



MONASH University

**Educational Reform: The discourses that shape and reshape the
positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in long day care
settings in Victoria, Australia**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education**

**Faculty of Education
Monash University
November 2018**

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ETHICS APPROVAL

The research for this thesis received the approval of the Monash University Standing Committee for Ethical Research on Humans on the 17th June, 2015. The project number is CF15/2312 – 2015000933.

ABSTRACT

Change is at the centre of the early childhood education field. Significant changes and policy reforms lead to a shift in thinking, moving from traditional to more contemporary approaches to theory and practice, which has been at the forefront of the early childhood field, both nationally and internationally. The aim of this post-structural study was to explore how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals working in the long day care sector in Victoria, Australia. This dissertation provides an overview of the Australian early childhood context, its evolution through the introduction of policy reform initiatives, and the subsequent impact on the Victorian context. More specifically, it utilises the introduction of the curriculum and quality reform documents as an illustration of how early childhood professionals engage with the pace of reform. It explores the underpinning processes of change and educational reform; with an emphasis on the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) and the ADKAR Organisational Change Model (Hiatt, 2006). This qualitative study spanned a one-year timeframe, and was situated within the south-east, north-east and eastern regions of Victoria, Australia. The purpose of this sample selection was to investigate how early childhood professionals in this area engaged with the reform discourses that came with the simultaneous introduction of state and national curriculum frameworks in 2009 (DEEWR, 2009; DEECD & VCAA, 2009). In particular, this study investigated whether links were present between early childhood professionals' responses to change, and their perceptions of how well they felt prepared by their pre-service teacher education and their ongoing professional development strategies to engage in change.

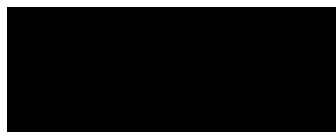
Eleven early childhood professionals, including six educators (some studying or qualified as teachers), one co-educator, one director and three centre coordinators participated in this study. Research methods included qualitative, semi-structured interviews with participants, and utilised an interactive version of the timeline method (Bedi & Redman, 2006; McKenna & Todd, 1997; Sobell, Sobell, Leo, & Cancilla, 1988) to list any professional development opportunities during and after the initial implementation of the 2009 reforms. This research design facilitated detailed and focused discussions regarding the participants' experiences of policy reform. Data was analysed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), and encompassed Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge (1972,

1980), and key concepts from the change literature. By framing the data in this way, it was possible to see the enmeshed discourses present within the field, and the way that they influenced the subject positions and discursive practices of participants as they attempted to engage in change. Data analysis revealed a range of strategies developed by these participants while navigating change which related to learning and institutional practices. A number of subject positions occupied by these participants were brought to the fore. These subject positions were shaped by specific discourses and their associated discursive practices. Furthermore, the application and analyses of the participants' interactive timelines and key change models (Hiatt, 2006; Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) to the study illustrated the participants' positioning within the change process. The findings from this study provide an understanding about the positioning, engagement and coping strategies of early childhood professionals in the Victorian long day care sector in relation to early childhood reform. This new knowledge will contribute to policy development, reform implementation and institutional practices for the purpose of future reforms in an ever-changing field.

DECLARATION: STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:



Date: November 30, 2018

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Scholarships, publications, presentations and service	
Scholarships	Monash Vice-Chancellor's Honours/PhD Scholarship: December 12 th , 2013.
	Monash Postgraduate Publications Award: January 1 st to March 1 st , 2018.
Publications	Armstrong, L., Rivalland, C. & Monk, H. (2019). The changing landscape of early childhood curriculum: Empowering pre-service educators to engage in curriculum reform (pp. 190-204). In, Barnes, M., Gindidis, M. & Phillipson, S. (Eds.). <i>Evidence-based Learning and Teaching: A Look into Australian Classrooms</i> . Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
	Rivalland, C., Armstrong, L. & Monk, H. (2019). Constructing positions of support: Acknowledging workplace discourses in the midst of early childhood reform, <i>European Early Childhood Education Research Journal</i> , 27 (1).
International conference presentations	Armstrong, L. (January, 2014). Current theoretical perspectives influencing kindergarten practitioners in Victoria, since the implementation of the EYLF. <i>International Research in Early Childhood Education (IRECE)</i> . Santiago, Chile: Universidad Diego Portales.
	Armstrong, L. (November, 2014). Acknowledging change in early childhood education: The impact on educators in the Australian context. <i>Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) & New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE)</i> . Brisbane, Queensland, Australia: Queensland University of Technology.
	Armstrong, L. (November, 2016). The impact of educational reform discourses: Emerging supports and stressors for early childhood educators. <i>Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE)</i> . Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).
	Armstrong, L., Rivalland, C. & Monk, H. (December, 2018). Dilemmas of engaging with changing curricula in ECE: Understanding discourses of learning. <i>International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS) 6th World Curriculum Studies Conference</i> . Parkville, Victoria, Australia: Melbourne Graduate School of Education.
National conference presentations	Armstrong, L. (July, 2014). Exploring the impact of change in early childhood education. <i>Monash Education Research Community (MERC)</i> . Clayton, Victoria, Australia: Monash University.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I genuinely thank my amazing supervisors, Dr Corine Rivalland (PhD) and Dr Hilary Monk (PhD) for their invaluable time, immense support and constructive guidance throughout this entire research journey. You have taught me the skills to conduct quality research, to critically reflect on myself as a researcher, and to question the truth claims of academia, educational research and the early childhood field. As a direct result of your dedication, I have grown in confidence, knowledge and ability, and will embrace and preserve the wisdom of your teachings, and carry these with me throughout my professional career. I thank Diane Brown (PhD) for copyediting my thesis in accordance with the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (2013) and the ACGR/IPeD guidelines for editing research theses.

Secondly, I thank the participants in this study for their approval, time and commitment in sharing their perceptions and their experiences from within the early childhood field. It is my sincere hope that their voices will be heard, and that acknowledgement of their significant contributions to this study can further inform the evolution of early childhood education in Australia.

Thirdly, I thank my family for their unfaltering support. To my amazing child Blake Velden, your very existence has inspired me to persist with my passion for early childhood education and research. I could not have succeeded without your love, support and patience. Rest assured that the sacrifices made will now lead to a brighter future for us both. To my devoted father Greg Armstrong, you have been there for me in so many ways that I could not have succeeded without you. We have become so much closer throughout this journey for which I will be forever grateful. To my ever-supportive mother and step-father, Denise and Terry Read, your continued encouragement and altruistic acts to ease my everyday stresses have also enabled this journey to be possible. To my brother and sister-in-law Brad and Tracie Armstrong, your faith and encouragement have empowered me to persist and strive for greatness.

I would also like to thank all of my colleagues and friends. In particular, to dearest Katrina MacDonald and Dr Sue Wilson, I feel so very blessed that you have entered my life (first as my wonderful colleagues, and now as my truly beautiful friends). You have been an amazing support and inspiration throughout this process as you patiently listened, offered support, and encouraged me to remain focused. To my dear friend Bree Lock, you have been an incredible support through our great conversations and time together.

Lastly, I thank Monash University, for offering me the opportunity to engage in an area of research for which I am most passionate. As an early-career researcher, this has been an incredible journey of growth and transformation.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
BECE	Bachelor of Early Childhood Education
BECS	Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DET	Department of Education and Training
ECA	Early Childhood Australia
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECP	Early Childhood Professional
ELC	Early Learning Centre
ESL	English as a Second Language
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FDC	Family Day Care
LDC	Long Day Care
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs
MUHREC	Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standards
OSHC	Out of School Hours Care
PD	Professional Development
PYP	Primary Years Programme
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VELS	Victorian Essential Learning Standards
VEYLDF	Victorian Early Years Learning and Developmental Framework
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter One: Setting the Scene

Introduction

This post-structural research study explored how Victorian early childhood professionals engage with educational reform discourses. In particular, it investigated whether there were links between these professionals' responses to change; their perceptions of how they felt prepared by their pre-service teacher education, educator training and their ongoing professional development strategies to engage in change. For the purpose of this study, the term *early childhood professional* encompasses a range of positions and qualification levels. These are specified in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Definitions and qualification levels of early childhood professionals in Victoria

Positions	Definitions/qualification levels
Teacher	Bachelor/Masters-qualified staff
Pre-service teacher	Studying Bachelor/Masters Degree
Educator	Diploma-qualified staff
Pre-service educator	Studying Certificate III/Diploma
Co-educator	Certificate III-qualified staff (Victorian term for assistant)
Director/centre coordinator	Variable qualification levels
Educational Leader (EL)	Overlapping role of some teachers and educators
Nominated Supervisor (NS)	Overlapping role of lead directors/co-educators

The significance of these positions is explored in greater depth throughout the thesis, with a particular focus on their impact upon engagement with change and educational reform.

In order to investigate educational change in early childhood education and its impact on early childhood professionals' responses to change, it is first necessary to examine the shifting and constantly evolving discourses within the Victorian early childhood field. This chapter describes some of these understandings in light of the historical, societal, political and economic landscape of Victoria and its early childhood context, which remain prevalent today. While at times lengthy, I posit that it was a necessary task in order to not only understand the state of the early childhood field today, but most importantly, to understand

how participants in the present study positioned themselves within specific discourses available to them during their career.

The shaping of state and national early childhood education

The early childhood education system comprises of a range of different services that accommodate the diverse needs of Australian families. These services include preschool and kindergarten, long day care, family day care, outside of school hours care, and other integrated services. According to the DET's *Early Childhood and Child Care in Summary September quarter 2017*, there are now 1,312,650 children using approved child care across Australia (DET, 2017c). In Victoria, this figure is 327,340 (DET, 2017c). In 2017, it was recorded that 339,243 children aged between four and five years were enrolled in a preschool program across Australia (ABS, 2017c). Of this figure, 56,564 children were enrolled in government preschools and 86,652 in non-government preschools, while 168,049 were enrolled in long day care centres (ABS, 2017c). It was also recorded that at this time, 95 per cent of these children were enrolled for over 15 hours per week, and there was an increase of 11.6 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending over 15 hours per week (ABS, 2017c). Over time, different terminology has been used to represent the field, such as children's services, child care, early years, early learning, and early childhood education and care.

The field of early childhood education has been informed and shaped by continuous changes from the very beginning of its existence. Thus, it is necessary to provide an overview of key changes informing the development of the field at a national level. A number of scholarly works have been conducted regarding the history of early childhood education in Victoria (Gardiner, 1982; O'Toole, 1999; Scantlebury Brown, 1966); and more broadly, across Australia (Ailwood, 2007; Ailwood, Boyd & Theobald, 2016; Brennan, 1998; Garvis & Manning, 2017; Grieshaber, 2018; Logan, 2018; Press, 2015; Press & Wong, 2013; Prochner, 2009; Whitehead, 2008, 2015; Wong & Press, 2016).

As such, to situate the present study, key eras in history are briefly explored as these are relevant to understanding how particular societal, political and economic factors have shaped the field of early childhood nationally, but more specifically in Victoria, Australia, from the late 1800s to 2018 (see **Table 2**). Although a large proportion of this section relates to the broader context of Australia, much of this has influenced the shaping of the Victorian context of early childhood education.

Table 2: Key eras in the history of early childhood education in Australia

Key eras in Australian early childhood education
Late 1800s–1938
1939–1960s
1960s–2006
2007–2018

It is important to acknowledge that the present research reflects post-structural ways of viewing the world. Though the histories of the field may be perceived as chronological, the discourses were fluid and pervasive, without the limitations of space and time. This aligns with the post-structural works of Michel Foucault, and his review of the historical nature of discourses in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1972).

I am fascinated by history and the relationship between personal experience and those events of which we are a part. I think that is the nucleus of my theoretical desires (Foucault, 1998, p. 124).

Late 1800s to 1938: Philanthropic beginnings of the early childhood workforce in Australia

The discourses of the early childhood workforce have been influenced by the societal, political and economic circumstance of certain eras throughout Australian history. The value attributed to the field has historically depended upon the perspectives and agendas of certain people, such as the philanthropists and feminists within the field, and political governance of certain times. According to Brennan (1998), “child care in Australia has moved from being a peripheral matter – of interest mainly to charitable groups comprised of upper-class women and a few progressive educationalists – to a high profile, vigorously debated political and public issue” (p. 1). Moreover, early childhood education has been described as a shift from “...a philanthropic issue to one which is firmly located in the mainstream agenda of Australian politics” (Brennan, 1998, p. 1). These transitions and trajectories are explored throughout this section.

In Australia, the early childhood field developed its humble beginnings in an official capacity during the 1800s. This stemmed from a growing concern for the care and education of young children held by various voluntary religious and philanthropic organisations (Brennan, 1998). The earliest known advocates for children’s education and care in Australia were feminists who emphasised the imperative nature of social and educational reform (Press, 2015). Their visions led to the establishment of different types of children’s services, such as day nurseries, kindergartens and children’s centres. It is important to

note that the introduction of the kindergarten movement began prior to the establishment of crèches and day nurseries. However, for the purpose of readability, the latter service types are discussed first. The following sub-sections provide an overview of these services, and the ambitious women behind their development.

Crèches and day nurseries

Crèches and day nurseries were originally developed and managed by voluntary organisations. They were designed to assist in caring for the children of women who were obligated to work; however, these services did not encourage women to seek employment (Brennan, 1998). In 1888, Australia transitioned to a self-governing nation and soon after, the crèche model was adopted as an effective childcare model. These services were first established in New South Wales in 1905, then in Queensland in 1907, and Victoria in 1910 (detailed later in **Table 3**).

Throughout the country, the day nursery movement formed its own training. This was largely modelled on the area of nursing, with a strong emphasis on health and hygiene practices (Press, 2015). For instance, in South Australia, an infant training course was developed by the *University Training College* (UTC) in 1909/10 (Whitehead, 2008). While in New South Wales, the *Sydney Day Nursery Association* initiated a *Nursery School Training College* in 1932, which was largely based on the United Kingdom's model of specialised nursery school training (Huntsman, 2013). Although such courses originally focused on the care of children under the age of two years, they later included children from two to five years of age.

The 20th century brought with it the growth and expansion of Australian cities, increased employment opportunities, reduced infant mortality rates, and the *kindergarten movement*. The formation of day nurseries was influenced by the *kindergarten movement* (discussed in the following section), which decided to exclude children under the age of three years from their programs in 1903. The establishment of these services aided in institutionalising 'care' and 'education' as separate services exceptionally early in the history of Australian early childhood education (Brennan, 1998). A particular point that reinforced this division was the day nurseries' affiliation with nursing duties for children under the age of three years (Brennan, 1998); and the educational emphasis of the kindergarten movement.

The kindergarten movement

According to Brennan (1998), the foundations of the *kindergarten movement* in Australia were grounded in "its '*child-saving*' mission and its belief that the conditions of working class family life could be improved through voluntary, philanthropic activity" (pp. 6-7, original emphasis). This began in the late

1800s with an endeavour to provide *free kindergartens* for children living in impoverished neighbourhoods. Prior to this period, there were some fee-charging kindergartens available in Australia, but these were “mostly attached to private schools for the daughters of wealthy families, whilst children in working class and poor communities had limited options” (Press & Hayes, 2000, p. 17). Hence the introduction of Free Kindergartens grew from necessity, and greatly influenced the development of the field.

During the 1890s, a feminist by the name of Margaret Windeyer journeyed to the United States “where she befriended the prominent American philosopher and educational reformer, John Dewey, who himself was interested in, and influenced by, the educational ideas of Frederich Froebel” (Press, 2015, p. 77). During her time abroad, Windeyer also visited the *Golden Gate Kindergarten Association*, and obtained a copy of their annual report (Press, 2015). Consequently, this report stirred up a sense of enthusiasm for Windeyer’s friend and fellow educational reformer, Maybanke Wolstenholme (subsequently Anderson) who established the first kindergarten association in Australia – the *Kindergarten Union of New South Wales* (Brennan, 1998). Although this movement began in New South Wales, it was also adopted in other Australian states and territories (see **Table 3**).

Table 3: Key organisations and their year of establishment (adapted from Brennan, 1998, p. 18; Wong & Press, 2016, p. 17)

State or territory	Organisation	Year established	First free kindergartens/day nurseries
New South Wales	Kindergarten Union of NSW Sydney Day Nursery Association	1895 1905	1896 (Woolloomooloo) 1905 (Woolloomooloo)
Victoria	Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria Victorian Association of Crèches/Day Nurseries	1908 1910	1901 (Carlton)
South Australia	Kindergarten Union of South Australia	1905	1906
Queensland	Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland	1907	N/A
Tasmania	Hobart Free Kindergarten Association Kindergarten Union of Tasmania	1910 1939	1910 (Hobart & Launceston)
Western Australia	Kindergarten Union of Western Australia	1911	1912

By 1896, the first Australian free kindergarten was established in a social welfare building in Sydney. In 1905, it was transferred to “the first-purpose-built free kindergarten in the southern hemisphere” and named the *Newtown Free Kindergarten* (Prochner, 2009, p. 137). Within two years, the KUNSW had influenced the establishment of a teacher education college and a further seven kindergartens in Sydney and later expanded to other states of Australia. As a result, unions, kindergartens and training colleges were formed in the other states of Australia in an attempt to unify the system which “now constitutes Early Childhood Education in Australia” (Davies & Trinidad, 2013, p. 73).

According to Press and Wong (2013), *Free Kindergartens* were originally based upon the methods of Friedrich Froebel. However as time progressed, many international perspectives were incorporated, such as those of Maria Montessori of Italy, Susan Isaacs and the MacMillan sisters from the United Kingdom, and G. Stanley Hall’s *Child Study Movement* in America (Press & Wong, 2013). The free kindergarten movement formed a key organisation in the development of early childhood education in Australia and has ultimately facilitated its progression.

It is important to acknowledge some of the women who were significant pioneers in the kindergarten movement around the country. Whitehead (2008) has provided some valuable insights into the South Australian context, particularly regarding the phenomenal works of Lillian de Lissa. According to Whitehead (2008), de Lissa originated from New South Wales, where she had received her kindergarten teacher education at the newly established college *Froebel House* in 1903, where she met a Chicago-born student by the name of Frances Newton. In 2005, de Lissa and Newton implemented a demonstration of kindergarten methods in Adelaide, South Australia. This ultimately led to the formation of the Kindergarten Union of South Australia (KUSA) in 1905–06, where de Lissa became the Director of Adelaide’s first kindergarten (Whitehead, 2008). Lillian de Lissa was a feminist for social, political and educational reform. Her ideologies were influenced by the works of Froebel and Dewey, and later, Montessori. Throughout her 40-year career, de Lissa developed and became Principal of the Adelaide Kindergarten Training College (KTC) from 1907 to 1917 as a progressive teacher-educator, and later continued her career in England (Whitehead, 2008).

In Victoria, the Free Kindergarten Union (FKU) began its formation in 1908, heavily influenced by the works of Frederich Froebel, the New Education movement, and Christian philanthropy (Gardiner, 1982). Between 1901 and 1907, free kindergartens were founded in the inner-city areas of Melbourne, “where narrow streets, crowded lanes, and insanitary houses were *white for harvest*” (Gardiner, 1982, p. 4, original emphasis). These kindergartens were managed mostly by early childhood professionals who had

some form of training, in collaboration with volunteers from Christian missions. Professionals of these first kindergartens (such as Marion Champlin, Isabel Henderson, Nora Semmens, Dorothy Bethune, Mary Lush, Annie Westmoreland, and Maud Wilson) became some of the first members of the Victorian Free Kindergarten Union (Gardiner, 1982).

A key pioneer in the Victorian context was Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown. This pioneer was a medical practitioner and a strong advocate of antenatal, infant and preschool health, development and care. Her contributions have included hospital work, the development of training for nurses at infant welfare centres, and support families of newborns (Campbell, 1988). In addition, Scantlebury Brown published *A Guide to Infant Feeding* in 1929 (Scantlebury Brown, 1929); and later *A Guide to the Care of the Young Child* in 1947 (Scantlebury Brown, 1947). She was also involved in the establishment of the *Victorian Municipal Preschool Association* (VMPSA) in 1946 (O'Toole, 1999). This was largely due to Scantlebury Brown's strong advocacy for building collaborative partnerships with local governments to solicit support and funding for preschool needs (O'Toole, 1999). This Association was short-lived, but paved the way for future preschool endeavours. The later advocacy work of Scantlebury Brown also facilitated funding from the Department of Health for the Lady Gowrie children's centres (discussed in the following section); however, this funding was unique to the state of Victoria (Press, 2015).

The work of Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown is significant here, as her background in health and maturational childhood development paved the way for the strong emphasis on these areas in the Victorian early childhood context. This has seemingly contributed to the clear focus that Victorian early childhood professionals and training institutions have historically placed upon developmental psychology and maturational childhood development in professional practice and teacher education programs.

Although kindergarten unions were originally formed in individual states and territories around Australia, these unions and associations were later united to form the *Australian Association for the Pre School Child Development* (AAPSCD) as a way of adopting a more integrated approach for the health, welfare and needs of children and their families (Wong & Press, 2012).

Gowrie Centres

Following the formation of the AAPSCD, the united organisation decided to launch childcare centres. In the 1930s, the Gowrie Centres (formerly known as Lady Gowrie Children's Centres) were founded by Lady Zara Gowrie, who was the Governor-General's wife and leader of the Free Kindergarten Union (Brennan, 1998; Press & Wong, 2013). According to Brennan (1998), these centres "effectively

represented a continuation of the philanthropic approach to children’s services” but with government funding, to provide ‘model’ centres which promoted “optimum methods for the care of preschool children in a period of intense public and official concern about the health of the poor” (p. 7).

It is important to note how funding was allocated in Australia at the time. Following the establishment of Federation in 1901, states and territories were made accountable for education, while the national government was responsible for issues of welfare (Press, 2015). Investment and funding of the early childhood sector have been greatly influenced by societal drivers throughout the years. Such drivers have encompassed the state of living conditions, unemployment and welfare issues, and hygiene and malnutrition – particularly associated with the economic depression of the late 1920s (Press & Wong, 2013; Prochner, 2009). In the early years, the kindergarten unions did not engage in lobbying governments to attain funding, partly because they felt that this might restrict their level of independence (Brennan, 1998). It was only later that kindergartens drew the attention of the department of education within state and territory jurisdictions (Press, 2015). The building of the Gowrie Centres commenced in 1938 and received a five-year funding commitment between 1940 and 1945. However, due to the circumstances which surrounded World War II (discussed later in the chapter), the funding commitments for Gowrie Centres were reduced (Press & Wong, 2013).

Based on the development of crèches, day nurseries, kindergartens and children’s centres, there was a growing need to facilitate methods of teacher education for staff employed within these services. The following section provides an overview of some of the early teacher education and educator training methods in Australian early childhood education.

Training colleges

Teacher education discourses in Australia have been shaped by social, political and economic history. For example, the recognised need for education and care for young children led to the development of day nurseries (for care) and kindergartens (for education). Due to the different focus of these services, separate training was needed for carers (or educators) and teachers (see **Table 4**).

Table 4: Key organisations for teacher education and their year of establishment (adapted from Brennan, 1998, p. 18; Whitehead, 2008; Wong & Press, 2016)

State or territory	Establishment of teachers' colleges	Training began
New South Wales	Sydney Kindergarten Teachers' College Nursery School Training Centre (later renamed Nursery School Teachers' College)	1896 1932
Victoria	Kindergarten Training College (later renamed Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers' College)	1922
South Australia	Kindergarten Training College University Training College – Infant training course	1907 1909/10
Queensland	Brisbane Kindergarten Training College	1907
Tasmania	No specific training college Hobart Teachers' College – Training course	N/A 1967
Western Australia	Western Australia Kindergarten Training College	1913

Prior to early childhood teacher education in Australia, British and American teachers were charged with heading the newly established kindergartens (Press, 2015). However, generally within a year of kindergarten unions forming within states and territories, *Kindergarten Teachers' Colleges* (KTCs) were established by these unions to train their teachers (Press, 2015). Other states and territories of Australia followed by developing their own teacher education colleges based on the Sydney model. For example, in the state of Victoria, a training program was designed in 1916 by Professors Ellen Pye and John Smyth in collaboration with the *State of Victoria Education Department* (Davies & Trinidad, 2013). The training offered through these colleges aimed to support kindergarten teachers in providing quality early childhood programs and supervision. These colleges were separate from state teachers' colleges and their course length generally spanned three years (Press & Wong, 2013).

In the Victorian context, an early provision of early childhood teacher education occurred in 1887. An English-trained kindergarten teacher was imported by the Victorian Education Department to provide teacher education for Victorian early childhood professionals at the Department's Model School (Gardiner, 1982). However, the depression of the 1890s put an end to this. A Kindergarten Society was established in 1902 (prior to the established of the Free Kindergarten Union) under the presidency of Annie Westmoreland, who had founded the *Ruyton Kindergarten Training School* (RKTS) in Kew, where she administered lectures about the Kindergarten Method from 1899 (Gardiner, 1982). Two other prominent figures at the time were Frank Tate, a supporter of New Education and Director of Education between 1902 and 1928, and Dr John Smyth, who was a Froebel enthusiast and Principal of Melbourne Teachers College from 1902 to 1927 (Gardiner, 1982). During this time, Smyth appointed Emeline Pye as a teacher-educator and Mistress of Method at the Teachers College (Gardiner, 1982).

In the early 1900s, the infant welfare movement was formed in response to the high infant mortality rate. By 1917, the *Victorian Baby Health Centres*, and the *Society for the Health of Mothers and Children* were established as voluntary organisations to provide training in infant health and supervision, and mothercraft skills (Scantlebury Brown, 1966). In 1926, the government intervened in the development of the Infant Welfare Division of the Department of Health, employing Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown as its first Director. This Division was tasked with establishing Infant Welfare Centres which were to be managed by trained Infant Welfare Sisters (nurses). By 1944, the Division expanded and was renamed the Maternal, Infant and Preschool Division (Scantlebury Brown, 1966). At this time, different training was available for specific positions (see **Table 5**).

Table 5: Early courses for infant and preschool (adapted from Scantlebury Brown, 1966, pp. 12-13)

Early courses	Duration	Organisation	Placement
Infant Welfare Sister	4 months	Victorian Nursing Council	Infant welfare centres
Mothercraft Nurse (infants)	15 months	Victorian Nursing Council	Maternity hospitals, day nurseries, residential homes of infants
Mothercraft Nurse (preschool)	6 months	Maternal Child & Welfare Branch	Day nurseries, children's homes Can take role of Play Leader in preschool centres
Kindergarten Teacher	3 years	Kindergarten Teachers' College, Kew	Kindergarten and preschool centres
Preschool Play Leader	1 year	Maternal Child & Welfare Branch	Kindergarten and preschool centres (under the supervision of a qualified kindergarten teacher)

The positions of Infant Welfare Nurse and Mothercraft Nurse fell within the training jurisdiction of the *Victorian Nursing Council* while the preschool orientated courses were orchestrated by the *Maternal Child and Welfare Branch*. These courses involved lectures, tutor support, practical demonstrations, observations, and examinations at infant welfare or preschool centres (Scantlebury Brown, 1966). The connection between health, development and education has endeavoured to take a more holistic view of early childhood education. However, the content of these training college courses provides another illustration of the developmental underpinnings of early childhood education in the Victorian context, which are discussed in the following sub-section.

Early influences of knowledge on Australian early childhood education

Many theories have influenced early childhood education in Australia (particularly throughout the 19th and 20th centuries). Some of these relate to global influences; however, it is important to acknowledge that these are not always transferrable to different contexts. An accumulation of theoretical, conceptual

and practical knowledge in the Australian early childhood field has addressed “the need for a specialised body of knowledge and skills” (Press, 2015, p. 78) for early childhood professionals and services.

From the 1890s, Frederick Froebel and John Dewey played a significant theoretical influence in the development of the kindergarten movement in Australia (Press, 2015). In particular, Froebel’s image of childhood innocence was an early influence on early childhood education contributing to the development of the kindergarten movement (Brennan, 1998; Press, 2015; Prochner, 2009). This is evident from the visit of Margaret Windeyer with John Dewey (an avid follower of Froebel’s work) in the United States (Press, 2015). In Australia, *Froebel House* (a teacher college) was established in Sydney during the early 1900s (Whitehead, 2008) while the kindergarten unions, their kindergartens, and their training colleges were also founded upon the theories of these philosophers (Press, 2015). The concept of play-based curriculum has also been held in high regard from the conception of Australian children’s services (Brooker & Edwards, 2010; Fler, 2010; Press, 2015).

During the early 19th century, Lillian de Lissa (one of the field’s pioneers) discovered the philosophies of Maria Montessori at *Blackfriars Practising School* in 1912 (Whitehead, 2008). This school became a hub for training teachers in the Montessori Method under the guidance of Martha Simpson, who had studied the method in Italy, and has been deemed as a significant figure in the Montessori Method being introduced to Australia (Feez, 2013). Throughout the 19th century, other theoretical influences have included the works of Rousseau and Pestalozzi; and later, Isaacs and Gessell (de Lissa, 1949 in Whitehead, 2008); and more specifically, Gesell’s maturational theory (Scantlebury Brown, 1966), and Rose’s (1999) notion of children as young citizens. However, it was not until the second half of the 20th century that the works of Jean Piaget’s developmental psychology (Edwards, 2007; Fler & Robbins, 2004; Scantlebury Brown, 1966) and Lev Vygotsky became influential (Whitehead, 2008). As such, the theoretical knowledge base of Victorian early childhood education has been occupied by shifting discourses, involving traditional developmental theories to more contemporary ones.

An emphasis has also historically been placed upon health and maturational development (particularly in the day nurseries and infant welfare services) (Brennan, 1998). The historical connection between health, development and education in Australia (predominantly in the Victorian context) has embedded the importance of understanding the prescribed norms and milestones of growth and development in order to provide quality education and care for young children (Scantlebury Brown, 1966). This perspective reflects the theories of Dr. Arnold Gesell, the later works of Jean Piaget’s developmental psychology, and *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (DAP) introduced by the *National Association for the Education*

of *Young Children* (NAEYC) in America (Bredekamp, 1987; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). All of these theories have influenced the Australian early childhood field. However, the theories that seem to dominate the field change over time. The influences of more contemporary perspectives regarding theory are discussed later in the chapter.

1939-1960s: The impact of wartime on the direction of the field

The Australian early childhood field was greatly impacted by World War II between 1939 and 1945. This resulted in staff shortages, increased staff turnover, budget restrictions, centre closures and fluctuating attendance of children (Press & Wong, 2013; Prochner, 2009). In response to these issues, the first radio broadcast of a kindergarten program was instigated in Western Australia in 1943 to ensure accessibility of services for children and families (Press & Wong, 2013). At this time, an increase in women's workforce participation led to the opening of 14 wartime children's centres around the country, for children from two years of age. Workforce participation and issues of supply and demand have been key drivers for the evolution of the sector throughout its history (Irvine & Farrell, 2013; OECD, 2017a).

Due to increased workforce participation of women during World War II, the Commonwealth Government provided additional funding to a small number of services (mostly kindergartens). However, this was only for the duration of the war (Brennan, 1998). This limited funding was "legitimated by appeals to a conception of 'national interests'; *women's* interests (apart from their roles as rearers of healthy children or contributors to the war effort) were not given any independent weight" (Brennan, 1998, p. 7, original emphasis). During this time, new groups were established which challenged the kindergarten unions regarding the purpose of children's services. Many of these groups ran their own wartime centres (Brennan, 1998).

Although there was increasing workforce participation of women during this post-war period, the kindergarten union did not place a high necessity for catering for working mothers (Brennan, 1998), and "refused to provide care for children under three or extended hours of care" (Press, 2015). Some chief members of the preschool movement contested the establishment of children's services, as it was seen as an enabler for increased participation of women in the workforce (Brennan, 1998). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, a strong discourse differentiation was portrayed by the kindergarten unions between the concepts of 'education' and 'care'. From the unions' perspective, 'educational' services were perceived as being necessary from a child development standpoint while 'minding' services were interpreted as purely attending to the needs of mothers (Brennan, 1998). As such, these discourses led to "an ideological split between the kindergarten movement and the day nursery movement" (Press, 2015, p. 76).

Following the end of World War II, there was a significant shift in the perception of early childhood education. In particular, participation became more appealing to wealthier families, as awareness of the benefits grew. Consequently, the mid 1940s to 1950 saw an expansion of centres due to growing popularity, high demand, postwar migration and the postwar baby boom (Press & Wong, 2013; Prochner, 2009). To adapt to these changing circumstances, the AAPSCD altered its attendance structure to accommodate more children by providing two sessions per day. The end of the war was a time of immense economic growth for Australia, which was largely due to the humanitarian response and immigration program of 1945 (Press & Wong, 2013; Prochner, 2009). This led to the establishment of immigration preschool centres in the early 1950s which followed specific guidelines to ensure they met specific health, education and care standards and employed qualified educators.

Throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, the federal body of the kindergarten unions (then known as the *Australian Pre-School Association*) “established an unchallenged position as public arbiters of young children’s ‘needs’ and the appropriate government responses” (Brennan, 1998, p. 8). Due to increased post-war European migration, the Australian Pre-school Association successfully advocated for the implementation of English language programs for migrant mothers, while qualified preschool teachers cared for their children (Press, 2015). This was an early indication of advocacy for cultural diversity in the growing multiculturalism of the Australian context (Press & Wong, 2013). This advocacy was further cemented by the establishment of the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation* (UNESCO) in 1956, and its perspective regarding children’s rights to quality education, a cultural rich environment, scientific progress, democracy, dignity and freedom of expression (UNESCO, n.d.).

Kindergartens and day nurseries were staffed by predominantly female early childhood professionals (Brennan, 1998). In the 1960s, this system came under scrutiny from feminist community childcare lobby groups who raised the need for government-funded, parent-run services (Brennan, 1998). During the early 1960s, pressure was put on state governments by the kindergarten union to implement the licensing and regulation of childcare services, to ensure that profit-based child-minding services were limited (Brennan, 1998).

Meanwhile, the Gowrie Centres continued to grow. Their centres began to accommodate education, demonstration and research programs in areas such as paediatrics, antenatal care, and children’s health and wellbeing which ultimately led to the first research grant being awarded in 1956 (Press & Wong, 2013). Between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, the organisation’s shifting responsibilities led to increasing

autonomy. Throughout the years, the Gowrie Centres have adapted their objectives to suit the changing social landscape of Australia. However, these centres continue to provide quality early education and care for young children, learning opportunities for early childhood professionals, and partnerships with other key early childhood organisations.

1960s-2006: A shift in focus from necessity to quality

The need for childcare services escalated throughout the 1960s. This was a time of immense change across the nation of Australia, through the opposition to the Vietnam War, the attention to Aboriginal rights, as well as the emergence of feminism, popular culture, and television. Following a nationwide labour shortage during the 1960s, employers called for more women to enter the workforce. Although this spurred improved employment, health and wellbeing, there was great cultural diversity and a significant gap between the poor and the wealthy. The growing demand for child care, increased workforce participation, and changes in family structures resulted in the need for more diverse service types. These services emphasised parental and community control (Brennan, 1998) and could be based in centres or homes, with varying durations of sessional or full-day programs (Press, 2015). Due to fierce lobbying by the Australian Pre-School Association, the Labor government (in power from 1972 to 1975 under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam) promised to ensure that every child receive one year of preschool education (Brennan, 1998). As a result, a range of services were introduced, including *long day care* (LDC), *family day care* (FDC), *occasional care* (OC), and *out of school hours care* (OSHC) amongst others (see **Table 6**).

Table 6: Emerging service types in the Australian early childhood context (adapted from Brennan, 1998, pp. 11-12; and Press, 2015, p. 72)

Service type	Description
Long day care (LDC) / child care	Similar to former <i>day nurseries</i> (Brennan, 1998). Chiefly for children from birth to school age whose parents are engaged in work, study or training. Most operate at a minimum of eight hours per day, 48 weeks per year. Maximum attendance 50 hours per week. Average attendance is 28.7 hours (DEEWR, 2017). There were 721,090 Australian children in LDC in 2017; 169,890 from Victoria (DET, 2017c).
Preschool (PS) / Kindergartens	For children prior to the year of formal schooling (at approximately five years of age in most states); sessional half-day sessions, or full six hour days are run over a week for three and four year olds during school terms; mostly not-for-profit, parent-run community services; some school-adjacent and part of the state education department. Following the goal for 15 hours of preschool education in their year prior to school entry (COAG, 2009), preschool programs can now be implemented within traditional kindergartens or long day care centres. The motivations behind broadening access to quality EC programs involve enhancing “national economic productivity, educational outcomes, and social inclusion” (Molla & Nolan, 2017, p. 13).
Family Day Care (FDC)	For birth to school aged children; home-based service run by educators in their own homes, registered with a family day care coordination unit, who provide support and training; sponsored by an agency (council, church or community) for access to toys, equipment and other resources. Although this FDC is on a national decline with 182,830 Australian children reported in 2017 (and only 62,720 of those from Victoria) (DET, 2017), this service type is on the rise in rural and disadvantaged areas (Family Day Care Australia, 2016–2017).
Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)	Provides care outside of school hours for young children; generally before-school, after-school and vacation care; programs available at some schools and some regular centres. 445,140 Australian children use this service (102,130 from Victoria) (DET, 2017).
Playgroups	Play sessions arranged for children by their parents and other caregivers.
Integrated services	Child and family services, including: Maternal and child health services, family support programs, and early childhood education and care programs.
Mobile services	Early childhood teaching and learning resources and equipment transported by vehicle and setup by educators for children. These mobile services provide access to playgroups, preschool sessions, long day care or child-minding for children and families from isolated or disadvantaged communities, or remote and rural areas of Australia.
Multifunctional Aboriginal children’s services	Offers education, care and support for Indigenous children and their families; some preschools are provided by state and territory governments in collaboration with the Aboriginal educational policy.
Multifunctional services	Various care services for children offered within one location; run as <i>neighbourhood centres</i> or <i>drop-in centres</i> in some states.
Occasional or casual care	Provides short sessions of care (such as crèche), generally three hours per week maximum. An estimated 6,140 Australian children (2,330 from Victoria) use this service (DET, 2017).

Finally, the discourses framing childhood services moved from being a service for *the needy* to being a standard service available within communities (Brennan, 1998) catering for the diverse needs of the Australian population in light of the ever-changing landscape of Australian life. The unique contexts of Australia's Indigenous children were also considered. Until the late 1960s, some of these children were still being forcibly removed from their families and communities. *Aboriginal Child Care Agencies* (ACCAs) were established in the late 1970s to address concerns regarding the placement of Indigenous children in institutions or with non-Indigenous families. The establishment of the *Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care* (SNAICC) provided an umbrella organisation for these agencies (Brennan, 1998). It has been argued that due to higher unemployment rates, Indigenous families are "less likely than others to require child care for work-related reasons" (Brennan, 1998, p. 6). However, statistics illustrate that there are now 22,150 Indigenous children in communities throughout Australia attending early childhood programs in long day care services alone (DET, 2017).

A change in political leadership from Labor to Liberal governance (the latter under the leadership of Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser) occurred in 1975, which led to "a reduction in public expenditure and a return to *traditional* family values" (Brennan, 1998, p. 9, original emphasis). In an ironic outcome, the reversal of preserving Commonwealth funding for *the needy* resulted in child care being prioritised above preschool (Brennan, 1998). The threat of funding cutbacks ultimately facilitated an alliance between child care and preschool advocates, promoting the formation of the *National Association of Community Based Children's Services* which endeavoured to enhance government funding for all service types (Brennan, 1998).

Throughout the 1970s, this alliance became increasingly involved in political campaigns and union movements regarding policies and funding, industrial conditions and quality of care in the early childhood field (Brennan, 1998). The growing comradery between the education and care sectors was finally recognised by the *Australian Pre-School Association* in the 1980s, reflecting this united front through a name change to the *Australian Early Childhood Association*, and finally, to *Early Childhood Australia* (Press, 2015). In an effort from the field in partnership with government "to create a more unified early childhood sector", the *Code of Ethics* (ECA, 2016) was developed in 1988 to provide ethical standards and professional status which added another level of discourse and framed the subject positions "of all those who worked in the early childhood field" (Press, 2015, p. 77). This document was later revised in 2008, and then again in 2016 (ECA, 2016). Based on contemporary pedagogical research and practice, the Code of Ethics was designed as a framework to guide early childhood professionals to engage in ethically

appropriate behaviour, and to reflect on their ethical responsibilities as professionals (ECA, 2016). The notion of professionalism was also bolstered by the adoption of the 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989). This document emphasises “the whole spectrum of human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – and sets out the specific ways these rights should be ensured for children and young people” (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d., para.3). Hence, the discourse framing the Australian early childhood field was becoming more professional in its approach to caring for children, through its growing consideration for ethics and human rights.

In addition, the turn of the century witnessed the involvement of Australia in international early childhood research with the *OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC) (OECD, 2017b). The collaborative acceptance of these international perspectives regarding children’s rights, education and care strengthened the foundations and perceptions of the field. It was anticipated that the adoption of global perspectives might instigate what Brennan (1998) had previously advocated, which was some form of “unionisation and politicisation of these workers” (p. 10). However, due to the number of different representative organisations across the field in Australia, an unrelenting fragmentation and “at times, palpable divides” remained between the childcare and kindergarten sectors (Press, 2015, p. 77).

The introduction of different service types prompted the development of regulations and standards to facilitate quality and safety for children within these education and care environments. This included the establishment of the *Commonwealth Child Care Act* in 1972 (Federal Register of Legislation, 2016), which enabled funding to be accessed by organisations aspiring to launch their own childcare services (Brennan, 1998). According to Wong and Press (2016), this Act was sparked by three converging trends: 1) the welfare of children whose mothers needed to work; 2) a demand for child care so that more mothers could work; and 3) the need for increased access to cheap labour for the manufacturing industry.

These documents can be understood as “a critical juncture in policy” (Logan, Sumsion & Press, 2013, p. 87) as they illuminated the complex nature of policy production and a vision for future policy direction (Logan, Sumsion & Press, 2015). Further policies are understood as power discourses or power structures within the early childhood context, which determined who held positions of privilege during specific reform structures. For example, the *Office of Child Care* was established in 1976 which was incorporated into the *Department of Social Security*. This formed a new funding approach to the child care system while preschool funding still remained a state responsibility. In 1979, ECA (then known as the Australian Pre-school Association, APA) developed a policy document titled the *APA Policy Statement on Children’s*

Services – General principles and guidelines for the care and education of young children – recommended by the Australian Pre-school Association (Press & Wong, 2013).

According to Logan, Press and Sumsion (2012), the Australian EC context is divided into five key historical periods from 1972 to 2009: an acknowledgement of workforce participation for women (1972–1983); high demand and supply shortages (1984–1993); privatisation of the field (1994–2000); corporatisation within the field (2001–2007); and a new focus on quality (2008–2009). These historical periods in time are significant in understanding the political and societal discourses which informed the directions of the Australian early childhood field.

The social, political and economic value attributed to child care intensified during the 1980s and 1990s with a shift in leadership from Liberal to Labor. During their 13-year term, the policy objectives of the national Labor government (Prime Minister Bob Hawke, 1983–91 and Paul Keating, 1991–96 consecutively) emphasised the importance of women’s workforce participation and welfare (Press, 2015).

In 1992, the *Australian Council of Trade Unions* began addressing the problem of wages and working conditions for child care workers. However, the political focus remained on the growing demand for child care. According to Brennan (1998), this was caused by “the expansion of work-based and commercial child care and the general drift in Labor policy towards a child care system based upon private enterprise rather than community organisations” (Brennan, 1998, p. 10). These services were either managed by not-for-profit community associations, local government bodies, state government departments or for-profit corporations (Press, 2015). Throughout the 1990s, child care became “widely regarded as central to the economic and social goals of the nation” (Brennan, 1998, p. 1). Thus, provisions in government subsidies for not-for-profit – and subsequently, for-profit organisations – led to the expansion of child care during this time (Press, 2015).

The 1996 election of the Liberal government of Prime Minister John Howard exacerbated the corporatisation of child care, by eradicating the minor subsidies disbursed to not-for-profit childcare services (Garvis & Manning, 2017). By 2005, corporate chains possessed 25 per cent of all long day care (LDC) places in the country (Rush & Downie, 2006). An example of rampant privatisation in the sector is the case of the ABC Early Learning Centres. This chain was formed in 1988 and rapidly became the largest of its kind. In 1997, ABC owned 18 centres, but by 2005, this number grew to 800 (Rush & Downie, 2006). Due to receiving \$206 million from indirect federal government subsidies, ABC Early

Learning Centres earned \$50 million in profit in the 2004/2005 financial year alone (Rush & Downie, 2006).

Throughout this time, there were concerns raised about the quality of the service provided by ABC. These concerns related to family relationships, nutrition, cleanliness, excess paperwork and staff treatment (Rush & Downie, 2006). In 2007, ABC shares fell dramatically, forcing the company into administrative receivership, followed by voluntary liquidation in 2009 (Garvis & Manning, 2017). At this time, ABC had gained 25 per cent of the entire LDC places and more centres, comprising 120,000 children and 16,000 staff (Ellis, 2009). The result of this proved to be “chaos for families who attended one of the 1,200 centres around Australia (Garvis & Manning, 2017, p. 3). Eventually in 2009, ABC was sold with the majority of centres going to charitable organisations, which later became Good Start Early Learning Centres (Garvis & Manning, 2017). Since this time, the field has been dominated by private and commercial centre-based child care (Press, 2015). Meanwhile, preschools remain predominantly not-for-profit ventures, managed primarily by parent committees and the Department of Education within separate states and territories (Press, 2015).

The late 1990s to 2000s set the scene for *quality* in early childhood education. This led to the development the *National Childcare Accreditation Council* (NCAC) which was funded by the Australian government from 1993 to 2011. In 1994, this non-profit organisation was charged with administering *Child Care Quality Assurance* (CCQA) through the *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System* (QIAS) for long day care (LDC), family day care (FDC) and outside school hours care (OSHC) services across Australia (ACECQA, 2017a). This system covered a range of quality areas that were adjusted throughout the years (NCAC, 2011). All aforementioned services were required to be registered with the NCAC and meet these quality standards for accreditation purposes. It is important to note that kindergarten services were not required to participate in this accreditation process. However, requirements for all early childhood services soon changed due to the growing unity and professionalisation of the field.

These changes add yet another layer of complexity to the field of Australian early childhood education, and the ways in which such reform discourses may be repositioning professionals in the field. The following section provides an overview of a significant era of reform, and the political influences involved in their establishment within the Australian early childhood education context.

2007-2018: Times of great reform

The year 2007 saw the beginnings of major policy reform in the Australian early childhood education field. This was largely driven by the field's susceptibility to "changes in government ideology" (Sims, Mulhearn, Grieshaber & Sumsion, 2015, p. 70). From 2007 to 2013, the Labor party (under Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, consecutively) was once again in power in the federal government (MoAD, n.d.). During this time, early childhood education was moved out of the welfare/community portfolio and into the education portfolio (Press, 2015). New reforms were on the agenda for the purpose of seeking cohesion across the field through a "higher-level commitment to improve the quality and provision of early childhood education and care" (Garvis & Manning, 2017, p. 4). This led to the initiation of several significant reforms.

In 2008, the *Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians* (2008) was developed by the *Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs* in 2008, stating that "improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives" (MCEETYA, 2008, pp. 6-7). Although this was a positive move, once again, the central objective of this reform was a socio-economic one.

In 2009, the *National Early Childhood Development Strategy – Investing in the Early Years* was instated by the *Council of Australian Governments* (COAG). The Strategy was a "... collaborative effort between the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments to ensure that by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation" (COAG, 2009, p. 4). In 2010, the Strategy identified six key areas for change (COAG, 2009, p. 4):

1. Strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services
2. Support vulnerable children
3. Improve early childhood infrastructure
4. Build parent and community understanding of the importance of early childhood development
5. Strengthen workforce across early childhood development and family support services
6. Build better information and a solid evidence base.

These were considered to be positive goals for the field moving forward. As expressed by Pascoe and Brennan (2017), "quality early childhood education and care is best considered as an investment, not a cost" (p. 6).

Other initiatives were also implemented throughout this period, including the *Stand Up for Quality* campaign in 2009 (ECA, 2017), and the *Early Learning: Everyone Benefits* campaign in 2017 (ELEB, 2017). The introduction of these initiatives aimed to assist with the evaluation and monitoring of service

standards, as well as the development of early childhood policies, position statements and improvement strategies. The establishment of COAG has brought about other important reforms; particularly regarding quality and curriculum (see **Table 7**).

Table 7: Summary of key reforms impacting the state of Victoria

Year of introduction	Reform	Jurisdiction
2003–2011	<i>Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC)</i>	National State
2009	<i>Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009)</i>	National State
2009	<i>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (DEECD & VCAA, 2009)</i>	State of Victoria
2012	<i>National Quality Framework (NQF) and National Quality Standards (NQS) – Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)</i>	National State
2016	<i>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (DET, 2016)</i>	State of Victoria

Although some of the reforms throughout this era occurred at a national level, some have either impacted the Victorian context, or have been specific to this particular state. Moreover, the state of Victoria held a prominent and instrumental role in the development and establishment of these reforms. This is discussed in greater depth throughout the following sub-sections.

Curricula and quality: Illustrations of reform

There is a strong relationship between the notions of curricula and quality. This relationship can be seen through the growing emphasis on quality within curriculum frameworks worldwide. More specifically, the pedagogical practices and principles embedded within these documents often reflect societal ideologies of quality. This relationship is now firmly embedded within the Australian early childhood context, through its establishment of curriculum and quality frameworks and the strong ideological connections between them.

Early childhood curriculum frameworks began to be developed worldwide, and were largely based on various learning outcomes for young children (DEEWR, 2009; Wilks, Nyland, Chancellor, & Elliott, 2008). According to *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education* (OECD, 2017a), the majority of countries covered by the OECD now have early childhood curriculum frameworks in place. In Australia, the states and territories developed their own curriculum frameworks within their own timeframes (see **Table 8**).

Table 8: The implementation of curriculum frameworks in Australia (adapted from Wilks et al., 2008)

State or territory	Curriculum framework	Age group	Year
New South Wales	<i>NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services: The Practice of Relationships: Essential Provisions for Children's Services</i> (New South Wales Department of Community Services & Office of Childcare, 2005).	Birth – school age	2005
	NSW Primary Curriculum: Foundation Statements (Board of Studies NSW, 2005).	5 – 8 years	2005
Victoria	<i>Curriculum Guidelines</i>	3 – 5 years	1991 (unsuccessful)
	<i>Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework</i> (VEYLDF) (DEECD & VCAA, 2009).	Birth to 8 years	2009
South Australia	<i>Respect, Reflect, Relate</i> (Department for Education & Child Development, 2001).	Birth – Year 12	2001
Queensland	Curriculum framework for the preparatory/foundation age (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006)	5 years	2006
Tasmania	Integrated approach to children's services.	Birth – 16 years	N/A
	<i>Essential Connections Curriculum: Thinking communicating, personal futures, social responsibility and world futures</i> (Department of Education Tasmania, 2004).	0 – 4 years	2004
	<i>Tasmanian Curriculum</i> (DEECD & VCAA, 2008)	-	2008
Western Australia	<i>Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12</i> (Western Australia Curriculum Council, 1998).	K – 12	2001
Northern Territory	No official curriculum; integrated approach.	N/A	N/A
Australian Capital Territory	<i>Every Chance to Learn</i> (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2007).	Preschool – Year 10	2007

The information provided above details a complex picture of early childhood education across Australia through the introduction, abandonment and replacement of early childhood curriculum frameworks over the past 20 years. None of these frameworks were considered to be mandatory, as early childhood services were only required to follow the childcare acts and licensing standards within each state or territory. However, all states and territories were required to adopt the new national curriculum framework titled *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF), following its introduction in 2009 (DEEWR, 2009).

The EYLF

The need for a national early childhood curriculum framework was brought to the fore in 2008, with the Centre for Community Child Health Working Paper: *Towards an early years learning framework for Australia* (Moore, 2008). This discussion paper proposed a way forward for stakeholders in the field to form a dialogue about curriculum development. In particular, it placed significant emphasis on incorporating international research, holistic pedagogy, and cultural and national expectations (Moore, 2008). In 2009, *Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework of Australia* (EYLF) became the first national curriculum document developed to cover all early childhood services and age groups from birth to five years of age within Australia (DEEWR, 2009). This was a significant change for the entire field, as centre and home-based services were previously not expected to engage with curricula. The EYLF was constructed in collaboration with associates of the Charles Sturt University-led Consortium (Sumsion et al., 2009). According to the developers of this new national framework, the purpose of the EYLF was to establish a set of principles, practices and outcomes which promoted a collaborative approach, fresh dialogue, ongoing effective practice and sufficiently represented the Indigenous population of Australia (Sumsion et al., 2009). The development of a national document was a complex process.

The combination of the multi-jurisdictional context, with its embedded historical legacy of often strained state, territory and federal relations, the multilayered decision-making structure, and the compressed timeline characterising the development of the EYLF made it a far more complex undertaking than the earlier development of the ECEC learning or curriculum frameworks by individual Australian states and territories (Sumsion et al., 2009, p. 6).

Thus, the development of the EYLF prompted political and societal challenges between the states and territories of Australia.

The development process of this document began in 2007 following the election of the Rudd government, as a *Productivity Agenda* to foster the growth of the Australian economy. From the establishment of this agenda, an *Education Revolution* was conceived in 2008 which generated an emphasis on quality improvement in the early childhood field. However, the way in which this framework was developed and introduced requires further exploration.



Figure 1: Timeline of the EYLF's stages of development – information from Sumsion et al. (2009)

The development of the EYLF has been described by Sumsion et al. (2009) as using a rapid timeline consisting of four stages (see **Figure 1**). *Stage One* commenced in 2008 and comprised a detailed analysis of various curriculum framework models adopted by countries worldwide (Wilks et al., 2008). This was succeeded by *Stage Two* which involved a discussion paper constructed by the *Productivity Agenda Working Group* and *Early Childhood Development Sub Group* (Edwards, Flear, & Nuttall, 2008). Subsequently, this was followed by a collaborative composition of a Research Paper which utilised background research from the field to inform the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of the proposed framework (Edwards et al., 2008). This Paper stated that it was “framed within the conceptual base of cultural-historical activity theory” which derives from the sociocultural works of Lev Vygotsky (Edwards et al., 2008, p. 1). This is an important element for the purpose of the current study, as although several key theories are embedded within the EYLF, the framework seems to draw quite heavily upon sociocultural theory with its emphasis on the social and cultural contexts of children, families and communities. According to Edwards (2007), “the historical commitment the field holds to cognitive-developmentalism” has hindered the understanding of more contemporary theories (p. 84).

The acknowledgement of *theoretical plurality* within the development of curriculum frameworks has been discussed by Flear (2003), as she suggested that early childhood professionals may experience less clarity regarding their own theoretical understandings when only one theoretical position is adopted. This has been an issue for some early childhood professionals who have “used a predominately developmental-constructivist theoretical perspective” to frame their practice (Edwards, 2007, p. 83); and this perspective has functioned as a powerful mechanism for informing the understandings of early childhood professionals regarding curriculum (Spodek & Sarach, 1999). To elaborate on this issue, Flear and Robbins (2004) have explained:

One of the greatest challenges facing the reform of early childhood education in Australia has been the growing chasm between theory and practice – with most staff having trained well over twenty years ago. As such the dominant theoretical paradigm held by many early childhood teachers is situated within a constructivist-developmental orientation (p. 47).

In the context of Victoria, the theories and practices of health and maturational development have shaped the field immensely (particularly in regards to very young children) since the times of Vera Scantlebury Brown (1966). This may suggest that the shift from developmentalism to theoretical plurality could be especially challenging for Victorian early childhood professionals.

Sumsion et al. (2009) explained that the intentions of the new framework was to inspire flexibility and dialogue which enable early childhood professionals “the option of working with a diversity of ideas and theories, including those perceived by the government to be politically risky” (p. 8). Nevertheless, some theories may appear more visible within the document than others. This may be associated with the political complexities and competing values involved in the cross-jurisdictional development of this document which ultimately led to the “*toning down* of potentially controversial ideas” (Sumsion et al., 2009, p. 7, original emphasis).

The literature regarding the development of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) illustrates just how much political influence was involved. For instance, it was acknowledged that the document is reflective of the political and social landscape at the time of its development, and that as this landscape changes, so will the direction of curriculum development (Sumsion et al., 2009). As Yates (2009) suggests, curriculum is reflective of the shifting emphasis of *what matters* within the political landscape. Though in relation to the development of the EYLF, the government seems to have had the final say in deciding what matters and what discourses are transmitted. For example, the EYLF supports *Goal 2* of the *Melbourne Declaration* which promotes the importance for all young Australian children to become “successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). In addition, the EYLF illustrates its objective to “provide young children with opportunities to maximize their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). Thus the emphasis on economic productivity and human capital in the development of early childhood policies and frameworks indicates the significance of political and economic drivers in educational reforms, such as those experienced historically, and more recently within the Australian context.

The consultative process of the framework development began throughout both *Stage Three* and *Stage Four* (see **Figure 1**) over a nine-month period. These final stages encompassed tenders in August of 2008, and consultations which spanned October 2008 to April 2009. This process involved:

...focus group discussions in most states and territories, a national symposium for invited key stakeholders, capital city consultations supplemented by regional consultations in Victoria, online

submissions, and an online forum established and managed by DEEWR (Sumsion et al., 2009, p. 6).

Thus far, explorations into how the new national framework was developed indicate that early childhood experts, government departments, policymakers and early childhood professionals were involved in the consultative process. However, it is important to investigate to *what level* these ECPs participated in this process, and how they have engaged with subsequent changes to theoretical and pedagogical discourses.

It was anticipated that the preliminary six-week trial of the framework, conducted in 28 early childhood settings throughout Australia from February to April of 2009, would assist in measuring the effectiveness of the document and how it was received by early childhood professionals, services and families. By July of 2009, the final edition of the EYLF was approved by COAG (Council of Australian Governments) and instigated on a national scale which “sought to improve access to early childhood education and care, especially to pre-school in the year prior to school” (Press & Wong, 2013, p. 88). Discussions occurred at a range of levels between the early childhood sector and policymakers. The Australian Government Department of Education and Training (formerly DEEWR) has provided the following statement in regards to the consultative process of the EYLF:

The Early Years Learning Framework was developed by the Australian and state and territory governments with input from the early childhood sector and early childhood academics. The Framework has incorporated feedback from a consultation process, including two national symposiums, national public consultation forums, focus groups, an online forum and case-study trials (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2013, para. 10, emphasis added).

However, the development of this framework occurred over “an extremely ambitious timeline” (Sumsion et al., 2009, p. 5). This may have resulted in added complexity in the ways in which early childhood professionals translated changes in theory to practice.

Following the establishment of the EYLF in Australia, a study was conducted “to appraise the approach, content and practice of early childhood teaching and learning in relation to quality as defined in the EYLF at each selected site” (DEEWR, 2011a, p. 11). These sites included long day care, preschool, and integrated and family day care services across all or most Australian states and territories. Data was collected through the use of a qualitative evaluation method, C-BAM questionnaire, and visitations and interviews with staff. The findings from this study were then summarised in the *Baseline Evaluation of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Final Report* (DEEWR, 2011a). According to this report, early childhood professionals across Australia were struggling with their understanding of the EYLF and

its translation to practice. In relation to the understandings and implications of theoretical knowledge, a number of significant findings were revealed:

Overall, it was found that the staff in the sample predominantly drew upon maturational theories of child development to guide their practice. The concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) dominated educator beliefs, and in a minority of cases, no theory of child development was able to be articulated (DEEWR, 2011a, p. 24).

Overall, this research discovered “consistent evidence that DAP continues to provide the theoretical basis for most of the professional practice in the early childhood sector in Australia” (DEEWR, 2011a, p. 24). Furthermore, “staff expectations of children tended to ‘match expected milestones’ and did not generally go beyond these” (DEEWR, 2011a, original emphasis, p. 24). Again, this acknowledges the historical influence of developmentalism in Australia, and the challenges faced by early childhood professionals as they attempt to engage with reforms that encompass other theoretical knowledge and perspectives.

In the state of Victoria, an elevated level of confidence and professional awareness was found regarding staff understandings of the EYLF. However, there was a consistent link between this level of understanding and formal qualification levels. As a result, the existence of a hierarchy was detected which involved a divide between staff with either higher or lower qualifications and experience, ultimately correlating with their levels of understanding regarding the EYLF (DEEWR, 2011a). This reinforces the need to examine how qualification levels obtained at certain times can affect understandings and engagement with reform. For Victoria, early childhood professionals were dealing with another curriculum reform – simultaneous to the EYLF.

The VEYLDF

The Victorian early childhood context was unique in regards to curriculum reform. As illustrated earlier in **Table 8**, Victoria had previously attempted to introduce the *Curriculum Guidelines* framework in 1991. However, as there was no opportunity for consultation or contribution with early childhood professionals, it was suggested that this document lacked detail and usefulness, and was thereby not adopted by early childhood professionals and services (Wilks et al., 2008). It was only in 2009 that Victoria introduced its own state early childhood curriculum framework titled the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* [VEYLDF] (DEECD & VCAA, 2009). This framework was based on the EYLF, and therefore had very similar content. Remarkably, the Victorian framework (the VEYLDF) was released simultaneously with its national counterpart (the EYLF). As such, Victorian early childhood

professionals had no prior experience of understanding and implementing a curriculum framework to their practice.

In August and September 2015, consultations were conducted in the state of Victoria regarding a review and potential updates into the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* [VEYLDF] (DEECD & VCAA, 2009). These consultations were initiated by Carmel Phillips (Manager of the VCAA Early Years Unit) and key professionals from the *Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority* (VCAA) and the *Department of Education and Training* (DET). Consultations (75-minute, face-to-face and video-conferenced consultations) were held at 10 venues across Victoria. Approximately 15 early childhood professionals and key stakeholders attended each of these consultations. In addition, there were working groups of between five to 40 participants (VCAA, 2015).

A survey was also conducted which attracted 535 respondents. Of these respondents, 444 were early childhood professionals, the largest proportion being from the kindergarten sector (35 per cent) from the south-east region of Victoria (over 30 per cent). Notably, 51.8 per cent of these respondents held over 15 years of experience in the early childhood field, with 61.3 per cent claiming to be situated within the Consolidation Phase of the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; VCAA, 2015). The findings from the consultations and survey revealed that changes were needed regarding the simplification of terminology; addition of information regarding cultural competence, children with additional needs, and vulnerable and disadvantaged children; clearer links to school contexts and developmental domains; structural changes to foster clarity; and access to external resources to support the VEYLDF (VCAA, 2015). As a result, the updated VEYLDF was released in 2016 (DET, 2016). Although this warrants questions regarding how early childhood professionals are now situated in their understanding of this new document.

The information provided above details a complex picture of early childhood education across Australia through the introduction of early childhood curriculum frameworks over the past years. Of note is the fact that none of these frameworks were considered to be mandatory until the introduction of the National EYLF document in 2009. Instead, early childhood services were required to follow the childcare acts and licensing standards within each state or territory. In 2009, many states replaced their own state frameworks with the new mandatory national framework. It is important to note that Victoria was the final state of Australia to introduce a curriculum framework, which coincided with the implementation of the national curriculum framework, and are both being utilised in many Victorian services. The simultaneous introduction of these documents exemplifies additional challenges for the Victorian early

childhood context. As such, further investigation is required to determine the situation of early childhood services (particularly within the Victorian context), and how early childhood professionals are being supported to cope with reform engagement.

The National Quality Framework

Quality reform was another initiative in the national early childhood context in Australia, although the concept of quality was not new. As discussed previously, Australia had already adapted a *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System* from 2003 to 2011 (NCAC, 2011). However, this system did not apply to the kindergarten and preschool sectors. The need for change in this area was strengthening, particularly through the COAG's 2008 Discussion Paper: *A national quality framework for early childhood education and care*. This paper emphasised that change was needed to enhance quality across the entire early childhood field, and highlighted the necessity of addressing changing community needs, and the fragmentation of regulatory measures (COAG, 2008). The *National Quality Framework* (NQF) and *National Quality Standards* (NQS) were introduced in 2012 by the *Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority* (ACECQA) (formerly NCAC) as an expression and policy driver of the *Council of Australian Governments* (COAG). The development of the NQF and NQS occurred through the establishment of a national agreement between state governments to ensure quality, improvement and consistency within long day care (New South Wales Department of Community Services & Office of Childcare), kindergarten settings, family day care (FDC), and out of school hours care (OSHC). In addition, a new national framework for the OSHC sector was introduced titled *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* (DEEWR, 2011b).

Based on these reforms, early childhood services are now assessed and rated against *Seven Quality Areas* which are defined as: 1) Educational program and practice, 2) Children's health and safety, 3) Physical environment, 4) Staffing arrangements, 5) Relationships with children, 6) Collaborative partnerships with families and communities, and 7) Leadership and service management (ACECQA, 2013a). This set of standards reflects the holistic approach promoted within the curriculum documents (DEECD & VCAA, 2009; DEEWR, 2009; DET, 2016). A clear relationship is visible through the NQF's ability to oversee the practices of early childhood professionals to ensure their alignment with the curriculum frameworks. Moreover, an assessment and ratings system was established to measure the quality of services based on the seven quality areas and overall rating of each service based on five rating levels, namely: 'excellent rating', 'exceeding NQS', 'meeting NQS', 'working towards NQS', and 'significant improvement required' (ACECQA, 2012).

At the beginning of this research study, ACECQA had just released its fifth nationwide report on the progress of the NQF, titled the *NQF Snapshot Q1 2014* (ACECQA, 2014a). The Snapshot conveyed that 5,085 (35 per cent) of Australia's 14,358 early childhood services had received a quality rating. Of all of these services, it was found that 61 per cent had been rated as either 'exceeding' or 'meeting' the NQS. This implies that the assessment process involved in these quality reforms has been a slow and arduous task for the Australian early childhood sector, possibly reflecting the limited resources of ACECQA, and state and territory regulatory bodies.

The development of this system has been largely influenced by changing political, societal and economic factors which specifically relate to the increasing accountability of early childhood professionals, the expansion of services across the country, the importance of quality, and the growing professionalisation of the field. Though, the *Report on the National Quality Framework and Regulatory Burden* (ACECQA, 2013b) indicates that the assessment process involved in this system has required substantial time, resources, diligence, and has ultimately resulted in additional pressure for assessors, early childhood professionals and services (ACECQA, 2013b).

According to the *NQF Snapshot Q3 2018*, there are 15,787 early childhood services approved to operate across Australia. These services include long day care (LDC), preschools and kindergartens, family day care (FDC), and outside of school hours care (OSHC). At the time of this report, 14,880 (94 per cent) of these services have received a rating through the *Assessment and Rating* process at least once (ACECQA, 2018). This indicates that 6 per cent (907) of early childhood settings are yet to be visited for accreditation purposes. The table below provides a comparison between the *NQF Snapshot Q1 2014* and *NQF Snapshot Q3 2018* (see **Table 9**).

Table 9: The proportion of approved services with a finalised quality assessment and rating as of June 2014, from the *NQF Snapshot Q2 2014* (ACECQA, 2014b, p. 7) in comparison with the *NQF Snapshot Q3 2018* (ACECQA, 2018b, p. 9)

Proportion of approved ECE services assessed and rated by June 2014		Proportion of approved ECE services assessed and rated by November 2018	
Australian Capital Territory	47%	Australian Capital Territory	89%
New South Wales	48%	New South Wales	91%
Northern Territory	55%	Northern Territory	94%
Queensland	37%	Queensland	95%
South Australia	21%	South Australia	93%
Tasmania	39%	Tasmania	94%
Victoria	43%	Victoria	93%
Western Australia	18%	Western Australia	91%
Overall national total	40%	Overall national total	94%

In June 2014, there were 7,327 approved services operating under the NQF throughout Australia, and 40% of this figure had been assessed (ACECQA, 2014b). By November 2018, there were 15,787 approved services, with 94% assessed (ACECQA, 2018b). This reveals the time taken for the NQF's implementation around the country, and that its systemic processes have taken approximately four years from its initial implementation. Although, it is important to consider that many new services are also being established on a regular basis, as illustrated by the increased number of services in operation.

The NQF assesses services against a set of key criteria. The latest figures from the *NQF Snapshot Q3 2018* illustrate how services are faring with this process. The table below illustrates the ratings for both the Victorian and broader national services against these criteria (see **Table 10**).

Table 10: A comparison between the achieved quality ratings of approved Victorian and Australia-wide early childhood services as of August, 2018, as depicted in the latest *NQF Snapshot Q3 2018* (ACECQA, 2018b, p. 11)

NQS Rating	State of Victoria	Australia-wide
Significant improvement required	1	20
Working towards NQS	615 (16%)	3,192 (21%)
Meeting NQS	1,975 (50%)	6,840 (46%)
Exceeding NQS	1,324 (34%)	4,779 (32%)
Excellent rating	9	49
Total number of EC services	3,924	14,880

The initial establishment of these new policies and frameworks created a sense of flux throughout the early childhood sector. For example, according to the *Report on the National Quality Framework and Regulatory Burden* (ACECQA, 2013b); the NQF has required early childhood services to implement a number of changes which have resulted in issues associated with its initial introduction and transition period, increased administrative requirements, time constraints and limited guidance (ACECQA, 2013b). A number of critiques have been presented regarding the NQF since its introduction. For instance, Fenech, Giugni and Bown (2012) have asserted that despite the ‘truth claims’ made by the NQF developers, this document provides “a system where minimum regulatory standards are deemed to be good enough for children” (p. 7). According to Logan, Press and Sumsion (2012) “quality in ECEC is multi-dimensional and an integral concept for ECEC policy, child care, and broader social, economic and political issues” (p. 10). However, early childhood professionals need to understand the purposes and practices of specific reforms (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009).

In regards to the NQF, it has been acknowledged that “it is vital to reflect on how and why quality ECEC has been constructed by dominant discourses and influenced by multiple streams of research” (Logan, Press & Sumsion, 2012, p. 10). Issues have also been raised in regards to the reliability and validity of the NQF assessment process, as the measurement of quality may depend upon the subjective interpretations of assessors (Jackson, 2015). This correlates with the notion that “the NQF rhetoric asserts there is no one right way to meet the agreed NQS, with service providers, educators and community participants having discretion in how they demonstrate meeting the standard” (Tayler, 2016, p. 30). This has also been iterated in the seminal works of Ball (2006) who explained that although policymakers often attempt to “achieve the *correct* reading” of a policy document, this is not possible, as “...authors cannot control the

meanings of their texts” (p. 44, original emphasis). As a result of these tensions between consistency and flexibility, further research is needed to understand how early childhood professionals are conceptualising and implementing these changes in relation to their pedagogical practices and how these factors may contribute to the accreditation levels of early childhood settings.

In January of 2017, the *Decision Regulation Impact Statement for Changes to the National Quality Framework* (Education Council, 2016) was released to address concerns raised in the NQF review (ACECQA, 2013b). According to this impact statement, 1,783 individuals registered to attend physical consultations across all states and territories within Australia. Furthermore, 113 written submissions, 670 surveys and online comments were also put forward. The majority of these online comments were completed by early childhood professionals, Nominated Supervisors (NS) and service providers. Notably, long day care (LDC) services represented 42 per cent (the highest of these responses), while only two responses were provided by key organisations (Education Council, 2016).

The changes recommended within the impact statement included: a refinement of the National Quality Standards (NQS) and Assessment and Rating (A & R) process; the removal of Supervisor Certificate requirements; an expansion of the NQF scope; alterations to the stipulation of fees; the construction of national educator-to-child ratios for Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) services; enhanced support and supervision for Family Day Care (FDC) services; and other administrative-type changes (Education Council, 2016). Due to the changes outlined in this review, further amendments have been made to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (MCEECDYA, 2011) including changes to the qualification requirements of early childhood professionals. These changes have been specified in the *Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2017 under the Education and Care Services National Law* (Education Council, 2017). As a result of the review and subsequent changes, a revised edition of the National Quality Standards was released on February 1, 2018 (ACECQA, 2018a). This edition encompasses a reduction in the number of quality standards (from 18 to 15), and the number of quality elements (from 58 to 40) (ACECQA, 2018a).

This section has provided an overview of the development and introduction of key reforms in both the Australian and Victorian contexts. The discussion of these reforms illustrates the political discourses involved in their construction, and how their establishment is shaping the Australian early childhood field. The following section explores the underpinning theoretical knowledge of these frameworks, and how the dominance of certain perspectives has shifted over time.

Contemporary influences of knowledge on Australian early childhood education

From its philanthropic beginnings to more contemporary times, many diverse perspectives have influenced the Australian early childhood field. These have included changing perspectives regarding: the image of the child (Rose, 1999); the integration of education and care (Cesarone, 2007); the provision of quality (Dahlberg, 2007); approaches to teaching and learning (Georgeson & Payler, 2013); accessibility (Walker, 2014); and the continuity of early childhood programs (Cooper & Sixsmith, 2003). According to McArdle (2007), the general focus for Australian early years pedagogy prior to the national curriculum was related to “identifying and building on children’s interests and maintaining informal approaches” through various models for states and territory curricula which emphasised “child-centered, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), antibias, emergent, and inquiry-based learning” (p. 909).

The Australian early childhood context now encompasses a diverse range of theories, including developmental, behaviourist, sociocultural, critical and post-structuralist perspectives towards teaching, learning and child development (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2018). These theories are embedded to varying degrees within both the national and Victorian curriculum frameworks (DEEWR, 2009; DET, 2016). It has been highlighted that the contemporary theories underpinning these documents have been introduced to early childhood professionals as “ways of knowing” which guide their thought processes and pedagogical practices (Nolan & Raban, 2016, p. 246). As a result of the change in theoretical discourses, there has been “a shift from adult objectivity in observations guided by child development theories, to more sociocultural-inspired observation and documentation practices...along with critical pedagogies where educators are to constantly challenge assumptions about curriculum” (Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017, 342). The addition of these more contemporary theories guides pedagogical practices that contrast significantly from those of traditional child development theories (Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017; Nolan & Kilderry, 2010). According to Nolan and Raban (2016), early childhood professionals “grapple with making connections and understanding the significance of theory to their work”, ultimately leading to engagement in practices which are “devoid of thinking with respect to theory and the theoretical perspectives” (p. 247). However, “not understanding the importance of theoretical underpinnings can result in practice being unchallenged and unchanged” (Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017, p. 343). The shift in theoretical discourse and its intensification in the field emphasise a significant challenge for early childhood professionals. Although theory has foregrounded the evolution of early childhood education in Australia, the significance of research has also increasingly influenced the field.

The growing status of the field has been influenced by neuro-scientific research which has recognised the significance of *early brain development* within the first seven years of life, particularly from birth to three years of age (Shonkoff, 2003, 2010; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), and later research into its relationship with early childhood learning and development (Diamond & Whittington, 2015; Lally & Mangione, 2017; Nagel, 2012; Westell, 2016). The importance of this relationship has been explained by Shonkoff (2010):

The foundational importance of the early years is increasingly appreciated across the political spectrum, and there is growing recognition that families, communities, the workplace, and the government each has a shared interest and distinctive, noninterchangeable role to play in assuring the healthy development of all young children (p. 365).

Neuro-scientific research foregrounds the benefits that quality early childhood programs have on the stimulation of early brain development (Diamond & Whittington, 2015; Lally & Mangione, 2017; Nagel, 2012; Westell, 2016). As a result, many governments worldwide are investing in the development of quality early childhood programs, particularly for children aged between birth and five years (OECD, 1998; OECD, 2017a; Wilks et al., 2008). Simultaneously, there has also been a foregrounding of early childhood education as a means to enhance *human capital* with the view that investment in the sector would increase economic productivity throughout a nation (OECD, 1998).

This constant fluidity of the field, its evolving theoretical and conceptual underpinnings, and their implications for pedagogical practice warrants the need to better understand how early childhood professionals – who are at the forefront of the implementation of these changes – are engaging with the changing knowledge discourses and their translation to new pedagogical practices (Britzman, 2003; Grossman & Williston, 2001). The change literature (discussed in depth throughout Chapter Two) points to the need for further research to investigate how these professionals perceive and understand changes to knowledge discourses. It is thus necessary to explore how these changes have influenced the direction of the early childhood field over time.

Vocational training, tertiary education and changing qualifications

The Australian early childhood field has been privy to increasing professionalisation throughout the years, particularly in light of qualification requirements, teacher education and educator training. For the purpose of the present study, the term *teacher education discourse* encompasses pre-service early childhood teacher education and educator training (see **Table 11**). The terms depicted in the table below are used throughout the thesis.

Table 11: Terms, positions and definitions relating to early childhood teacher education discourses

Terms/Positions	Definitions
Educator training	Pre-service training (including Certificate III and Diploma qualifications) obtained by early childhood educators through vocational institutions (i.e. TAFE and RTOs).
Educator trainer	A person employed by a vocational institution (TAFE or RTO) to train early childhood educators in their Certificate III or Diploma qualifications
Teacher education	Pre-service education (including Bachelor and Masters qualifications) obtained by early childhood teachers through tertiary institutions (i.e. universities)
Teacher-educator	A person employed by a tertiary institution (university) to educate early childhood teachers in their Bachelor Degree or Masters Degree qualifications

Early childhood qualifications in Australia have evolved into a three-tiered system, which incorporate the Certificate III and Diploma courses (offered at vocational institutions) and the Bachelor Degree (offered at tertiary institutions) (AQF, 2013). These qualifications are provided through the *Vocational Education and Training* (VET) and *Higher Education* (HE) tertiary sectors (Dyson, 2005). *Registered Training Organisations* (RTOs) also offer their own versions of these programs (ASQA, 2015). According to McArdle (2007), “all early childhood workers who are involved in the planning of young children’s programs are professionally qualified with at least two years of [vocational] training, and preschool and early primary teachers hold university degrees” (p. 909). As stated in the Introduction to this chapter, specific teacher education methods equate to distinctive position titles – framing the subject positions of early childhood professionals within the field and within the education and care institutions in which they worked. For example, vocational education provides an ‘educator’ title, while tertiary education provides a ‘teacher’ title (see **Table 1**). Changes to qualification requirements in the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* have meant that all professionals in the Australian early childhood field must be working towards obtaining a higher qualification (MCEECDYA, 2011). This has been a significant change for professionals working in the Victorian long day care sector.

In relation to teacher education more broadly, Victoria has the second largest accessibility to metro, rural and online teacher education programs – second only to New South Wales (AITSL, 2017). Student commencement in teacher education programs has significantly increased in the state of Victoria over the past 10 years; and the 2014–2015 periods saw the largest increase in teacher education commencement

out of all states and territories (AITSL, 2017). This data is reflective of the higher qualification requirements across the teaching profession. Teacher education rates have also been impacted more generally across Australia. In 2015, 2,509 students (14 per cent) across Australia completed their initial teacher education (ITE) in early childhood (AITSL, 2017). This illustrates that to some degree, early childhood professionals are accepting and complying with the higher qualification requirements within the field.

The up-skilling of the early childhood workforce has slowly progressed throughout Australia, with the percentage of unqualified staff in the field at 14.8 per cent in 2016 (Social Research Centre, 2017). These changes have had a significant impact on the Victorian early childhood context, as prior to this reform, Victorian long day care (LDC) educators were not required to undertake tertiary teacher qualifications. It is important to note that this was already a requirement in the state of New South Wales. This requirement emphasises the important consideration of context when looking at how these changes may have impacted early childhood professionals in the state of Victoria.

According to the 2017 Starting Strong report, “the duration of teacher training for pre-primary education varies more than for any other level of education” (OECD, 2017a, p. 103). Although this may largely refer to tertiary teacher education, it may also be similar for educator training courses. For example, following the increased demands for qualified early childhood professionals, qualification amendments to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (MCEECDYA, 2011) were implemented which meant that many early childhood professionals needed to up-skill. As a result of government subsidies, *Registered Training Organisations* (RTOs) increased the number of their own early childhood courses. These inconsistencies ultimately led to a review conducted by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) into EC courses run by RTOs. The review found that many RTOs were not complying with assessment requirements, providing vocational courses that were far too short, with inadequate workplace assessment opportunities (ASQA, 2015). As such, recommendations were made to improve these issues. However, according to a later report by ASQA, it was found that among all RTOs (not just for the EC sector) “more than a quarter of the 11,677 advertisements reviewed on ASQA-regulated RTOs’ websites that advertised duration for training package qualifications have a course duration below the minimum of the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) volume of learning range” (ASQA, 2017, p. 4). Hence, many early childhood professionals have entered the early childhood field with these qualifications. Thus, there is a strong need to investigate what discourses are available to these educators, and how the privilege and power associated with certain qualifications affects the perceptions and subject positions of early childhood professionals in the field.

It has been proposed that “early childhood education is a dynamic field characterised by innovation and change” (Watson & Axford, 2008, p. 49). This is particularly evident when looking at the changing landscape of Australian early childhood teacher education. In a report titled *Characteristics and Delivery of Early Childhood Education Degrees in Australia*, Watson and Axford (2008) explored the delivery of these programs in the tertiary system. The findings from this research indicated that many of these programs accommodated for teaching children between birth and eight years, although some institutions offered courses which combined early childhood education and primary education; however, some of these courses lacked accreditation through the state teacher education and registration authorities. According to this report, “there are three major influences on the work of Early Childhood teachers in Australia: Early Childhood Teacher Preparation courses; the development of professional standards; and the role of Registration and Accreditation Authorities at the State and Territory level” (Watson & Axford, 2008, p. 24). For Australia, this means that early childhood teachers need to be meeting the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), and also obtain teacher registration from their state or territory organisation, for example, the *Victorian Institute of Teaching* (VIT) in Victoria (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2015). Early childhood teacher registration and accreditation was established in September 2015 for early childhood professionals in Australia. In the state of Victoria, all early childhood professionals must now be registered through the *Victorian Institute of Teaching* (VIT, 2015).

All of these changes warrant investigation into how these new requirements position early childhood professionals in the field, and how effectively they perceive their pre-service education has been in preparing them to engage in such changes. The following section draws together some important considerations regarding the impact all of the reforms discussed throughout this section (*times of great reform*) have had on the Victorian early childhood context.

The impact of national and state reforms on the Victorian early childhood context

The early childhood field has been largely motivated by changing political, economic and societal contexts over time. According to Dever and Falconer (2008), the environmental influences of these factors “have shaped images of children in the past” (p. 17, sic). This has been particularly evident in regards to the low socio-economic status of families, changing family structures, shifting religious perceptions, as well as the impact of colonisation, war and industrial revolution (Prochner, 2009). These changing factors influence how specific discourses are shaped and reshaped over time.

More broadly, political, economic and societal contexts are some of the main factors underpinning policy and educational change discourses within early childhood education (OECD, 1998; OECD, 2017a; Wilks et al., 2008; Woodhead, 2006). The influence of these discourses highlights specific power structures within the early childhood context, and illustrates positions of privilege in policy reform initiatives. Looking at the historical development of early childhood education internationally, a parallel can be drawn between new discourses in early childhood theories and policy development, and the aforementioned historical, social, political and economic factors of specific points in time (OECD, 1998; OECD, 2017a; Wilks et al., 2008; Woodhead, 2006). According to Grieshaber (2017), “changes in society and education generally in the past few decades have impacted early childhood education policies, theories, philosophies, professionals, provision for education and significantly, families” (p. 2). Hence, the interrelationship between these factors and needs of a nation at any given point in time considerably influences the perceived aim of education leading to changing theoretical and philosophical directions with a direct impact on early childhood professionals, children and the wider field of early childhood education. This has been visible in the field of early childhood education, as global discourses of children’s learning and development have evolved.

The societal, economic and political contexts influencing the Australian early childhood field have shaped what is privileged within its policy initiatives – such as the focus on *human capital*. Although, this focus has led researchers to request a more balanced approach to the present needs of children, the future needs of the nation and its corresponding need for human capital. For example, it is clear that an increasingly dominant discourse of early childhood education is a precursor for future health and human capital (DEEWR, 2013). However, Arthur et al. (2012) argue that “one of the challenges facing such commitments is the balance between a focus on investment in early childhood as a means of securing the future, and a focus on improving the present” (p. 2). That is, the present lives and experiences of children are just as important as their future outcomes. As such, when developing new early childhood policies and frameworks, the privilege attached to specific discourses needs to be applied using a more measured approach, enabling support to be provided for the present needs of children and their families, rather than the emphasis being put only on the future societal contributions of children (Arthur et al., 2015).

The political influences of privileged discourses in the Australian early childhood field seem to have shifted since the return of the reinstatement of the the conservative Liberal-National coalition government in 2013, and its consecutive Prime Ministers: Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison (MoAD, n.d.). This led to some of the Labor Party’s previous educational reforms being reviewed and/or repealed. One of these reviews was the *Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and Early*

Learning (2013; 2014a; 2014b) which focused on “a mix of both economic and social goals” with an emphasis on increasing workforce participation through enhancing the accessibility, affordability and flexibility of early childhood programs (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014a, p. 11). The Australian Government Productivity Commission’s final report was released in 2015, and acknowledged that although “there is a lot that is good about Australia’s current ECEC system”, changes to the funding system were needed, as it “was largely designed to meet the needs of a different era” (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2014b, p. 6). The responsibilities and privilege attributed to certain initiatives seem to change over time; possibly influenced by economic and social factors, and the values and agendas of governments in power. However, “changes in government have initiated reviews that are pointing to further reforms that are regarded as being retrograde steps” (Sims, Mulhearn, Grieshaber & Sumsion, 2015, p. 91). This emphasises the impact of political, economic and societal influences in the shaping and reshaping of specific discourses, and how certain discourses are privileged by those in positions of power in the development of policy reforms.

Policy reforms encompass a range of issues for those whose job it is to interpret and translate them. According to Ball (2006), a seminal writer in the area, educational policies can be perceived “as representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actor’s interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context)” (p. 44). This emphasises that policy reforms are exceptionally complex – due to the intricacies of their development, privileged knowledge discourses within, and also the convolution of their interpretations.

When addressing policy reforms in early childhood education, it is important to examine how people are being supported (or not) in their interpretations of new discourses in changing times. These issues have been acknowledged through the substantial work of Darling-Hammond (2000), as she proposed that the consideration of the dispositions, knowledge and skills of professionals, as well as adequate preparation and pre-service and in-service teacher education and educator training are key factors in the successful implementation of educational reforms. These strong links between educational reforms and teacher education discourses are explored in greater depth in Chapter Two.

In conjunction with the national and international influences discussed throughout this section, it is clear that the Australian early childhood context has experienced significant change. The reviews and reforms have added to the fluidity and uncertainty within the field of early childhood education. As such, it is

imperative to investigate just how early childhood professionals are coping with all of these changes, and how they are engaging with early childhood reform.

Personal motivation

My personal motives and professional background hold a strong connection to my topic of research, particularly in relation to how I have come to understand the significance of change within the Victorian early childhood sector. Many of these changes occurred during my formal studies (as illustrated in **Figure 2**). It led me to experience a real sense of wonderment regarding how these changes were impacting other early childhood professionals in the field.

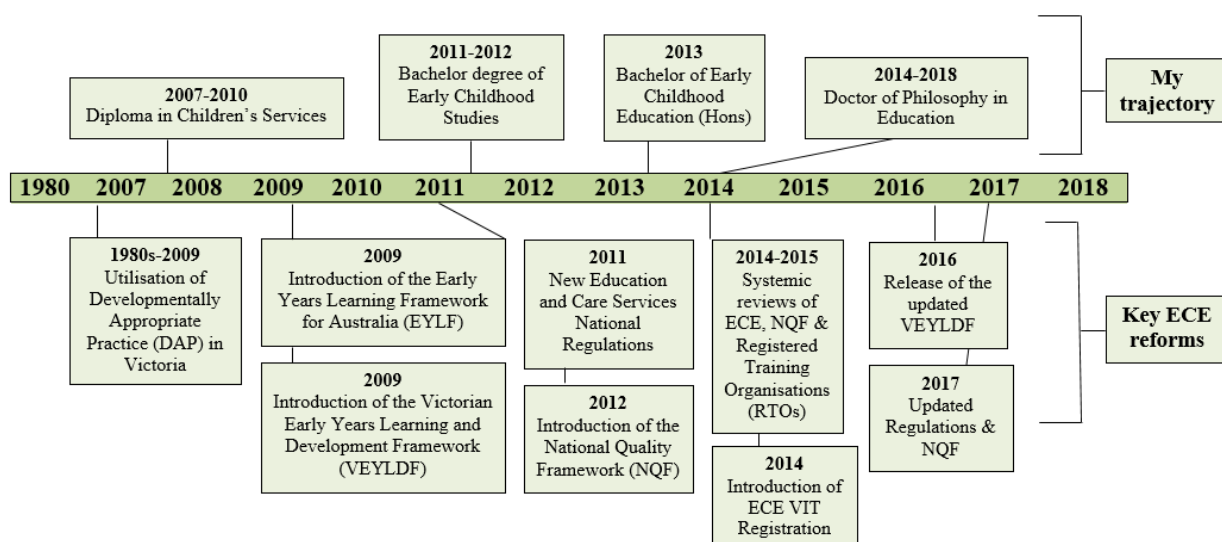


Figure 2: Timeline of personal trajectory in Victorian early childhood education in comparison with relevant early childhood reforms

My experience in the early childhood field began through the completion of my Diploma in Children's Services at a *Technical and Further Education* (TAFE) institution in the southeast region of Victoria between 2007 and 2010. During the time of my study, the theoretical discourses of early childhood education were significantly entrenched with Piaget's developmental psychology and the NAEYC's *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Following my final field placement for the Diploma course, the newly developed VEYLDF and EYLF were simultaneously introduced. However as pre-graduates, we received minimal information regarding the implementation of these documents and were told "we do it like this now". As a result, my fellow-students and I experienced a deep sense of confusion regarding how to effectively translate these new

frameworks to our practice. To my astonishment and dismay, as I entered the long day care field, I discovered that many early childhood professionals (both new and experienced) appeared to be grappling with their interpretations of these documents. The introduction of the VEYLDF, the EYLF, and finally the NQF encompassed many new concepts and pedagogical approaches. It was not until I began my *Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies* at a tertiary institution that the VEYLDF, the EYLF, and the NQF were more thoroughly examined and unpacked. Through the support and guidance offered at this tertiary level, I was able to understand, interpret and implement these new frameworks more effectively. However, I was pondering how other early childhood professionals in the field were coping with these changes, particularly those who completed their pre-service teacher education and educator training prior to 2009.

Following the completion of my Bachelor Degree, I entered into an *Honours Degree in Education* so that I could explore these issues further. I began to question the way that the curriculum and quality frameworks were introduced, and lack of preparation and support I experienced during my own vocational training. Had other new early childhood professionals been left feeling unprepared from their pre-service education? And, were experienced early childhood professionals in the field feeling such confusion from these changes? According to the literature (detailed in Chapter Two), specific skills such as critical thinking and reflective practice are required for effectively engaging in change (Brown & Inglis, 2013; Robertson, 2005). Yet, to my surprise, many of these skills were primarily being taught at a tertiary level (Watson, 2008; Watson & Axford, 2008).

I utilised my Honours year to conduct an initial pilot study to determine how kindergarten teachers in the state of Victoria interpret and translate the underpinning theories of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and apply them to their practice. According to the participants involved in this small research study, early childhood professionals in the field were indeed experiencing a sense of confusion and issues of resistance regarding this new framework and its implementation (Armstrong, 2013). In particular, it was discovered that there were major disparities regarding the perceptions of participants towards their pre-service teacher education and professional development opportunities which seemed to influence their ability to acquire an integrated understanding of these documents. Subsequently, the findings of this study have resulted in more questions than answers.

As a result of this small-scale study, I engaged in an in-depth review of state, national and international literature examining change in early childhood education (ECE) and how early childhood professionals grapple with change and educational reform. Although not always transferable, a review of the literature

indicates that early childhood professionals have been engaging with change in different ways that encompass a sense of resistance (Arthur et al., 2015; Block, 2000; Fenech, Sumsion, & Shepherd, 2010; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Gomez, 2012; Pendergast et al., 2005). It has been recognised that some early childhood professionals struggle with understanding the *how* and *why* of change involved in educational reform (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009), particularly when it appears that top-down approaches have been utilised (Moore & Fink, 2003; Wedell, 2009; Whittington, Thompson & Shore, 2014). It is important to acknowledge that to some extent, all government policies are top-down. However, there are often also calls for change from the ground-up. Many early childhood reforms were initiated by early childhood professionals and representative organisations that sought better outcomes for children. As advocated by Sims (2006), “those of us working in early childhood can choose to position ourselves as drivers of social change” (p. ii). However, I was left questioning the degree to which early childhood professionals were involved in this process.

The literature suggests that change can be a gradual process which develops through specific stages (Fullan, 2000, 2007; Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006; Pendergast et al., 2005). The processes of change have been highlighted across several disciplines such as business (Hiatt, 2006), change management (Hall, 2013; Hall & Hord, 2014) and education (Ball, 1994; Fullan, 2007; Moss, 2014; Wedell, 2009) and have involved the development of specific models of change. A description of these models are provided in Chapter Two and contrasted with changes within the early childhood sector in Victoria.

This section has established how my educator training, teacher education and workforce experiences have shaped my position and perceptions of the Victorian early childhood field. The impact of change in the Victorian early childhood context – and more specifically, the long day care sector – requires far greater attention. It is anticipated that my study can add to understanding the impact of change in early childhood education, and how early childhood professionals are engaging with the changes involved in new reforms such as the VEYLDF, the EYLF and the NQF. It is hoped to determine whether the pre-service teacher education, educator training and professional development opportunities of early childhood professionals are adequately supporting the transition of and engagement with these reforms. In order to do this, it is first necessary to identify and explore the driving forces of change which justify the rationale for this study.

Rationale

Change has played a pivotal role in the historical development and establishment of early childhood education. The influence of change has been fundamentally based on social, political and economic

drivers (Brennan, 1998; Press, 2015; Prochner, 2009). Within Victoria, Australia, this has involved the introduction of curriculum and quality frameworks which have placed accountability on early childhood professionals who are responsible for implementing these documents. However, it can be seen that many are positioned within different career stages (Hargreaves, 2005), as some have been in the field for many years and were originally qualified prior to the national curriculum framework and its broad theoretical approaches (DEEWR, 2009) and may rely heavily upon the effectiveness of in-service professional development opportunities. Meanwhile, some early childhood professionals have been trained following the introduction of 2009 reforms. According to a study conducted by Kilderry, Nolan and Scott (2017), some Victorian early childhood professionals “who gained their qualification before the introduction of the EYLF and NQS were feeling ‘out of the loop’ with regard to contemporary discourse”; while those “who were recently educated and qualified were more familiar with sociocultural, critical and other perspectives and associated concepts introduced in the EYLF and NQS” (p. 350, original emphasis). This is an extremely significant and relevant finding for the purpose of the current study, as it emphasises the importance of including the perceptions of professionals who became qualified at different points in time.

Considering the broad range of perceptions to teaching and learning among early childhood professionals, the diversity of their career stages, teacher education, educator training and experience may hold significance in how they understand and engage in change. Similarly, the way in which reforms are initiated may also influence early childhood professionals’ ability to engage in change. For instance, perhaps it seems that these reforms were *done to them* as imposed change rather than proposed change (Baker & Foote, 2003), with little or no contribution from the early childhood professionals entrusted to implement these reforms effectively. These issues are explored in more depth in Chapter Two and inform the development of the research questions at the heart of the present study.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this research study is to examine how early childhood professionals in Victoria are engaging with educational reforms. Originally, this study intended to encompass data collected from long day care, kindergarten and school-based early learning centres. However, the data collected from participants working across these three sectors is immense. Hence, this dissertation focuses more specifically upon participants from long day care only. Data obtained from the remaining two sectors are being analysed for additional publications. In order to address the objectives of the current research, a post-structural perspective is applied to determine:

How do educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in Victorian long day care settings?

More explicitly:

- *What strategies are utilised by early childhood professionals to understand, cope and engage in educational reform?*
- *How do educational reform discourses position early childhood professionals within the processes of change?*

The above questions form the foundation of this study and exhibit a strong link to the significance of pre-service teacher education, educator training and professional development which is evidenced throughout the literature detailed in Chapter Two. Due to the nature of educational reform and the responsibility for professionals to implement these reforms, these questions need to be investigated further.

Significance/expected outcomes

There is a strong need to understand how early childhood professionals understand and adapt to educational reforms, whether pre-service education and professional development opportunities assist in these processes effectively, and how approaches could be improved in the future. It has been anticipated that this study may benefit many stakeholders and contribute to several key areas in the field of early childhood education, such as early childhood reform and policy development, teacher education, educator training and professional development. Although these areas are expansive, the literature discussed in the following chapter indicates a significant connection between change and the necessary knowledge, skills, time, support and resources required to instigate meaningful and sustained change (Fenech et al., 2010; Gronlund & James, 2008; Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006; Kilgallon, Maloney, & Lock, 2008; VCAA, 2015; Waniganayake et al., 2008).

The importance of this research and its potential impact on a diverse group of stakeholders has been explained by Nuttall and Edwards (2009) who indicated that “practitioners, researchers, and teacher-educators are grappling with, responding to, and, in some cases, resisting conceptual change” (p. 135). This statement is reinforced by the work of Day and Chin-Kin Lee (2011) who suggested that a better understanding is needed regarding the emotions of Australian early childhood professionals when developing and implementing educational reform initiatives (Hargreaves, 2005; Hochschild, 1979). Therefore, further research is required to determine the current situation in the Australian (and more specifically, the Victorian) context of early childhood education, and how early childhood professionals are being prepared for, and engaging with, changes associated with reforms.

Thesis structure

This research study is divided into eight Chapters (see **Table 12**). Chapter One has introduced the topic of inquiry and its significance to the field of early childhood education. Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant literature regarding the processes of change and offers several models of change which can be adopted within the early childhood context. This chapter focuses on research that illustrates a strong connection between engaging in meaningful and sustained change, and pre-service teacher education, educator training and professional development opportunities. Chapter Three details the theoretical position and conceptual framework applied to the data analysis process, and explains how and why these concepts are relevant for the purpose of this study. Chapter Four explains the approaches and methodology of the research design utilised in this study. This chapter also includes the methods involved in participant selection, data collection, as well as ethical considerations, limitations, reliability and validity. Chapter Five provides demographical information and initial perceptions of the participants involved in this study, and some emerging discursive constructions from the data. Chapter Six provides comprehensive data analysis and discussion of the findings relating to the first research sub-question, and the strategies utilised by participants to engage in change. Chapter Seven offers detailed analysis and discussion of the findings relating to the second research sub-question, and the positions of participants within the process of change. Chapter Eight contains a summary of the research findings, contributions to knowledge, recommendations for future policy considerations and research and conclusion.

Table 12: The structural design of the thesis

Thesis structure	
Chapter One	Setting the scene: Introduction to the topic, motivation and significance to the field
Chapter Two	Literature review
Chapter Three	Conceptual framework
Chapter Four	Research design and methodology
Chapter Five	Demographical information of participants and emerging discursive constructions
Chapter Six	Data analyses and discussion: Strategies for change
Chapter Seven	Data analyses and discussion: Positions within the change process
Chapter Eight	Summary of findings, contributions, recommendations and conclusion

Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of the Australian early childhood education, with particular emphasis on the Victorian context. Various political, societal and economic influences have been highlighted within the three key eras identified throughout this chapter. The progression of the field in conjunction with personal motivations and experiences of the researcher have led to the unpacking of specific discourses of theoretical knowledge, teacher education, educator training and workforce. The information provided captures a complex image of the Victorian early childhood context. It sheds light upon significant factors that have contributed to its unique positioning. These factors include the historical dominance of developmentalism, increasing qualification requirements (particularly new to the Victorian long day care sector), and the instrumental role that Victoria played in the development and establishment of the reforms beginning in 2009.

In sum, from all that has been discussed, a research direction has been formed, as this discussion has illuminated the impact on the Victorian context and early childhood professionals' engagement with reform. Hence, the focus of this study centres on reform engagement. Although it is important to explain that the emphasis is not upon the different curriculum and quality frameworks specifically; rather, they are utilised as an example for the purpose of understanding how early childhood professionals engage with the *pace* of reform, as illustrated through the introduction of various documents that have been discussed throughout this chapter. In harmony with Sims, Mulhearn, Grieshaber and Sumsion (2015): "What is certain is that a close eye must be kept on progress and the implications of any new changes must be evaluated and new opportunities for research must be seized" (p. 91).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the literature

As outlined in Chapter One, early childhood education has undergone significant change over time in Victoria and within the broader Australian context. As a result, early childhood professionals have experienced a wide range of reactions and responses (Nuttall & Edwards, 2009). An analysis of relevant literature reveals that in order for early childhood professionals to embrace and apply such significant change to their practice, the many processes of change itself and associated issues must be acknowledged. This chapter explains key concepts for understanding change, and illustrates a clear relationship between the discourses of change, teacher education, educator training and professional development. More specifically, it illustrates the connection between these discourses and the implementation of change. It is important to acknowledge that some literature may not be fully transferable to the Victorian/Australian early childhood context; however, it raises some important points for consideration.

Exploring the discourses of change

There are two key discourses of change particularly relevant to this study – namely, *educational change* and *organisational change*. Educational change discourse is visible through the progressive and systemic restructuring within an educational context often required during educational reform (Fullan, 2007; Moss, 2014; Wedell, 2009). In relation to this, Wedell (2009) has suggested that educational change may involve diverse terminology such as “*innovations, reforms or changes*” which “refer to all alterations or adjustments to the process or content of education, whoever initiates them, and whatever their scale or degree of prior planning” (p. 1, original emphasis). Fullan (2007) explains that defining change in the educational context encompasses immense complexities:

The meaning of change is one of those intriguing concepts that seems like so much common sense, but eludes us when we pursue it on a large scale. The reason that it is so difficult to pin down is that at the end of the day large-scale reform is about *shared* meaning, which means that it involves simultaneously individual and social change (p. 11, original emphasis).

This suggests that both individual and collective understandings are needed to successfully engage in meaningful and effective change. Therefore, the ways in which individuals and groups comprehend change discourses may affect how change is implemented. The second discourse of *organisational change* addresses the dilemma of achieving collective understandings (Hall & Hord, 2011; Hiatt, 2006). Similar to the educational context, organisational change requires change to be understood collectively for

successful implementation to occur. However, it is important to note that “successful change starts and ends at the individual level” (Hall & Hord, 2011, p. 9). Hiatt (2006) supports this argument and advises that for change to be realised, it must first be understood “at an individual level” (p. 1). In other words, for change to be effectively implemented throughout an entire organisation, change must first be supported by all individual participants within the organisation. This may depend upon how these discourses are made available to individuals, who occupy positions of power regarding certain discourses, and whether these discourses are valued among individuals, and the organisation itself. Although individual understanding is vital for change to occur, it is also imperative to have a shared understanding and vision between early childhood professionals and throughout the entire organisation (Brown & Inglis, 2013; Turner & Crawford, 1998). The discourses of educational change and organisational change provide a valuable foundation to the present study and are explored in greater depth throughout this chapter.

Within any context, change agents (or individuals in positions of power) need to acknowledge interrelationships between people, practices, culture, systems and technology, as these can influence people’s receptiveness to change (Rodd, 2015). When investigating change in the early childhood context, it is important to consider what type of change is actually occurring. Further classifications of change have been contributed by Rodd (2006) who proposed six faces of change: incremental change (small, cautiously deliberated, gradually initiated and assessed changes); induced change (predetermined initiatives involving “people, processes, programs, structures and systems”) (p. 185); routine change (modifications based on rectifying daily challenges); crisis change (swift decisions based on circumstances which require urgency); innovative change (imaginative resolution of issues that engages numerous participants); and transformational change (extreme organisational change). These classifications add another element for understanding the discourses of change.

Transformational change has been explored by Moss (2014) who proposed that “the ubiquity of change, even ‘transformative change’, does not mean it has a universally agreed meaning” (p. 7, original emphasis). Although discourse may refer to a collective language used to speak about specific topics (Mac Naughton, 2005), meaning may be dependent upon the availability of certain discourses to individuals, and their interpretations may be based on their subjective positioning. One perspective offered by Moss (2014) explained change as a way of “opening up to a continuous state of movement, not just a short burst of movement whilst traversing from one static position to another” (p. 9). This suggests that transformative change requires an understanding of the need for ongoing change and evolution, as opposed to “anxious, restless change” often involving “incessant reviews, rushed reforms and hurried evaluations” within educational contexts (Moss, 2014, p. 8). It would be ideal to suggest that early

childhood education is currently in the midst of transformational change. For instance, many significant changes were introduced by the National Quality Framework (NQF) (ACECQA, 2012). However, according to Fenech, Giugni and Bown (2012), “the NQF falls well short of ushering in transformative change that will ensure all children in Australia have access to quality ECEC” (p. 12). At the time of its introduction, this framework may perhaps have been more accurately described as a type of *induced change*, as it reflected the immense impact these predetermined policy initiatives had on early childhood professionals, their educational programs, their pedagogical processes, and the accreditation and regulatory structures and systems in place. Although systemic and structural changes have been made to early childhood policy, processes and programs, it is vital to explore how these discourses are currently being understood and managed at ground level by individual early childhood professionals, and whether the extreme organisational change associated with *transformational change* is indeed occurring.

The influences of educational change

There are many influences that effect how educational change is managed. Wedell (2009), in particular, points out those associated with identifying those in positions of power who initiate change, the scale of change and why the change is considered necessary. In relation to these aspects, it has been recognised that change is often instigated by government departments and policymakers at state or national levels. These changes though are often advocated by key early childhood organisations in light of innovative research in the field. Change can also be seen within individual educational settings at a more localised level. However, further research would be useful to understand whether there is a connection or a disjuncture between change at government and local levels.

The rationale behind change can include maintaining and reflecting national and global trends and competitiveness, which are largely related to the economic and technological positioning of specific stakeholders and educational settings (Wedell, 2009). This rationale is consistent with early childhood reforms, which have been largely based on national and international research, economic and societal drivers and the growing status of the field (OECD, 2017a). Another element involved in educational change stems from political and ideological perceptions regarding the significance of accountability, equality, measurement and standardisation of educational content and delivery methods. Again, this can be seen through the growing professionalisation and status of early childhood education in both local and global contexts (ACECQA, 2017c; OECD, 2017a). However, such professionalisation and status can be entwined within the working contexts of early childhood professionals.

For instance, a divide remains between the status of early childhood professionals and their primary school counterparts. In Australia, there is also a division between the status of kindergarten/preschool teachers and long day care (LDC) educators. According to Gibson, Cumming and Zollo (2017), as “powerful social discourses” reflect LDC educators as “babysitters” rather than teachers:

The distinction of teacher/professional from child care worker/babysitter exemplified the regime of truth situating degree-qualified early childhood teachers as professional, and those with other qualifications as not. The degree qualification is assigned power/status, while—on the basis of what “everybody” says—work in child care is seen as a babysitting service (p. 213).

This division is visible throughout the historical constructs of Australian (and Victorian) early childhood education. As previously discussed in Chapter One, a historical division between ‘education’ and ‘care’ was present in these service types, where kindergarten teachers were accountable for the education of young children, while LDC educators were accountable for their welfare (Brennan, 1998; Press, 2015).

Issues of accountability may be cause for concern in early childhood education, as change is often perceived as being initiated from a top-down approach which may ultimately disempower early childhood professionals and their professional identity, status and morale. Though in relation to the concept of identity, Dahlberg (2007) proposes that “identities are constructed and reconstructed within specific contexts – contexts which are always open for change...” (p. 57). This suggests that change is a naturally occurring phenomenon through which identities are transformed. However, the degree of comfort and effort involved may be significantly dependent upon the context and manner in which such change takes place – and how certain discourses available to individuals enable them to occupy certain subject positions and engage in particular discursive practices.

A study of secondary school reform in Ontario, Canada, suggested that professionals “rarely like imposed, top-down change of any kind” and that “imposed and negatively intoned change had emotional effects on teachers’ motivation and morale” (Moore & Fink, 2003, pp. 90-91). The findings of this study suggest that the perceived demeanor, intent, lack of communication, and questionable creditability from government departments negatively influence the change process involved in educational reform (Moore & Fink, 2003). The major concerns identified by the participants in this study were related to time, implementation, professional development, motivation and morale associated with engaging in educational reform discourses. These issues indicate that more care is needed when reforms are initiated, particularly in relation to the often present political agendas of policymakers in positions of power, and how these reform discourses are introduced to early childhood professionals and institutions.

The focus areas of educational change often relate to the acquirement of a specific set of preferred knowledge and approaches to teaching and learning; however, the preference towards certain knowledge, theory and practice may change with time and global, governmental, educational and social perspectives (Wedell, 2009). Within the early childhood context, this has been apparent through changes in the dominant discourses of the field as the privileged knowledge associated with these discourses, as mentioned earlier, has changed over time. However, the way in which educational change is initiated can lead to substantive effects on individuals depending upon their specific contexts. Correspondingly, Wedell (2009) has offered that although “most large-scale change processes remain top-down, their implementation is not a neat, rational and uniform process of simply using the resources that have been made available to apply the change practices identically in every school” (p. 30). Hence, it needs to be contemplated that responses to change may differ significantly, especially when taking into account the diversity of stakeholders within various contexts, such as educational professionals and policymakers, institutional leaders, teacher-educators, educator-trainers, colleagues, families and the broader community, as their uptake of specific subject positions is dependent upon the discourses available to them, and how these discourses are presented and perceived.

Many factors require serious consideration when planning for educational change which specifically relates to the contexts of early childhood professionals. For example, their workload and the scale of change to content and delivery methods; their level of pre-service teacher education and educator training; their current beliefs, dispositions, strengths and weaknesses; their comprehension of and preparedness to change; and their accessibility to adequate professional development, support and resources. All of these factors contribute to the subject positionings of these individuals. This indicates the importance of supplying professionals with sufficient levels of communication, information, support and the establishment of monitorial systems to facilitate their adaptation to new theory and practice and facilitating the possibility of “reculturing” educational contexts (Wedell, 2009, p. 32). This requires government departments and policymakers to demonstrate a sufficient level of understanding of the change process and the subject positionings of those required to implement change, though Wedell (2009) has contended that often this is not the case, which can ultimately result in the failure of change initiatives. Another reason for failed attempts of change relates to its often hierarchical origin which can lead to these change initiatives being implemented on a superficial level or discounted all together. The way that change is developed and introduced by those in positions of power can influence how these changes are received. The issues raised by Wedell (2009) have illuminated the significance of understanding the processes of change and associated diverse impacts on individuals and institutions.

These issues correlate with the early childhood context and more specifically, the extent of changes to the field over the past decade.

In the Australian early childhood context, many changes have been required of early childhood professionals following the introduction of several reforms since 2009. However, according to Rodd (2015), “complex change can only be successful if every member of the early childhood workforce learns to question the status quo, and rise to the challenge of reconceptualizing, approaching and performing professional roles, functions and responsibilities in different ways” (p. 17). A person’s response to change can vary significantly, and can be particularly dependent upon whether change is classified as a proposed or imposed change (Baker & Foote, 2003; Moore & Fink, 2003). The complexities of educational change have been extensively explored by Fullan (2007) who suggested that “educational change is technically simple and socially complex” due to the involvement of so many stakeholders, such as early childhood professionals, key organisations, policymakers and government departments (p. 84). In particular, this may relate to the type of change being implemented, the level of engagement by these stakeholders, and the specific contexts in which change is being applied. Hence, these complexities may cause some confusion during the implementation of change.

A lack of understanding of policy reforms can lead to perceptions of these initiatives being top-down approaches, as they may not adequately take the diversity of individual contexts and their subject positions into consideration. Consequently, Gomez (2012) has suggested that “perhaps a pitfall of developing broad-based systems at the state and national level, which then need to be implemented locally” can result in major challenges, and further “highlight tension between policies mandated and individual practitioner beliefs” (Gomez, 2012, p. 90) due to the influential role that individual contexts and beliefs play in regards to the relevance of theory and practice in early childhood education. In relation to this issue, Gomez (2012) has articulated that it is necessary “to consider the different cultural contexts that shape individuals’ belief systems about institutions, particularly about government, and the requirements created by those institutions” (p. 91). Therefore, if these considerations are not taken into account, professionals may demonstrate a resistance to knowledge, policies and requirements of institutions.

Several embedded assumptions were discovered by Gomez (2012) regarding early childhood policy implementation, specifically related to misinformation, as well as limited information and communication. In particular, a misleading claim was made which suggested that professionals lacked interest regarding policy reform, which ultimately led to “reinforcing unequal power structures” (Gomez,

2012, p. 92). This demonstrates an apparent partisan approach to policy reform in early childhood education and a failure to incorporate professionals in the process of change. Furthermore, the participants in this study exhibited “frustration with assumptions inherent in the ECE system” which “are detrimental to the successful implementation of policy and distribution of resources” (Gomez, 2012, p. 93). These assumptions demonstrate inadequate relationships and lines of communication between policymakers and professionals in the field.

It has been suggested that policymakers may benefit from engaging in reflective practice and cultural repositioning in order to better encompass diverse cultural contexts within the field. By engaging in such practices, policymakers can develop new reforms which better reflect the individual contexts and subject positions of professionals in the field; and ultimately enable them to transition through the change process more swiftly and adapt to the reforms more successfully. Gomez (2012) has recommended several strategies to overcome the hurdles associated with policy reform in early childhood education. Specifically, it has been suggested that providing professionals with knowledge of the system, engaging professionals in dialogue and the processes of policymaking, and encouraging them to share their experiences of translating these policies to practice “may lessen the inequalities that exist in the hierarchy of institutional knowledge” (Gomez, 2012, p. 93) and ease the burden of implementing educational change. Thus, by making known the privileged knowledge discourses associated with specific reform initiatives, professionals can be repositioned in a more equal partnership of power with policymakers. To understand these issues further, different elements and processes of change are explored in the following sections.

Models of change

Several models have been developed which define and illustrate the processes involved in change. For the purpose of this study, the two most relevant models are detailed in this review. The first is the *ADKAR Organisational Change Model* originally developed by Jeffrey Hiatt (2006). This model demonstrates the necessity of several elements within the change process, such as an *awareness* of the need for change; the *desire* to change; accessibility to the *knowledge* required for change; the *ability* to acquire and implement required skills and conduct; and *reinforcement* for sustaining change (see **Figure 3**). The development of this model recognises that many cognitive processes are necessary for meaningful change to occur and although resources, support and training are essential for the process, contextual factors must also be considered. This model provides a useful tool to gauge the engagement and positioning of early childhood professionals within the processes of change in association with the reforms beginning in 2009.

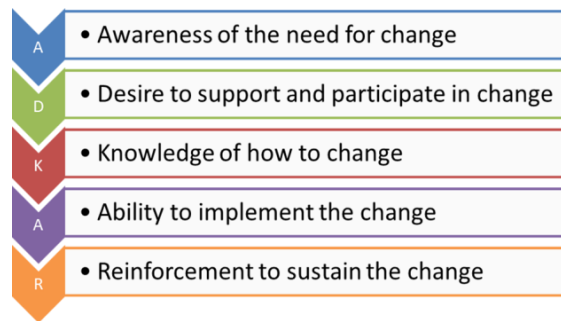


Figure 3: The ADKAR Organisational Change Model (Hiatt, 2006)

Hiatt (2006) has proposed that there are several influential factors pertaining to each element of the ADKAR model. These factors can be explained using the Australian early childhood context as an example. For early childhood professionals to build an *awareness* of the need for change, they must first consider the current situation in the field, and their own individual perceptions of associated complications. In Victoria, this may be translatable to the theoretical shift from the application of developmental psychology and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Edwards, 2007; Scantlebury Brown, 1966) to the multiple theories of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), as revealed in the *Baseline Evaluation of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Final Report* (DEEWR, 2011a). The degree of awareness held by professionals may also be influenced by the credibility of the developers of the proposed change – in this case – the changes associated with the EYLF which may have been perceived as being initiated as a top-down approach from government level, even though this policy was agitated by key early childhood organisations and academic research (Moore, 2008). Furthermore, the possibility of misinformation regarding change is also an influential factor. Some minor evidence of this factor has been found during a small-scale study with six Victorian early childhood professionals, whereby a lack of knowledge and the EYLF’s openness to interpretation has led to a sense of confusion among participants (Armstrong, 2013). Further evidence has been presented by Kilderry, Nolan and Scott (2017), whereby “uncertainty and apprehension with unfamiliar discourse stemming from the EYLF and NQS was a strong theme” among five early childhood professionals in an area near Melbourne, Victoria (p. 350).

Individuals may experience a degree of contestability regarding the rationale of change. Accordingly, it has been discovered that resistance to the changes of the EYLF has been strong among some early childhood professionals in the field since its introduction (Armstrong, 2013; Rodd, 2015; Tayler, 2016). One study has noted potential reasons for this response, as it was “...clear from empirical evidence that an educator’s pedagogy and practices and the educator-child interaction behaviours are not easy to change”

(MGSE, 2016, p. 4). In addition, Kilderry, Nolan and Scott (2017) revealed that “there can be a mismatch of old and new discourse and knowledge, and this can lead to an uncomfortable juxtaposition trying to combine familiar and new ways of practising and new ways of practising along with accounting for practice” (p. 351). Though certain behaviours and practices are indeed difficult to shift, in order to engage in effective change, an initial desire for change is needed.

The second element of the ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006) refers to the *desire* to change. This element also has several influential factors which relate to the nature and impact of change; the personal, institutional and environmental contexts in which the intended change is to occur; and the unique motivators of individuals. This is visible within the early childhood context, as professionals grapple with their motivation for translating the underpinning changes of the EYLF into practice. The ADKAR model’s third element relates to the *knowledge* required to instigate change (Hiatt, 2006). The factors involved include acknowledging the current knowledge base of individuals; their potential of new knowledge acquisition; the availability of education, resources and training; and the existence of and accessibility to the required knowledge. In reference to the EYLF, professionals have recognised issues relating to the accessibility of knowledge, resources, skills and training required to effectively implement the new framework (Garvis et al, 2013; Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017).

The fourth element of Hiatt’s (2006) ADKAR model refers to the *ability* to implement proposed change. There are several factors that influence an individual’s ability to implement change which include psychological barriers; level of intellectual and physical capabilities; and the availability of time, resources and support to develop the necessary skills to implement change. The ADKAR model’s fifth and final element relates to the *reinforcement* of sustaining change (Hiatt, 2006). The influential factors associated with this element include meaningfulness to individuals; an absence of negative outcomes, which can ultimately hinder the change process; an indication of positive results; and accountability measures.

The second model of change relevant to this study is the *Educational Change Model* (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) which identifies three specific phases involved in the process of change (see **Figure 4**). These phases consist of *Initiation*, *Development* and *Consolidation* phases which form an eight to 17-year cycle of change. Correspondingly, the findings of the current research appear to correlate with this cycle (see Chapter Seven: Positioning within the change process). According to the phases of this cycle, professionals may experience feelings of “frustration, despair, and despondency” as they attempt to enhance their “understanding [of] the new reforms and the implications for changes to their thinking,

language and practices” (Garvis et al., 2013, p. 87). This acknowledges that the successful implementation of educational change is dependent upon the level of understanding exhibited by professionals, as “teachers need to understand proposed educational reforms in order to effectively implement change...” (Kilgallon et al., 2008, p. 28). However, in a study regarding curriculum implementation, Burgess, Robertson and Patterson (2010) found that early childhood professionals who chose not to engage with curriculum initiatives during the Initiation phase were unlikely to become engaged throughout the later phases; thus, these choices can ultimately cause either “continued engagement or irrecoverable rejection” (p. 58).

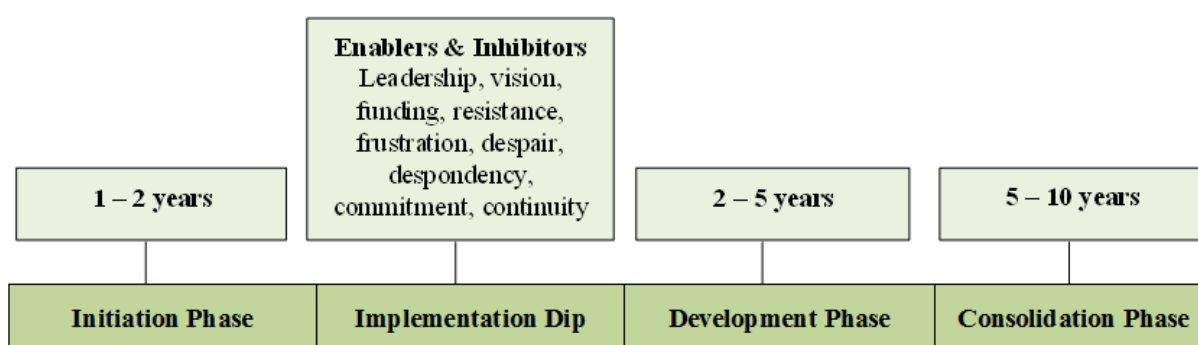


Figure 4: Timeline of educational change – information adapted from Garvis et al. (2013), Pendergast et al. (2005) and Pendergast (2006)

The *Educational Change Model* also recognises that during transition between Initiation and Development phases, professionals often experience what has been defined as an *implementation dip* (Pendergast et al., 2005), which signifies a “drop in confidence and a loss of momentum” (p. 88). For the purpose of the present study, the positioning of early childhood professionals is investigated in light of the phases within this change model.

Based on the timeframe of this model, it can be suggested that early childhood professionals may currently be situated in the *Consolidation phase* in relation to the EYLF. However, in relation to the NQF, professionals may have just experienced an *implementation dip* whilst positioned within the *Development phase* (see **Figure 5**). This overlap of positioning within the field provides reasonable cause for the presence of confusion, resistance and diverse responses to these reforms. Furthermore, the positioning of early childhood professionals may also portray some significance to the accreditation of early childhood services as depicted in the previous chapter (see **Table 9**).

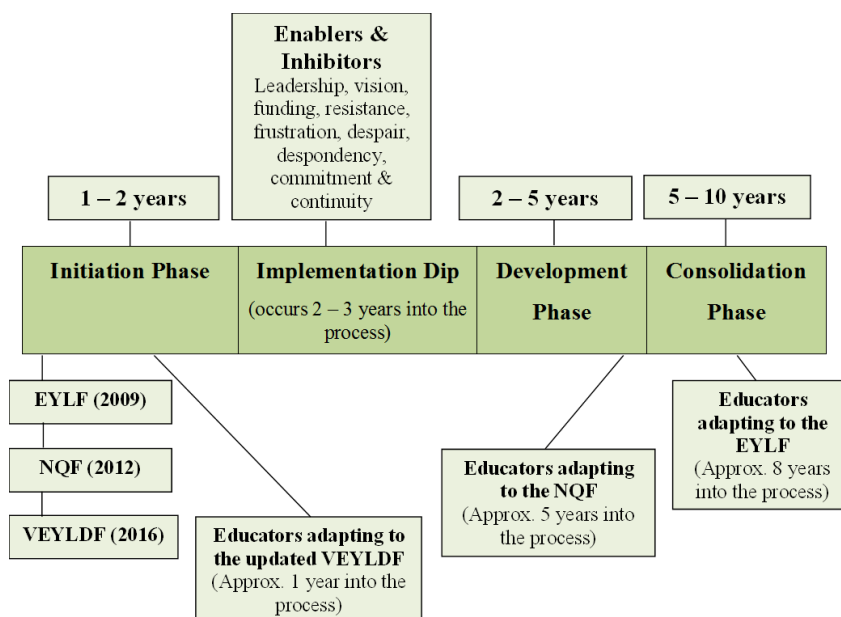


Figure 5: Approximate positioning of Australian early childhood professionals in relation to the reforms beginning in 2009, based on the Educational Change Model – information adapted from Garvis et al. (2013), Pendergast et al. (2005) and Pendergast (2006)

This section presents key change models that offer some insight into the elements and processes involved in the implementation of change. Some connections have been made between these models and the changes occurring in the Victorian early childhood context. The following sub-section provides some brief yet significant examples regarding how change can be measured effectively.

The measurement of change

The processes of educational change have been effectively documented and analysed for four decades using the Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) which comprises Stages of Concern (SoC) identifying personal aspects of change; Levels of Use (LoU) detecting behavioural profile of users and non-users; and Innovation Configurations (IC) distinguishing operational forms of change (Hall, 2013; Young, 2013). This method has assisted with the implementation of research, evaluating programs and facilitating the processes of change (Hall, 2013). Furthermore, the Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) has also been useful in the early childhood field. Such use includes (but is not limited to) the examination of change in curriculum implementation (Burgess, Robertson & Patterson, 2010); the recasting of the Reggio Emilia approach (Elliott, 2005); and play-based learning in Australia (Sumsion, Grieshaber, McArdle & Shield, 2014). This approach was also utilised in the *Baseline Evaluation of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Final Report* (DEEWR, 2011a), as mentioned in the previous chapter. In particular, it has become apparent that many professionals are grappling with their

understandings of new reforms in early childhood education. Therefore, a model such as this can assist in understanding their current behavioural and emotional position within the processes of change.

Emotive behaviours of change

The literature indicates a distinct link between change and emotion. Some of the research explored throughout this sub-section involves the broader educational context. Although not always transferrable, some discussion is put forward regarding the findings of these studies in light of the Victorian early childhood context.

It has been put forward by Arthur et al. (2012) that the level of engagement in change can be visible through certain behaviours such as: *denial* (refusal of acknowledging the need for change); *resistance* (through stress, complaints and avoidance of change); *exploration* (by considering positive approaches to change); and *commitment* (through the discovery, adaptation and commitment to change). Rodd (2015) has described some common reactions to change such as: competition, accommodation, avoidance, compromise and collaboration. The emotional reactions to change have been recognised by Gronlund and James (2008) as they clarified the significance of recognising the diverse learning styles, knowledge and skills of professionals and their various positions “on the continuum from resistance to acceptance of new ideas” (pp. 21-22). In regards to this emotional transition, Gronlund and James (2008) have also put forward:

We may need to rant and rave in anger and denial until we accept that the change is inevitable and necessary. Then and only then can we embrace it and truly grow in our thinking and our practice. And that takes time and effort (p. 18).

Consequently, change can be understood as a natural and evolutionary process, where emotional responses such as resistance can emphasise the significance of change (Block, 2000). Resistance can be visible through diverse manifestations. For instance, individuals may desire extensive information regarding intended change, or alternatively, they may present extensive information regarding their own difficulties. Other forms of resistance may include the time constraints and impracticalities associated with change; and individuals may respond to change with confusion, hostility, passive silence, or a fear of the element of surprise (Block, 2000). Although, it is important to recognise that not all emotive responses to change are negative. More positive examples have been acknowledged by Arthur et al. (2018) who have emphasised the importance of mindfulness regarding attitudes towards change, resilience, and creating adaptive cultures with workplaces. Therefore, the prospect of change can result in many emotional responses.

When exploring the connections between emotions and change, it has been suggested that “under intensive and insensitively imposed change, teachers also find their emotional worlds turned upside down” (Baker & Foote, 2003, p. 60). Arlie Hochschild (1979) has put forward an emotion-management perspective to define the concept of *emotion work* which refers to the alteration and management of emotions. This concept has been extended by Baker and Foote (2003) who have indicated that within professional contexts, the imposition of change can result in the emotions of individuals being purposefully aligned to reflect the expectations of their professions. However, when proposed change becomes imposed change, emotion work can be transformed “into a draining process that increases stress, saps motivation and depletes morale” (p. 60).

The relationship between emotion and educational change has been explored by Hargreaves (2005) in a research study which examined the emotional responses of 50 diversely-aged school teachers across 15 schools in Ontario, Canada. This study highlighted a significant link between emotional responses to educational change and teachers’ specific ages, generational groups and their positions within the various stages of their teaching careers. A combination of Hochschild’s (1983, 2003) notion of *emotional labor* and *critical incident analysis* (Sikes, 1985; Tripp, 1993, 2012) was utilised to conduct a series of interviews with three generational groups of early, middle and late career stage teachers.

It was found that early career stage teachers demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm, optimism and adaptability to change; however, they also possessed limited competence, confidence and experience (Hargreaves, 2005). This may be an issue in responding to educational change effectively, as a lack of confidence and experience may influence how professionals understand and implement changes to practice, particularly if they have no prior experiences for comparative purposes. In contrast, late career stage teachers exhibited a level of exhaustion towards “their experiences of repetitive educational change” as they approached retirement (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 981).

When discussing the 2009–2012 early childhood reforms, Tayler (2016) claimed that “change-fatigue and resistance” should be expected (p. 30). Change fatigue has been defined as “being tired of change” and less adaptive due to the frequency of innovation and change (Dilkes, Cunningham & Gray (2014). Although Hargreaves’ (2005) group of late career stage teachers had extensive experience of dealing with educational change throughout their careers, it has been proposed that they were perceived by their younger colleagues as the least likely to engage in change. However, Hargreaves (2005) has argued that the capabilities of late career stage teachers are fundamentally underestimated due to their vast experience with continual changes within their profession. Meanwhile, the middle career stage teachers involved in

Hargreaves' (2005) study have exhibited an increasing level of competence, confidence and openness to educational change (Hargreaves, 2005). This indicates that middle career stage professionals are at an ideal stage within their careers and appear to portray more appropriate emotional responses to deal with educational change effectively.

As outlined above, the career stages of professionals play a significant role in their type of emotional response and adaptability to change. However, age may also be an important factor, as many late career stage professionals approach retirement. According to the *2016 Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census* published in September 2017 (Social Research Centre, 2017):

The age distribution of the ECEC workforce has remained unchanged between the 2010, 2013 and 2016 waves of the National Workforce Census. In 2016, one-in-eight (12.7 per cent) staff were aged 30-34 years old (up 1.5 percentage points since 2013) and 5.1 per cent were aged 15-19 years old (down 1.2 percentage points). Changes in the proportion of other age groups in the ECEC workforce were within 1 percentage point between 2013 and 2016 (p. 17).

These figures suggest that the Australian early childhood workforce is an ageing field. One reason for this is visible within the Victorian context, through the immense recruitment of early childhood professionals in the 1960s and 1970s, during times of industrialisation (Brennan, 1998). According to a report titled *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005), this offers a significant challenge and opportunity for the sector to replace the experience and skills of late career stage professionals and provides “a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape and benefit from substantial changes in the teacher workforce” (p. 8). However, due to an increase in early career stage professionals entering the field (OECD, 2005), it is imperative for these professionals to have adequate training and support to foster appropriate emotional responses for effectively understanding and engaging in sustainable educational change throughout their careers.

Knowledge of behaviours and emotions provides a useful management tool to determine the psychological demeanors of early childhood professionals as they engage with new reforms and their position in the process of change. The fundamentals of change management have been described by Turner and Crawford (1998) as “the three reshaping capabilities” (p. 12). These three elements entail engagement (shared power, purpose and vision, through insight, determination, and authentic and frequent discussion); development (the development of necessary resources, skills, strategies and training to implement the change effectively); and performance management (monitoring and evaluating challenges, expectations, objectives and performance levels). It has been suggested that the amalgamation of these three elements can offer a foundation for the achievement of effective change. This further

determines the importance of external factors and strategic approaches involved in successfully implementing change. However, a lack of support, time and resources can lead professionals to feel a sense of isolation, discussed by Baker and Foote (2003) who explained:

Teachers who crave support and learning from their colleagues in teams and groups find that limited resources, increased demands and mandated priorities condemn them to a time-starved life of corrosive individualism where they work, learn and respond to change alone (p. 59).

The research examined in this section sheds light on the need to understand the emotional behaviours associated with change. Although largely taken from the broader educational field (Arthur et al., 2018; Hargreaves, 2005; Rodd, 2015), much of these findings may be relevant when considering change in the early childhood context. It accentuates the need to delve deeper into the Victorian arena, to investigate the emotional responses of professionals to a number of significant changes – such as the simultaneous introduction of state and national curriculum documents (DEECD & VCAA, 2009; DEEWR, 2009), as well as changes to qualification requirements (MCEECDYA, 2011).

Teacher education discourses and their influence on change

It is important to consider how different teacher education discourses have influenced the current practice of early childhood professionals. As a reminder, the term *teacher education discourse* encompasses pre-service early childhood teacher education and educator training (see **Table 11**) throughout this study. It has been discovered that quality training and support can assist in guiding professionals through the processes of change; however, it is essential to contemplate whether they perceive their pre-service education and educator training to be consistent with the reforms beginning in 2009, specifically in the provision of content knowledge and the necessary skills to implement such changes. To obtain a clear understanding of early childhood teacher education, it is necessary to begin by exploring the changing knowledge base in the field of early childhood education, and consider how this may impact engagement with change.

The changing knowledge base of early childhood teacher education discourses

Whose knowledge is this? How did it become ‘official’? What is the relationship between this knowledge and how it is organized and taught and who has cultural, social and economic capital in this society? Who benefits from these definitions of legitimate knowledge and who does not? What are the overt and hidden effects of educational reforms on real people and real communities? (Apple, 2018, p. 63).

The citation above (although about education more broadly), offers some valid and provocative questions for considering the changing knowledge discourses of early childhood education and its reform initiatives; and also, what knowledge is privileged, and how this affects positions of power in the field. Substantial research has been conducted regarding teacher education, specifically debates between education and training; supply and demand; theory and practice; and the status of educators as professionals or skilled workers (Dyson, 2005). However, Gomez (2012) has articulated that “it is necessary for all ECE practitioners to have a solid foundation in child development” although some practitioners have asserted that experience overrides the necessity of such knowledge (p. 90). While Krieg (2010) claims that despite the theoretical shift in conceptualising early childhood education, “childhood development theory continues to be the basis on which many educational programs are constructed” (p. 147).

If this is the case, then it is necessary to further explore the perceptions of early childhood professionals regarding the theoretical content of their formal teacher education programs to determine how this has supported them to engage in changes to dominant theoretical discourses. In relation to this point, Ryan and Grieshaber (2005) have clarified that although pre-service professionals need to be equipped with a wide range of theoretical knowledge, they should also be taught how to question the relevance of this knowledge and its translatability to practice. As a result, discourses of knowledge have been central to significant change over time (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003).

In the Victorian context, the development of a binary system has also impacted teacher education. This system was intended to differentiate between the acquisition of theoretically-based knowledge through tertiary (university) institutions and skills-based knowledge through vocational (TAFE and RTO) institutions (Dyson, 2005). However, this segregation has resulted in tensions between the significance of theory versus practice, resulting in conflicts “between schools and the university, between theory and practice, between knowledge and experience, and between the real and the ideal” (Britzman, 1991, p. 211). Krieg (2010) explains:

The tensions between perceptions of teaching concerned with ‘practical’ skills and teaching as intellectual work are prevalent in current debates regarding early childhood teacher education. They manifest in debates about whether early childhood teacher education is primarily a ‘technical process of developing a set of skills and competencies using processes that ‘apply’ knowledge developed with others or is a process designed to support teacher educators and pre-service teachers to inquire into, contest and contribute to knowledge about teaching (p. 149, original emphasis).

This theory versus practice and either/or approach to teacher education may not adequately reflect the requirements of Victorian early childhood reforms – particularly regarding the amended qualification requirements for the long day care (LDC) sector (MCEECDYA, 2011). In addition, the national curriculum framework for Australia (DEEWR, 2009) recommends that early childhood professionals should engage in critical thinking and reflective practice, though it seems that in the Victorian context, such skills are more aligned with a degree obtained through higher education rather than a vocational Certificate or Diploma qualification. This increased value of theoretical knowledge in Victorian early childhood education and its reforms reflects “a change in the balance between theory and practice” (Lohmander, 2004, p. 28). Thus, it is important to explore how knowledge is produced and disseminated; and how this may influence the specific knowledge discourses valued in the context of early childhood education.

Issues of knowledge production and dissemination

Knowledge production has been widely debated on a global scale over the years (Appleyard, 1996; Eraut, Alderton, Cole, & Senker, 1998; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994; Nelson, 2000; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Of particular relevance to this study, Foray and Hargreaves (2003) have referred to the rate of knowledge production and dissemination in different sectors, focusing upon a sectorial comparison of Education and Medicine in England. Although there has been some contention regarding its extent within the education sector (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000), “knowledge production here has indeed been very slow and there are acknowledged difficulties in diffusing new or ‘superior’ knowledge” (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003, original emphasis). In the past, it has been contended that the humanistic mode of knowledge production (practical knowledge) has dominated the education sector, with very little influence from the science-in-technology mode of knowledge production based on experimental and scientific research and development (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994).

Over the years, several reasons have been attributed to the rate of knowledge production in the education sector such as: a weak connection between the practical field and the research and development field; limited funding within the sector; the small-scale, practice-based formats of research studies; and limited implementation of *randomised controlled trials* (RCTs). As a result, the education sector has portrayed that it’s “knowledge production” may have been “the by-product of the activity rather than its intentional goal” (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003, p. 8). Consequently, professionals may not understand underpinning knowledge unless it directly reflects their practice at a particular point in time. Therefore, professionals may have experienced difficulties in comprehending the intermittent and evolving changes to policy, theory and practice.

Conversely, in early childhood education in Australia, knowledge production and dissemination have increased and expanded through research in recent years – particularly due to the 2009 to 2013 reform period. While acknowledging the existing pressures of researchers, Nuttall and Grieshaber (2018) have proposed that “in a time of unprecedented attention...being paid to the early childhood education field, related research should be flourishing” (p. 525); as the field has reached “a stage of maturity” and is “poised” for “a *coming of age*” (p. 526, original emphasis). The explosion of research in the Australian early childhood field has led to what Appleyard (1996) and Foray and Hargreaves (2003) have defined as *knowledge spillover*. This term refers to how new knowledge becomes absorbed by factions of the sector and has resulted in the introduction of swift policy changes. This is a vital point, as historically, the rate of knowledge production in education has been a gradual process; however the recent dissemination of new knowledge in the early childhood field has been quite rapid in contrast. This contradiction may be adding to the confusion in the early childhood field, and indicates that perhaps a more balanced approach to knowledge production and dissemination is required. Expanding upon the concept of knowledge in the education sector, Gibbons et al. (1994) have identified two modes of knowledge production. *Mode 1* encompasses a traditional approach to knowledge production within a specific discipline, while *Mode 2* encompasses a more contemporary approach which more broadly and flexibly considers the application of such knowledge across multiple contexts, disciplines and problems. This second mode is reflected within the curriculum frameworks, as these documents are perceived as being holistically framed by contemporary theories (Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017; Sumsion et al., 2009).

When considering the Victorian early childhood context, the transition between the utilisation of these modes emphasises that not only have early childhood professionals been faced with changes to knowledge discourses, but also changes to the way in which these discourses are produced. For instance, in the past, Victorian early childhood education had been entrenched in content knowledge generated largely by traditional developmental psychology (Edwards, 2007; Fler & Robbins, 2004; Scantlebury Brown, 1966). Though currently, diverse knowledge discourses are produced by a range of participants across the field – generally in positions of power (Fler, 2014; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005; Nuttall & Grieshaber, 2017). According to Fler (2013), *spheres of control* were present throughout the development of the EYLF which included academics who engaged “in dialogue about the intent and directions of the original curriculum (academy control)”, and “government sanctioning” which determined “the final product (government control)” (p. 234). These spheres of control make visible specific positions of power during the reform development process. This means that the content knowledge may be based upon a range of diverse and perhaps conflicting perspectives, and may also be

broad, flexible, and open to interpretation. This is certainly the case with the new curriculum frameworks; however, the interpretation of such documents requires a level of understanding regarding their development. According to Ball (2006):

...it is crucial to recognise that the policies themselves, the texts, are not necessarily clear or closed or complete. The texts are the product of compromises at various stages (at points of initial influence, in the micropolitics of legislative formulation, in the parliamentary process and in the politics and micropolitics of interest group articulation) (pp. 44-45).

Therefore, the very nature of policy development influences the construction of knowledge discourses, often resulting in conflict and ambiguity. To understand this, further examination is needed regarding how political discourses influence the dominant knowledge discourses privileged within policy reforms through effects of power.

The politics of privileged content knowledge

It is important to consider how political discourses influence certain knowledge discourses which are privileged within a field such as early childhood education. The influence of privileged knowledge of educational and governmental institutions upon individuals has been acknowledged by Gomez (2012) who discovered that “institutions mediate information and produce and privilege different knowledge” which reveals the presence of “unequal power relationships”, political agendas, and “institutional power structures” within the field of teacher education (pp. 81-82). This has been further reinforced by Goldstein (2008) and Grieshaber (2008) as they acknowledge the presence of power structures in teacher education.

An example of power structures and political agendas is visible within the Victorian early childhood context – particularly during the 2007 to 2013 reform period. This reform agenda was orchestrated by the Labor Party who held power in the federal government at the time. Labor’s policy agenda demonstrated their political discourses which favoured the value of early childhood education, but also privileged the future economic productivity of children and the workforce participation of their parents as ‘human capital’ – evident within the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009). While the privileged knowledge discourses embedded within the national and Victorian curriculum frameworks were influenced by key early childhood advocates and organisations (Edwards, Fleer, & Nuttall, 2008; Sumsion et al, 2009; Moore, 2008; Press & Wong, 2013).

Based on the information above, the knowledge discourses valued in teacher education programs may largely depend upon the preferences and power held by certain institutions and policymakers. However, tensions have been discovered between the perceptions of institutions and individuals regarding the

development of educational policies and teacher education programs (Gomez, 2012). This indicates there may be significant disparities between the beliefs and perceptions of professionals and those of policymakers and institutions regarding what constitute relevant content knowledge in teacher education.

The diversity of early childhood qualifications

Changing times in early childhood education have resulted in the roll out of a wide range of teacher education and educator training programs in Australia. The *Australian Qualifications Framework* (AQF) was established by the Australian Qualifications Framework Council in 1995 to reinforce the qualifications within the tertiary sector (higher education within universities) and vocational sector (encompassing TAFE and RTOs) at a national level. The second edition of the Australian Qualifications Framework (2013) specifies the purpose, knowledge, skills, their application and volume of learning associated with recognised qualifications. The table below demonstrates the significant differences in content knowledge acquired through specific qualifications (see **Table 13**). Therefore, if vocational trainers only possess a Certificate IV as previously declared by Smith and Grace (2011), yet are teaching above their personal qualification level, it is unlikely that these trainers are adequately informed with sufficient content knowledge. Accordingly, it has been suggested that trainers should possess a higher qualification than the level they are teaching; for example, trainers of Diploma-level students should hold an Advance Diploma or Bachelor Degree qualification (Smith & Grace, 2011).

Table 13: Level of knowledge required for specific qualifications, as cited in the Australian Qualifications Framework (2013, pp. 14-16)

Qualification	Certificate III	Certificate IV	Diploma	Advanced Diploma	Bachelor Degree
Knowledge	Graduates of a Certificate III will have factual, technical, procedural and theoretical knowledge in an area of work and learning	Graduates of a Certificate IV will have broad factual, technical and theoretical knowledge in a specialised field of work and learning	Graduates of a Diploma will have technical and theoretical knowledge and concepts, with depth in some areas within a field of work and learning	Graduates of an Advanced Diploma will have specialised and integrated technical and theoretical knowledge with depth within one or more fields of work and learning	Graduates of a Bachelor Degree will have a broad and coherent body of knowledge, with depth in the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines as a basis for independent lifelong learning

The emphasis on the traditional provision of technical skills and industry expectations within the vocational sector (Baum, 2008) reveals a mounting chasm between the qualifications and intensifying expectations of vocational trainers (Smith & Grace, 2011), and ultimately, a great divide between the vocational and tertiary sectors. This may hold significant relevance to the early childhood field, as the Diploma of Children's Services is taught at a vocational level through the TAFE system and RTOs. Therefore, it is possible that the divide between theory and practice at vocational and tertiary levels may also be magnified by the limited qualification levels of vocational trainers.

The issues of early childhood pre-service training and qualifications were addressed in a report titled *Pathways to a Profession: Education and training in early childhood education and care, Australia* (Watson, 2006). This study reported on the policy context of early childhood education and care within Australia with a clear focus on courses offered within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. Several issues were found regarding a lack of incentives for students to participate in childcare orientated courses offered by vocational institutions which have led to a shortage of childcare educators in the field. This has been greatly influenced by the low wages, minimal professional status, and poor working conditions (Neylon, 2015), which may cause Bachelor-qualified teachers to discriminate against working in these settings. Despite the recognition for cultural change (Neylon, 2015), a significant gap remains between the childcare and kindergarten/preschool arenas. The identification of this gap highlights the research direction of the present study, as it acknowledges the importance of understanding the positions and perceptions of early childhood professionals, particularly those working in long day care.

Another major disparity has been identified between the early childhood vocational and tertiary sectors regarding barriers in the pathways experienced by students from vocational to tertiary education programs. Watson (2006) has attributed these barriers to: a lack of recognition for prior learning (RPL) and experience; stringent selection criterion of tertiary institutions; the need for higher academic literacy skills; and differences in the teaching, learning and assessment approaches between both sectors. According to Watson (2006), measures have been taken to address this. For example some vocational institutions have attempted to incorporate more in-depth content, as well as academic writing and referencing skills to support further study options for their students. Meanwhile, some tertiary institutions have tailored their programs specifically for vocational graduates by offering more credit for prior learning. Some institutions have developed an integrated course which combines vocational and tertiary early childhood programs. Although Watson's (2006) research was conducted prior to the reform period in Victoria, it sheds some light on the complexity of early childhood teacher education and educator training throughout the nation. The diverse pathways for early child professionals are important to

consider, as their pathways and experiences of pre-service teacher education and educator training may impact their subjectivity, and their ability to engage in reform.

The ways in which these issues have been addressed varies among institutions, but ultimately reflected through the wide range of delivery methods employed by different institutions which may include residential, on-campus, off-campus, multi-campus, online and part-time methods. Due to the supply and demand of early childhood services and the competitiveness of the sector (Irvine & Farrell, 2013), a range of employment-based training (EBT) models have also been rolled out in Australian early childhood teacher education (Choy & Haukka, 2010). A report by Watson and Axford (2008) has focused upon 90 early childhood courses offered within 35 tertiary institutions across Australia. According to this report, a number of social factors have attributed to changes in delivery methods of early childhood courses throughout the years, as they attempt to meet the diverse needs of students; however, this means that many of these courses “vary considerably in detail” (Watson & Axford, 2008. p. 9). Although the teacher education sector has been attempting to cater for the diversity of the pre-service population, these variations mean that early childhood professionals are entering the field with diverse understandings and experiences – again, shaping their subjectivities in different ways. This has been corroborated by a South Australian study conducted by Whittington, Thompson and Shore (2014) who found that “no single profile of an ECE teacher’s professional knowledge emerged from the data” (p. 69). This corresponds with the notion outlined by Wedell (2009) regarding the inability of developing identical content knowledge across multiple educational contexts.

Based on recommendations from the *Australian Government Productivity Commission* (2011), it was advised that all early childhood teachers with tertiary degrees upgrade from a three-year qualification to a four-year qualification. According to a South Australian study undertaken by Whittington, Thompson and Shore (2014), teachers felt obliged to participate in this qualification upgrade, and “as teachers experienced it, the top-down feel of the upgrade policy decision from COAG to their ECE site, implied that teachers’ long experience and past contributions to the ECE field held no currency in this national qualification upgrade” (p. 68). This point is important here, as it provides a clear example of how these teachers perceived this reform as an “imposed” effect of power; and that due to the shifting knowledge discourses, their own knowledge base was no longer valued or privileged within the field.

Other issues were revealed by Whittington et al. (2014) which related to cost; an uncertainty regarding technological skills; the management of work, study and family commitments; and the “steep learning curve” of mature-age educators re-entering study which ultimately led to feelings of frustration, resistance

and stress (Whittington et al., 2014, p. 68). This point recognises the connection between the changes to privileged knowledge discourses within the early childhood teacher education sector, and the emotive responses visible with the perceptions of these professionals. Furthermore, it corroborates the significant link between emotive responses and the processes of change (Arthur et al., 2018; Baker & Foote, 2003; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Gronlund & James, 2008; Hochschild, 1979; Moore & Fink, 2003; Rodd, 2015; Tayler, 2016).

There appears to be a need for early childhood professionals to rethink their perceptions and professional positioning to assist in “fostering a culture of extended professionalism rather than professional compliance” (Whittington et al., 2014, p. 72). However, Whittington et al. (2014) have proposed that “perhaps because their professional role was so focused on everyday ‘doing’, they found it difficult to stand back and reflect on the professional expertise they had acquired” (p. 70, original emphasis). This suggests that some professionals may be grappling with their professional positions in early childhood education due to the shift away from a practical knowledge discourse and position, towards a new discourse and position of reflective learning. This shift in professional positioning of early childhood professionals seems to play a meaningful role in educational change. Correspondingly, Whittington et al. (2014) have noted that these professionals “...may experience dissonance between their roles as competent professionals and their new and unsettled experiences as learners” (p. 71). However, not only are early childhood professionals required to adapt to new theory and practice, they are also required to adjust their manner of thinking, learning styles, professional positions and how they perceive their roles as early childhood professionals. This aligns with the concept of “culture” and the evident necessity of “reculturing” the early childhood field (Wedell, 2009).

Meanwhile, a question of workplace discourse is also apparent, as teacher responses “...may also reflect their experience of professional development which may often have met the immediate needs of their work sites, rather than encourage the sustained thinking time needed to become immersed in work-related learning” (Whittington et al., 2014, p. 70). Furthermore, Whittington et al. (2014) have reported that “networking and exposure to a wide range of ideas was a visible part of the ECE professional learning culture, however a planned and considered approach to professional development did not appear to be actively fostered by the employer or pursued by individual teachers” (p. 71). These are significant elements for consideration, as they highlight the need to examine how workplace discourses impact the positioning and engagement of their early childhood professionals when it comes to change and reform.

The literature presented throughout this section portrays a very multifaceted image of Australian early childhood teacher education and educator training. The continuous changes and reforms within the early childhood sector form a growing need for new knowledge and skills; however, disparities in pre-service education and educator training qualifications can generate issues for adequate provision. According to the 2017 *Starting Strong* report, there is a “need to update knowledge and competencies”, therefore, “initial teacher education must be viewed as only the starting point for teachers’ ongoing development” (OECD, 2017a, p. 104). Hence, there is a strong link between initial pre-service teacher education and effective engagement in professional development strategies which can play a pivotal role throughout the processes of change.

Professional development discourses and their influences on change

The connection between effective change and the quality of professional development discourses has been acknowledged by many scholars in the fields of change management, educational change and early childhood education (Colmer, Waniganayake & Field, 2014; Fukkink & Lont, 2007; Fullan, 2000; 2008; Gomez, 2012; Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017; Neuman & Kamil, 2010; Rodd, 2015; Weber & Trauten, 2008). This section presents some illustrations and perceptions of professional development discourses sourced from both national and international research. It then unpacks some key political and contextual influences involved in the uptake of these discourses, and the significance to the Victorian and broader Australian early childhood field.

There is a strong link between professional development discourses and the quality of practice demonstrated by early childhood professionals (Neuman & Kamil, 2010). According to Kagan, Kauerz and Tarrant (2008), a three-tiered conceptual model for professional development (constructed in the United States) encompasses: *Tier 1* (targeted efforts, compensation and workplace environment); *Tier 2* (integrated efforts, compensation, unionisation and collective management and services); and *Tier 3* (systemic efforts, quality improvement and funding). This model emphasises the value of professional development across all three tiers, specifically at individual, community and government levels. However, inaccuracies were discovered regarding the effectiveness of these strategies, and their relevance to early childhood research and policy reforms (Kamil, 2010). Of note, the focus of research into professional development often relates to child outcomes, rather than the preparation and growth of early childhood professionals (Kamil, 2010). If these points are translatable to the Australian early childhood context, they may add an additional layer of confusion.

Similarly, Cole (2004) has identified a range of contentious issues when reflecting upon what constitutes effective professional development in the school system, stating that “there remains a concern about under-utilisation of professional learning opportunities within the school and with the limited impact of professional development on the quality of teaching” (p. 16). He also implied that these issues specifically relate to the narrow perception that ‘expert’ programs equate to effective professional development. Cole (2004) goes on to explain that this perception needs to be broadened and adopted taking a more holistic “team” approach to change within school systems that possess genuine “professional learning cultures” through comprehensive leadership and accountability measures (pp. 8-9). It has been recommended that professional development strategies may be more successful through the identification of the desired change and the specific behaviours required for implementing this change, as well as clarification of whether this change is related to “a need for knowledge, skill development, or attitudinal change” (Cole, 2004, p. 13). Correspondingly, some professionals may measure the effects of change in their practice based on children’s learning (Guskey, 1986). This is significant because it seems that the effect of educational change is often assessed, evaluated and modified – based on children’s learning outcomes. However, more emphasis may be needed for early childhood professionals to assess, evaluate and modify their own learning outcomes.

According to Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Vick Whittaker, and Lavelle (2010), there are four key areas of professional development (PD) in early childhood education. These relate to 1) enhancing the human and social capital, 2) the efficiency of PD provision among institutions, 3) improving child-centred practices and 4) quality improvement. This suggests that many factors are involved in the effectiveness of professional development strategies. Across all four of these areas, it has been recognised that the effectiveness of professional development strategies may be supported by the use of explicit objectives; collegial participation; an alignment of content and duration; the suitability to specific institutional contexts; reflective of regulations and standards; and the ability for professionals to engage in evaluation, reflection and self-assessment (Zaslow et al., 2010). Therefore, if all of these elements are necessary in the provision of effective professional development strategies, it is necessary to determine whether these elements are being adequately considered by leading institutions in the field.

Illustrations of professional development discourses

Over time, scholars have investigated the effectiveness and outcomes of professional development strategies, particularly when implementing change such as new reforms. One such study by Gibson and Brooks (2012) was conducted in western Canada; revealing mixed teacher responses to a one-year professional development school program. These responses included feelings of discomfort, ambiguity

and irrelevance of content knowledge, difficulties in understanding assessment strategies, feeling overwhelmed by information, lack of resources and time restrictions. Consequently, the program “had a limited impact on changing practice” (Gibson & Brooks, 2012, p. 18). Resistance, emotional response and varying degrees of acceptance to change were contributing factors for the teachers involved in this study (Gibson & Brooks, 2012). Emotional tension was experienced by these participants, as they were forced to relinquish their previous practices for new ones. This stresses the need to consider the positions of professionals and the processes of change when implementing professional development related to new reforms.

In Western Australia, the *Professional Leadership and Action Research (PLAR) Training Model* was developed and trialled to support leadership and change management for early childhood professionals (Stamopoulos, 2015). This model involved participation in five PD sessions (action research, action learning community meetings, external group networking, ICT supports, and opportunities for leadership and advocacy). The PLAR model was then evaluated by 17 early childhood professionals who rated it highly as a useful approach to support them as leaders and agents of change. Hence, this offers an encouraging example of how professionals have repositioned themselves through the influence of power discourses to take ownership of their engagement in professional development. Furthermore, professional development is likely to be more effective in relation to change when PD is continuous, focused, and incremental (Andreasen et al., 2007), and when professionals are involved in the decision-making process to enhance their sense of ownership and self-efficacy.

In Victoria, a study was conducted by Garvis et al. (2012) to evaluate “reach, engagement and impact”, leadership outcomes, and “enablers, inhibitors and barriers” associated with the VEYLDF’s (DEECD & VCAA, 2009) PD strategies rolled out between 2010 and 2011 (see **Table 14**). Over a ten-month period, a three-stage evaluation was conducted which comprised a primary survey, in-depth interviews and a final survey targeted towards early childhood professionals from all service types across the state of Victoria. The data collected from 1,141 survey participants and 20 participants involved in the interview process revealed a wide demography in which the majority of participants were aged 40 years and over, with 10 years of experience of working with three- to five-year-old children.

Utilising the *Educational Change Model* (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006), Garvis et al.’s study revealed that the majority of participants were either at the end of the *Initiation phase* or at the beginning of the *Development phase* of this model. It was found that throughout the Initiation phase, the efficiency of engaging with educational reforms were largely “affected by process, content and contextual factors”

(Garvis et al., 2012, p. 4). However, participants' perspectives of this professional development strategy differed greatly. For instance, the online resources provided by VCAA, DEECD and ECA offered valuable information and discussion opportunities; however, this was often hindered by issues of accessibility, time barriers and the sometimes limited technological skills of participants. The face-to-face PD strategies, such as the regional and state seminars and workshops, proved to be useful for networking purposes; however, some participants expressed disappointment concerning the need for broader content. Furthermore, barriers were acknowledged regarding availability, location and time restrictions to attend these seminars and workshops. Thus, it seemed that these PD strategies were not meeting the needs of these early childhood professionals.

Table 14: Face-to-face and online professional development strategies implemented from June 2010 to July 2011 (Garvis et al., 2012, p. 90)

Face-to-face professional development strategies	Online professional development strategies
2010 Early Childhood Education Conference (hosted by KPV and Gowrie Victoria) - June	VCAA Early Years Exchange (the EYE) Editions 1–6 - December 2009 to June 2010
Regional information sessions 2010	Early Years Alert—online publication through VCAA
Bastow Institute: Leading People in Early Childhood Settings, April to July 2010 and March to August 2011	PowerPoint Presentation to Families on the VEYLDF - March 2010
Bastow Institute: Educational Leadership in Early Childhood Settings May to June 2010 and May to August 2011	2010 Early Childhood Education Conference (KPV/Gowrie) Online Papers available from June 2010
Statewide Module 1. An Introduction to the VEYLDF and Reflective Practice delivered between May 2010 and June 2011	The Learning and Development Outcomes from the VEYLDF linked to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) July 2010
Statewide Module 2. An Introduction to Collaborative Practice delivered between May 2010 and June 2011	Online Module 1. An Introduction to the Victorian Framework and Reflective Practice published October 2010
Statewide Module 3. An introduction to Effective Practice delivered between May 2010 and June 2011	Online Module 2. An Introduction to Collaborative Practice published October 2010
Statewide Module 4. Assessment for Learning and Development: The Early Years Planning Cycle delivered between May 2010 and June 2011	Evidence Paper Practice Principle 8: Reflective Practice published October 2010
Bastow Institute: Contemporary Child Development Theory for Early Childhood Educators July to December 2010	Online Module 3. An Introduction to Effective Practice published April 2011
VCAA Learning and Development Outcomes Project July 2010 to June 2011	2011 Early Childhood Education Conference (KPV/Gowrie) Online Papers available from June 2011
Victorian Early Years Coaching Program October 2010 to December 2011	N/A

Suggestions from participants regarding future professional development strategies revealed that further support is required for early childhood professionals relating to their comprehension of the practice principles, learning outcomes, documentation and self-assessment approaches. However, a number of participants described themselves as “confident and capable” in utilising the VEYLDF (Garvis et al.,

2012, p. 6). This demonstrates the diversity of progression and positions of Victorian professionals within the change process regarding reforms.

There are a range of professional development approaches which may be more convenient and relevant to the specific circumstances of early childhood professionals. Twigg et al. (2013) examined the effectiveness of a *coaching program* which was developed by *Gowrie Victoria* to support the alignment of practice with the new state curriculum framework VEYLDF (DEECD & VCAA, 2009). There appears to be a significant connection between the application of coaching and understanding new reforms; however, it is necessary for individuals to first and foremost understand the attainability and benefits (the *how* and *why*) of the intended change (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009). The coaching process has been described as encompassing specific skills which build trust within professional relationships. Such skills include active listening, reflectivity, critical thinking, goal setting, action planning, observation, evaluation and self-assessment.

The use of this skillset can alleviate the sense of isolation often experienced by professionals and can ensure the stability of their personal abilities, including self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy and ultimately “the ability to change without threat” (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 99). Nevertheless, Twigg et al’s (2013) study investigating the effectiveness of a coaching program revealed that many professionals involved in such programs are still grappling with their levels of commitment and readiness to change. Early childhood professionals from 90 Victorian services participated in the 18-month coaching program consisting of visits, calls, emails, online communication, reflective journals, meetings and additional resources.

It was found that Twigg et al’s (2013) program assisted participants in their understanding of and alignment with the new framework, and the visits were acknowledged as being useful. However, time restrictions and availability of relief staff were key factors in effective engagement. In particular, the reflective journals were considered too time-consuming and online resources under-utilised. This indicates that there are many factors which require substantial consideration when initiating professional development strategies such as coaching programs. Applying new practices such as professional development strategies can take time and dedication. Twigg et al. (2013) have stated that “...the readiness and commitment to change by educators and services” can have an immense impact on “the effectiveness of the Coaching Program” (p. 83). Furthermore, the construction of relationships and trust between participants and coaches can foster the dislodgement of resistance issues among participants and the development of meaningful commitment to the change process.

The establishment of *communities of practice* (Buisse, 2005; Ilari, 2010) can play an integral role in effective professional development strategies. Although, it has been acknowledged that communities of practice may often be associated with specific institutions whereby their content knowledge, funding and reporting requirements are privileged, ultimately reinforcing an unequal power structure (Kasl & Yorks, 2010). Grossman, Wineburg and Woolworth (2001) suggest that professionals need to develop a community of learners among themselves, in a similar manner to what they are expected to facilitate for the children in their settings; however, some professionals are reluctant to deepen their professional knowledge in their own personal time. It has also been proposed that although enhancing professional practice must be a key aspect of learning communities, the focus should also be on the “continuing intellectual development” of professionals, so that they may “continue to grow in knowledge and keep up with changes in their disciplines” (Grossman et al., 2001, p. 951). These findings may be relatable to the Victorian early childhood context, as professionals need to consider their own learning community, and how they can find time to engage in deeper professional learning.

Mentoring programs can also be a useful method of professional development (Gomez, 2012). An examination of such programs in Victoria revealed that “even the comparatively well-resourced programs faced limitations and an uncertain future” (Morrissey & Nolan, 2015, p. 46). The reasons for this stemmed from lack of incentive, time and workload. They also found that limited programs were available for newly qualified professionals, and that although many engage in mentoring (either as mentors or mentees), the majority “receive no training or support to undertake these roles” (p. 46). This highlights an important point regarding the awareness, support, training and knowledge discourses available to individuals in these positions.

An *Emergent Curriculum* workshop was conducted by Brown and Inglis (2013) to explore the awareness of professional development (PD) among professionals. The authors described the process as phases of capacity-building which require a shared vision for learning, PD and support strategies, and in-service support services – all of which necessitate supportive leaders and mentors, adequate time and resources, and facilitate the needs and desires of the professionals. Subsequently, professionals can invoke power discourses by taking ownership of the change process through collaboration, mutual goals and shared visions. By positioning themselves in this way, professionals can implement changes effectively through critical thinking, open dialogue, and reflective practice. However, this means that professionals need to have the support, training and ability to apply such skills, to consider the pressures of time for reflection

and collaboration (Brown & Inglis, 2013), and to prioritise and clarify the specific components of change (Hargreaves, 2003).

Support offered through PD strategies has the capability to assist in engaging with educational reform. However, Grieshaber (2008) has explicated that “PD experiences tend to reinforce and reproduce institutional knowledge about what good teaching *should* look like” (p. 85, original emphasis). It has been considered that “contradictions and inconsistencies” may arise through the translation of this knowledge to practice (Grieshaber, 2008, p. 505). Rather than focusing upon privileged institutional knowledge, PD programs need to be intense, ongoing and specific to the individual contexts and needs of professionals in the field (Fukkink & Lont, 2007). Not only do these programs need to be contextually relevant, but also “PD needs change over time, and policies that recommend static requirements and approaches are not responsive to changing needs” (Gomez, 2012, p. 83). Here Gomez acknowledges that PD programs need to respond to and reflect the changing needs of professionals as they progress through the change process involved in the introduction of educational reforms.

Another form of professional development has been trialled in the *Victorian Advancing Early Learning* (VAEL) study (MSGSE, 2015) which was implemented in response to findings from the *E4Kids* study (MGSE, 2016). The VAEL study implemented the *3a* (Abecedarian Approach) as a PD program to support the improvement of quality teaching and learning practices among early childhood professionals (MSGSE, 2015). This approach was based on the longitudinal US study called *The Abecedarian Project*, which examined the lives of disadvantaged children, while the Australian model (*The Abecedarian Approach Australia*) reflects the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) and the National Quality Framework (NQF) (ACECQA, 2012), and has been used to examine the contexts of Aboriginal children and communities (MSGSE, n.d.).

The three strategies of 3a involve Conversational Reading, Learning Games and Enriched Caregiving (MSGSE, 2015). It is not the approach itself that is of importance here – rather, the way in which it was implemented with professionals as a form of PD. The first stage consisted of a Treatment Year, whereby early childhood professionals and *educational leaders* (discussed in later chapters) were engaged in ongoing professional development and fortnightly coaching sessions regarding the 3a strategies within their workplace; the second stage was a Maintenance Year, where the educational leaders were responsible for supporting the professionals to continue implementing the 3a strategies within their workplace; and the third (optional) stage involved an educator-led parental program to promote the home-

use of the 3a strategies (MGSE, 2015). Although the VAEL study focused upon quality and child-interactions, specific elements of support were highlighted. According to the study:

...increasing the quality of educators' interactions with young children is a complex process that cannot be rushed. It requires timely, targeted and consistent support, management 'buy-in' and a set of 'threshold conditions' for the program to succeed. Furthermore, collaboration on the form of educational leadership, professional learning and coaching is vital to the success of early learning interventions (MGSE, 2016, p. 23, original emphasis).

These elements emphasise that significant time, incentive, leadership, and continued support and learning are necessary for implementing changes to practice. This has been verified by Colmer, Waniganayake and Field (2014) who claimed leadership models such as “distributed leadership and collaborative professional development support educational reform within early childhood centres” (p. 111). As such, it is essential to investigate whether these elements were considered and applied by PD institutions when early childhood reforms were originally introduced.

More recently, further support through PD opportunities have been offered regarding the National Quality Framework (ACECQA, 2012). According to ACECQA's *Annual Report 2016–2017* (ACECQA, 2017c) 129 engagement activities and presentations were delivered across the Australian early childhood field within this period. These initiatives included telephone and online enquiries, workshops, a targeted early career education program and targeted campaigns in order to support early childhood professionals in the field. It is possible then, that the increased professional development provided by ACECQA may be effectively supporting early childhood professionals in the field. However, it is important to determine how political and contextual factors influenced the presence of support during the implementation of the NQF, and how professionals perceived such PD strategies at the time.

Political and contextual influences on professional development discourses

The development, implementation and engagement in professional development discourses can be shaped significantly by various factors – including political and contextual influences. It has been found that professionals interpret policy “through the lens of their professional beliefs, preferences, and strategic knowledge base and created classroom policy responsive to their ... professional contexts” (Goldstein, 2008, p. 448). According to Nailon (2013), contextual influences play a significant role in the development of personal constructs of early childhood professionals in the Australian context. Engagement can indeed lead to changes to more innovative approaches of interpretation if their personal constructs are “open to change”; however, change can be limited when somewhat negative constructs are present among professionals (Nailon, 2013, p. 86). These findings reinforce that in order to instigate

meaningful change, PD programs need to facilitate the subjectivities and personal constructs of professionals, and ensure that the content emphasised in these programs is contextually relevant.

When examining professional development from the trainer's perspective, Gomez (2012) identified that issues were present among trainers surrounding restrictions regarding privileged institutional knowledge; communication of policy positions; explaining the early childhood education system; and a "resistance to knowledge production that was perceived as oppressive" (Gomez, 2012, p. 87). This highlights the importance of acknowledging the contextual and knowledge discourses of professionals, explaining the reasons behind policy requirements, the benefits of resources, and determining the needs and goals of individual professionals to ensure a smooth transition through the change process.

Cherrington and Wansbrough (2010) who evaluated the professional development strategies implemented regarding the *Te Whāriki* curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996) in New Zealand found the effectiveness of PD strategies may be dependent upon their contextual relevance to specific early childhood professionals. Cherrington and Wansbrough (2010) proposed that "...effective PD provides theoretical and content knowledge, supports inclusive practices and changes practitioners' beliefs, practices and attitudes" (p. 30). However, it has been contended that some professionals may lack the ability to recognise the theoretical shift of knowledge discourses that is often needed to understand and engage with new curriculum (Meade, 2000). Therefore, due to the diversity of theoretical interpretations and conceptual understandings of reforms, PD programs should be based on the contexts, needs and desires of individual early childhood professionals, and designed in a way which supports their progress throughout the change process.

Professional development strategies may not be constructive if they are formulated through political discourses in a top-down universal package which lacks focus, intellectual challenge, relativity to practice, and the potential for critical thinking and inquiry (Borko, 2004; Bredeson, 2002; Fullan, 2008; Gibson & Brooks, 2012). This has been supported by Baker and Foote (2003) as they claim that professionals are often "subjected to mandated (and usually inadequate) in-service training on government priorities" (p. 59). Therefore, it is important to examine what research has been conducted in the early childhood field regarding the effectiveness of PD strategies, particularly in light of educational reforms.

In response to the introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) in Australia, early childhood services were provided with a guide for effective professional development (Russell,

2009). It was explained that such development should encompass contextually relevant and extended professional learning opportunities; self-assessment and critical reflection of personal constructs; opportunities to learn and apply new and alternative theoretical knowledge and practical approaches; and the development of trusting relationships between colleagues to facilitate meaningful dialogue (Russell, 2009). These features were developed in conjunction with evidence and recommendations from a research report produced by Waniganayake et al. (2008) regarding the benefits and potential outcomes of engaging in professional development in early childhood education. This report indicated that due to the “considerable growth and change” in the field, it was recommended that “governments must pay greater attention to the provisioning of professional development and support for children’s services practitioners” and that a commitment to these recommendations was necessary to effect change (Waniganayake et al., 2008, p. 128). This recommendation corresponds with the notion that PD strategies are indeed required to facilitate change in early childhood education.

Such strategies include effective leadership, supportive collaborative dialogue, and ongoing internal professional learning (Colmer, Waniganayake & Field, 2015). Moreover, the quality and type of a PD program may determine its effectiveness, as well as the perceptions of professionals towards change.

The significance of professional development in coping with change

Reform has been at the forefront of the Australian early childhood context over the past decade. These reforms have included the introduction of state and national early years learning frameworks, the national quality framework and standards, and an increase in qualification requirements. As a result of these reforms, many professional development programs were rolled out to assist early childhood in adapting to these reforms (see **Table 14**). Although ample literature highlights the importance of professional development (Colmer, Waniganayake & Field, 2014; Garvis et al., 2013; Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017; Rodd, 2015), further exploration is needed regarding the consideration of early childhood professionals’ positions within the processes of change, and the effects of these positions on the facilitation of meaningful and long-term change.

When examining the connection between professional development and change, Fullan (2008) has identified six secrets of change which can be transferable to the early childhood education field. These comprise: 1) the need to maintain the same level of commitment to professionals as is applied with children; 2) a continuity and purposefulness of peer interaction to enable empowerment; 3) capacity building through a transparency of the desired change, its affiliated resources and respective motivation; 4) amalgamating the often separate concepts of work and learning; 5) continuous transparency of desired

practice and improving results; and 6) acknowledging the constant evolution of knowledge and commitment within systems (Fullan, 2008). These ‘secrets’ demonstrate an intricate web of processes involved in instigating change – not simply to be applied by individuals but by utilising a collaborative team approach among professionals, their colleagues and services (Cole, 2004). This collaborative approach forms one strategy for engaging in change; however, further investigation is needed to determine how this practice is perceived among early childhood professionals in the Victorian context.

Quality professional development strategies play a pivotal role in the effective implementation of meaningful change. Though, this may be dependent upon the types of professional development approaches utilised, as they can have diverse outcomes and levels of effectiveness and sustainability. These diversities may be attributed to the suitability, accessibility and time restrictions of specific programs. Therefore, it is imperative that the specific contexts and needs of early childhood professionals be taken into consideration when developing and implementing PD strategies to instigate meaningful change. Further research is required to investigate the perceptions of early childhood professionals regarding PD discourses; and to examine how PD strategies have supported professionals to reposition themselves as they move through the processes of change.

Summary

The literature throughout this chapter has explored several interrelated discourses associated with Victorian early childhood reform – namely, the discourses of change, teacher education and professional development. Various types and models of change developed through research in the business and education sectors have been identified and are translatable to the early childhood sector. Extensive research has been reviewed regarding the many processes and stages of change; however, further research is needed to determine the current positions of early childhood professionals in the field. The literature suggests that professionals require specific skillsets such as critical thinking, reflective practice and self-assessment strategies, as well as support, resources and time to instigate change. However, a significant gap between skillsets and perceptions of the Diploma and Bachelor qualifications have been identified (Neylon, 2015). This literature foregrounds the different discourses which frame the subject positions of early childhood professionals working in the Victorian long day care sector. These factors have contributed to the formulation of the present study’s research questions, namely:

How do educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in Victorian long day care settings?

More explicitly:

- *What strategies are utilised by early childhood professionals to understand, cope and engage in educational reform?*
- *How do educational reform discourses position early childhood professionals within the processes of change?*

It is therefore necessary to seek the perceptions of these professionals to investigate what knowledge discourses and skillsets have been acknowledged within their own pre-service education and PD strategies. It is anticipated that research into this issue may reveal the extent of influence between these discourses, and whether Victorian early childhood professionals are adequately supported within their positions as they transition through the processes of change and engage in early childhood reforms. In order to address these research aims, a conceptual framework is needed.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction to the research approach

The research approach adopted for the purpose of the present study was formulated in light of the research questions, and the factors identified within existing research foregrounded throughout Chapter Two. It is important to take some time and space to establish the rationale for applying a post-structuralist lens as a way of unearthing new knowledge regarding the Victorian early childhood field. This chapter illuminates the nature of this post-structuralist research design and underpinning theoretical concepts which are pertinent to this study. .

The conceptual framework developed for the present study has drawn upon Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge and uses Willig's (2013) version of *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* (FDA). Throughout this chapter, several diagrams have been constructed which portray how all of these concepts were utilised for the purpose of this study. The approach used in constructing these diagrams has deliberately avoided the use of linear, directional symbols, as Foucault has illuminated that his concepts and methods of analysis are complex, fluid and interconnected.

In thinking of the mechanisms of power I am thinking rather of its capillary forms of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives (Foucault, 1980, p. 39).

The capillary structure has been previously adopted by Rivalland (2010), who applied it "as a backdrop to capture the fluidity of available discourses and power relations that are present in human interactions and social practices" (p. 95). As such, the use of Rivalland's (2010) interpretation of Foucault's capillary structure has been utilised and extended within the diagrams of this study to reflect these multifaceted interrelations.

It was important to acknowledge that my own theoretical positioning and beliefs (also understood as a paradigm) have directed the research approach of this study (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) which O'Toole and Beckett (2010) have explained that "a philosophical paradigm is a world-view that underlies the theories and methodologies of the researcher's practice and research" (p. 28). While, Mac Naughton, Siraj-Blatchford, and Rolfe (2010) have described that "each paradigm is a specific collection of beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and about our relationships with it, together with practices based upon those beliefs" (p. 367). Hence, the significance of recognising my own philosophical paradigm as a

researcher has highlighted my “personal beliefs, perspectives, ideologies and assumptions that form [my] own subjectivity” (O’Toole & Beckett, 2010, p. 30). As such, I have adopted a post-structuralist paradigm, as I perceive that language, knowledge and meaning are subjective, and that these concepts are forever changing and cannot be conclusively determined or explained, but rather subjectively understood at a particular point in time (Mac Naughton et al., 2010). Meanwhile, Rhedding-Jones (2005) has suggested that the application of post-structuralism and linguistic practice encompasses deconstruction and reconstruction which is “useful for the agenda of change” (p. 81). Consequently, this provided a suitable paradigm for this study, as it aimed to understand the perceptions of early childhood professionals regarding their engagement with the 2009 reforms – within specific timeframes and stages within the change process.

A post-structural paradigm is reflective of the literature detailed in Chapter Two which highlights the shifting discourses relating to the production and dissemination of knowledge (Appleyard, 1996; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994) and the privilege associated with specific content knowledge (Goldstein, 2008; Gomez, 2012; Grieshaber, 2008). In addition, the literature has indicated the presence of power relations involved in the instigation of educational reforms (Baker & Foote, 2003; Moore & Fink, 2003; Rodd, 2015), and the diverse and subjective perceptions of professionals and policymakers regarding these reforms (Gibson, Cumming & Zollo, 2017; Gomez, 2012; Liu & Feng, 2005; Wedell, 2009). Furthermore, a post-structuralist perspective “seeks to understand the dynamics of relationships between knowledge/meaning, power and identity” (Hughes, 2010, p. 51).

The relationship between these concepts has offered an effective lens in exploring how early childhood professionals engage with educational reform, as it has illuminated the notion that “everything and everyone can – and does – shift and change all the time” (Hughes, 2010, p. 50). For this reason, post-structuralism has provided the necessary theoretical understanding to unpack the discourses of change within the field of early childhood education through its history. From a post-structural perspective, discourses shape and reshape the lives of professionals in the early childhood field, and their ways of engaging with changing theoretical and pedagogical discourses. In line with the work of Foucault, it has been proposed that structures which systematise specific beliefs and perspectives within certain cultures are subject to historical conditioning, whereby “historical constructs are determined by the social rules and practices that regulate discourse” (Law, 2007, p. 342). As the rules and practices have changed in the early childhood field, new discourses (such as the curriculum and quality frameworks) have emerged. In light of these changes, perceptions regarding these new discourses and their associated rules and practices

require further attention, particularly in regards to the issues of power and social control attached to the initial introduction of these discourses.

In order to understand how early childhood professionals make sense of new discourses such as the new frameworks, I have used an interpretivist paradigm, as the process of interpreting social action is subjective in nature (Bryman, 2012). However, Hughes (2010) has cautioned that post-structuralists may reject the perspective of some interpretivists that meaning can be developed by individuals in an articulate and continual manner. It is therefore important to justify that for the purpose of this study, meaning is understood as being largely influenced by shifting discourses which change over time. This has been justified by Kenway and Willis (1997):

For post-structuralists, meaning, power and identity are always in flux. They shift as different linguistic, institutional, cultural and social factors move and stabilise together. The emphasis in post-structuralism is on the discourses which make up social institutions and cultural products ... [I]t is through discourse that meanings and people are made and through which power relations are maintained and changed. A discursive field is a set of discourses which are systematically related (pp. xix-xx).

This suggests that meaning, power and identity are always in a state of change and are produced through specific discourses. Moreover, it is through discourses that meaning and people are constructed. The literature on change and the processes involved in the development and implementation of educational reforms have illustrated the complexities of specific concepts developed by Michel Foucault – namely, discourse, power and knowledge. In the early childhood context, these concepts are visible through the dominant discourse of new reforms, the effects of power deployed throughout their development and implementation, as well as the privileged knowledge of specific institutions. Therefore, Foucault's theoretical concepts have proven a suitable lens to unpack meaning regarding change and educational reform throughout the present study. Foucault himself however has acknowledged that these concepts are not confined to one form of application and understanding. In regards to this, Foucault has explained that “what I've written is never prescriptive either for me or for others – at most it's instrumental and tentative” (Foucault, 2000, p. 240). As such, the interpretation and use of these concepts within this study have been based upon my own understandings as an early career researcher. This has led to extensive research to unpack these important concepts. Several scholars have attempted to translate the extensive works of Michel Foucault throughout the years (Mac Naughton, 2005; O'Farrell, 2005; Prado, 2000; Rabinow, 2000). This chapter draws upon the interpretations of these scholars along with Foucault's original works.

Conceptualising discourse

The conceptualisation of *discourse* is essential for the purpose of this study, as this theoretical concept underpins many elements pertaining to the topic of research. According to Mac Naughton (2005), Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse encompasses:

...a body of thinking and writing that used shared language for talking about a topic, shared concepts for understanding it and shared methods for examining it. The shared language, concepts and methods are found in everyday practices and decision making and in diverse institutional texts, practices and decision-making processes in different societies and different times (p. 20).

This reflects the importance of discourse to the current research, as early childhood professionals may experience specific discourses within their early childhood institutions and everyday practices.

Furthermore, it is useful to investigate how particular discourses relating to policy texts such as the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), VEYLDF (DEECD & VCAA, 2009; DET, 2016) and NQF (ACECQA, 2012) and the decision-making processes behind these documents are received by professionals and if this has resulted in a shift in dominant discourse.

According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017), "...discourses are not objects but *rules* and *procedures* that make objects thinkable and governable, and they do not 'determine' things but *intervene* in the relations of what can be known, said or practiced" (p. 120, original emphasis). In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault (1972) unpacked his understanding of discourse and its reconstitution:

...we must reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from within the voice that one hears, re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them. The analysis of thought is always *allegorical* in relation to the discourse that it employs. Its question is unfailingly: what was being said in what was said? The analysis of the discursive field is orientated in a quite different way; we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes (pp. 28-29, original emphasis).

This statement reveals several important questions which are relevant to this study. Firstly, are the shifting discourses associated with educational reform exclusionary of previously dominant discourses within early childhood education? Secondly, what are the tensions and limitations of these shifting discourses? Thirdly and finally, whose voices are silenced and whose voices are dominant? In order to answer these questions, a detailed analysis of discourse needs to be undertaken regarding early childhood professionals' engagement with reforms.

Another sound explanation of discourse has been offered by Grbich (2004) who has alluded to the analysis of power:

Discourses are the spoken or written practices or visual representations which characterise a topic, an era or a cultural practice. They dictate meaning and upon analysis may indicate the individuals or groups whose views are dominated at a particular point in time (p. 40).

Particular discourses are present throughout daily life and differ in various contexts, environments and situations. This has been explored by Hook (2007) who described that "...discourse is both which constrains *and enables* writing, speaking and thinking" (p. 102, original emphasis). Furthermore, "discourses can facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when" (Parker, 1992; as cited in Willig, 2013, p. 130). As a consequence, the language used in particular situations, by certain people, and at specific times may alter the meaning and manner in which language is used – depending upon the specific discourse. However, "when referring to 'discourse', Foucault does not mean a particular instance of language use – a piece of text, an utterance or linguistic performance – but rules, divisions and systems of a particular body of knowledge" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 114, original emphasis). Therefore, it is essential to consider these unspoken rules when conducting research.

Professionals working in early childhood services are situated within a certain discourse which is limited by what the discourse is saying. However, people are "shaped by their times", and also by "the dominant discourses of their time", as they "act to reproduce those discourses" (Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 148). However, it seems that the curriculum and quality frameworks have become the dominant discourses of this time in Australian early childhood history. In relation to this, Willig (2013) has explicated that "dominant discourses privilege those versions of social reality that legitimate existing power relations and social structures" (p. 130). This is reflected through the full structures present within the frameworks which both permit and prohibit professionals to engage with these documents in certain ways and reach specific goals, though these elements may result in constraining the thinking of professionals regarding their approaches to teaching and learning, and engaging with young children. Thus, it is imperative to examine the processes involved in professionals' ability to interpret and translate the frameworks into their practice. This is the core of the current study, as it aims to look at the systems involved in early childhood services, where professionals are situated, as well as the discourses or *discursive constructions* of the documents themselves. Moreover, it investigates how professionals with their own prior knowledge and understandings are able to put the new curriculum and quality frameworks into practice and how they transition through these processes of change.

The processes of learning to engage with new frameworks may be either supported or hindered by the workplace contexts of early childhood professionals. Workplace practice plays a vital role in professionals' transition to the new frameworks, through either the workplace's acceptance or rejection of professionals' engagement with these documents. The significance of "the relationship between discourses and institutions" has been defined by Willig (2013):

Discourses are not conceptualised simply as ways of speaking or writing. Rather, they are bound up with institutional practices – that is, with ways of organizing, regulating and administering social life. Thus, while discourses legitimate and reinforce existing social and institutional structures, these structures in turn also support and validate the discourses (p. 130).

This reflects the connections between the structures of the new framework discourses and the institutions involved in the development, introduction and implementation of these documents. It suggests that in order for the framework discourses to be effectively adopted by early childhood professionals, they firstly require adequate support through the practices of institutions. Such institutions may include early childhood services, pre-service teacher education an educator training institutions, professional development institutions and policy development institutions.

Institutional practices may influence early childhood professionals' ability to engage with new discourses through a range of material conditions. According to Willig (2013), FDA poses "questions about the relationship between discourse and how people think or feel (subjectivity), what they may do (practices) and the material conditions within which such experiences take place" (p. 130). In the context of early childhood education, the dominant discourses of institutions may impact the subjectivity of professionals through their experiences of pre-service education and PD opportunities. In turn, these material conditions may ultimately influence professionals' ability to engage with and translate new discourses (such as the curriculum and quality frameworks) to their practice. This is a primary focus throughout this research study. In particular – how do early childhood professionals think and feel (subjectivity) about the introduction of the curriculum and quality frameworks (discourses)? What are the strategies they are applying to implement these documents (practice)? What experiences have they had to support them with this transition (material conditions)? This corresponds with the literature which specifies that material conditions such as support, resources and time are required for the processes involved in change and educational reform (Fenech et al., 2010; Gronlund & James, 2008; Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006; Kilgallon, Maloney, & Lock, 2008; VCAA, 2015; Waniganayake et al., 2008).

The meaning of discourse has also been explored by Parker (1992) who advised that “a good working definition of a discourse should be that it is *a system of statements that construct an object*” (p. 5, original emphasis). This definition was further developed through the seven specific criteria for discourse analysis (see **Figure 6**). These criteria indicate that discourses are historically situated, articulate structures of meanings recognised within texts, and are associated with specific objects and encompass people; and moreover, discourses interact with other discourses and are reflective upon their own forms of expression (Parker, 1992).



Figure 6: Seven criteria of discourse - information adapted from Parker (1992)

This diagram utilises the capillary structure (Rivalland, 2010). Its main artery represents the discourses, which in this case, are the reforms beginning in 2009 (such as the EYLF, the VEYLDF and the NQF). These discourses flow through the smaller capillaries, interacting with other discourses, yet framing the meanings and available subject positions. It is important to note that the diagram of capillaries are fuzzy at times, as it represents how discourses are dispersed; and while they might be less visible to people working in the field, they are still present and active in framing what is possible.

Research which utilises discourse analysis however ought to exceed the abovementioned criteria by also contemplating “the role of institutions, power and ideology” (Parker, 1992, p. 3). This has been reinforced by Ortlipp (2003a):

Some discourses, because of their institutional location and wider social circulation, have more social and institutional power, suggesting that subject positions within such discourse may be more desirable, more justifiable, more accessible, and accessed more consistently (p. 33).

This is a relevant point when considering the early childhood context, as the potential power and ideology affiliated with specific institutions seem to play a pivotal role in educational reform initiatives.

Accordingly, it is essential to conceptualise *power* for the purpose of this study, as “we *should* talk about discourse and power in the same breath” (Parker, 1992, p. 18, original emphasis).

Conceptualising power

Just as discourses are interrelated to other discourses, there is also an interconnection between discourse and power (Bullock & Trombley, 1999, p. 675). In relation to Foucault’s work on power, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) have explained that “Foucault analysed the ways in which apparently objective and natural structures in society, which privilege some and punish others for nonconformity, are in fact ‘discourses of power’” (p. 230, original emphasis). The use of such discourses are relevant to this study, as they may assist in pinpointing power structures within the early childhood context, and in determining who held positions of privilege during the introduction of the 2009–2012 early childhood reforms.

Although power can be perceived as discourse, it is also connected to other discourses within a society. As Foucault (1980) explained:

In any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association (p. 93).

This suggests that within society/ies in Victorian (and Australia more broadly), power relations have been established through an economy of discourses in regards to early childhood education. However, there are multiple ways that power is involved. Foucault’s conceptual theories regarding power are quite complex. According to Foucault (1980), there are four facets of power (see **Table 15**).

Table 15: Four facets of power – information adapted from Foucault (1980, pp. 92-93)

Four Facets of Power
1. Power as a collection of enforced <i>relations</i>
2. Power as conflicted <i>processes</i> which either change, enhance, or repeal relations
3. Power as a <i>support</i> within an intersection of relations which construct a sequence or inconsistencies
4. Power as <i>strategies</i> whereby power is developed within social structures and practices

The table above provides a useful tool for the current study, as it constructs questions regarding the positioning of power during early childhood reforms. Firstly, what power relations were present at the time of these reforms? Secondly, what were the effects of the processes of power – did the power strategies used ultimately change, enhance or repeal relations among professionals? Thirdly, how did power support relations and did this result in an effective sequence or incoherent inconsistencies for professionals? And finally, what power strategies were utilised in the initial transition to reforms? Foucault’s theories regarding structural and relational power assist in answering such important questions.

The concept of power involves several key elements (as depicted in **Figure 7**). This diagram uses the capillary system to illustrate the interconnections of these elements. The main artery represents power in regards to early childhood reform. Power flows through the smaller capillaries impacting and being impacted by these other elements. Foucault (1979) has described that power relations involve shared association which outlines “innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of power relations” (p. 27). This suggests that power relations are always in flux and conflict. This seems visible within the Australian context, as changing governments lead to changing agendas which ultimately shift power to and from different sectors. This statement also indicates that if power is a temporary and unstable position, it may only be possible to decipher who possesses power at a specific point in time.

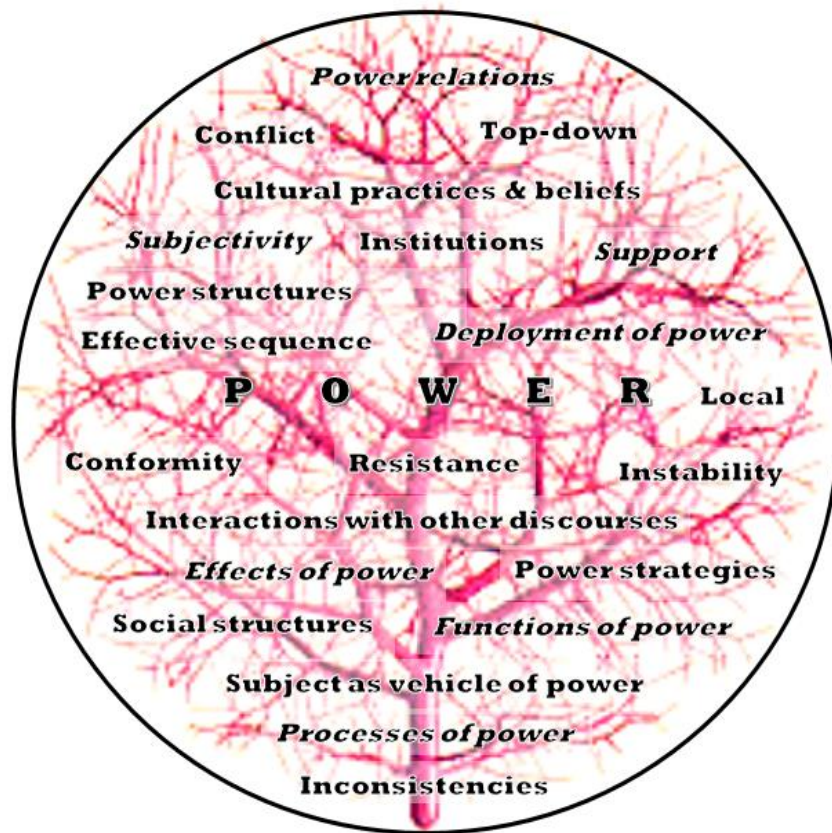


Figure 7: Conceptualisation of power – information adapted from Bullock and Trombley (1999), Foucault (1979, 1980) and Jackson and Mazzei (2012)

Power relations involve specific functions and effects of power within power structures (such as institutions) which often possess elevated status and responsibilities within social structures (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). These power structures influence the way in which power is deployed. This was a key objective of Foucault’s research – to investigate “the deployment of power, a deployment that makes visible how the subject is constructed through social relations and cultural practices” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 54). This may assist in understanding whether the reforms which began in 2009 have shifted the positioning of power, social relations and practices for early childhood professionals in the field. Another factor relates to the power structures involved in initiating the reforms and how professionals perceive the way in which these reforms were introduced. It will be useful to investigate the deployment and effects of power associated with the reforms. This is achieved by investigating the subjectivity of professionals to determine whether they perceive the introduction of these reforms as exemplifying a top-down approach or whether they felt a sense of empowerment during this process. Power and subjectivity are significantly entwined, as power influences the beliefs and practices of people in such a way that people may be classified as “vehicle[s] of power” while the production of subjectivity itself is an effect of, and produced

and transformed through, power/knowledge practices and relations (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 60). Thus, Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge are also interconnected.

Foucault has clearly defined the connection between power and knowledge through the integrated concept of *power/knowledge* or *knowledge-power*. More specifically, Foucault chose "to grant knowledge and power equal status" through his definition of power/knowledge, whereby "power and knowledge generate each other in endless cycles" (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 67). This has been reinforced by Jackson and Mazzei (2012) who supported this cyclic relationship between power and knowledge as they added that "...power and knowledge...merge and become visible as forms of power/knowledge in cultural and material practices within specific conditions" (p. 60). Hence, power/knowledge shapes and reshapes the practices embedded within particular contexts. According to Foucault (1994):

Those wishing to establish a relation between what is known and the political, social or economic forms that serve as context for that knowledge need to trace that relation by way of consciousness or the subject of knowledge. It seems to me that the real junction between the economico-political processes and the conflicts of knowledge might be found in those forms which are, at the same time, modes of power exercise and modes of knowledge acquisition and transmission a form of knowledge-power. (pp. 51-52).

This is an important statement for the current study, as the lens of power and knowledge (utilised independently and in unison) may signify how the practices of professionals have been shaped and reshaped as a result of power/knowledge within their individual early childhood contexts. Moreover, this lens may decipher whether the privileged power and knowledge within these specific contexts has shifted since the reforms. According to Foucault, the practices and relations of power/knowledge can be defined as "continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors ... subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts" (Foucault, 2002, p. 74). This connection between power and knowledge suggests that knowledge requires specific conditions to become lived truth (Foucault, 2003). Therefore, if knowledge requires power to become truth, it is useful to investigate the experiences of professionals regarding the power attributed to early childhood reforms, and how its new knowledge was constructed and received.

The construction of knowledge transpires within relations of power and as a function of power, whereby power can be perceived "as productive and relational: power relations that are unstable, unequal, and produce knowledge about the self" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 54). The concepts of 'power' and 'the self' have also been defined as technologies. According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017)

“technologies of power seek to govern human conduct at a distance while technologies of self are techniques by which human beings seek to regulate and improve their conduct” (p. 118, sic). This infers that there is a clear relationship between power, knowledge and subjectivity which means that power influences knowledge, while power and knowledge shape and reshape subjectivity. Correspondingly, “Foucault’s power/knowledge doublet captures how people’s actions are local reactions and responses, even struggles and resistances, and are temporarily embedded within specific, and shifting, relations of power” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 49). The concepts of power and knowledge are significantly interrelated (see **Figure 8**). Using the capillary structure, the diagram below illustrates the conjoined concept of power/knowledge as the main artery, its underpinning elements which flow through the smaller capillaries.

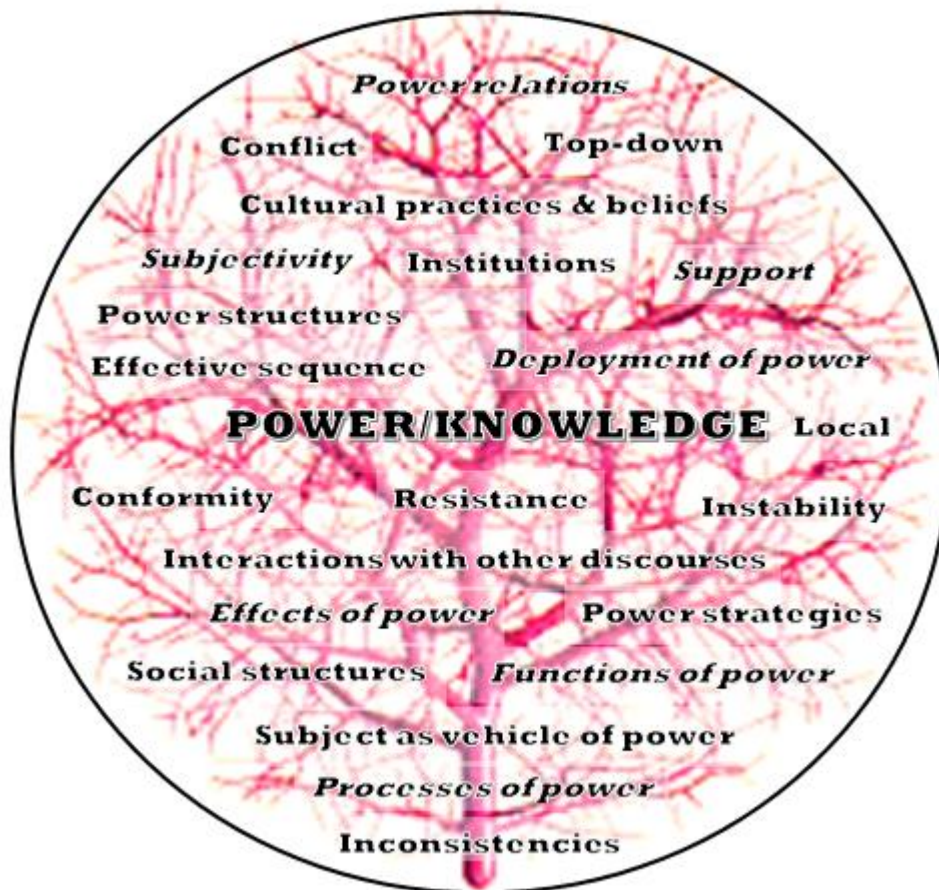


Figure 8: Conceptualisation of power/knowledge – information adapted from Foucault (2002, 2003), Jackson and Mazzei (2012) and O’Farrell (2005)

Although these concepts are interrelated, the present study utilises these concepts independently. This is considered an acceptable course of action, as O’Farrell (2005) has noted:

On most occasions...Foucault discusses the relation between power and knowledge without using the hyphenated term, thus creating more of a distinction between the two categories. In actual fact, the hyphenated term which has also been translated into English as power/knowledge, appears relatively infrequently in Foucault's work... (p. 101).

As such, this study demonstrates a significant acknowledgement of the interconnectedness between Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge, while strongly emphasising the substance of each individual concept. By taking this direction, a more comprehensive analysis can be achieved through an in-depth engagement with the underpinning elements embedded within each of these key theoretical concepts.

Conceptualising knowledge

Foucault's conceptions of *knowledge* have transformed throughout his extensive works over time. For instance, he believed that human knowledge could be generated and explained, though attempts to organise this knowledge were always limited (O'Farrell, 2005). Foucault's works included the introduction of the *episteme* or *epistemological fields* which referred to "the emergence of scientific and pre-scientific forms of knowledge during specific periods in history" (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 63). Within these periods of time, the way in which knowledge was understood changed considerably (see **Table 16**).

Table 16: Conceptions of knowledge - information adapted from O'Farrell (2005)

Period in time	Conceptions of 'knowledge'
The Renaissance	All knowledge could be accurately interpreted using the theory of resemblance
The Classical Age	Texts and objects could be classified into systematic charts
The Nineteenth Century	The classification of knowledge began with the quest for historical origins

Foucault's concept of knowledge has been described as "an *activity* that produces subjects and the ways in which they interact within and against their social and material worlds" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 60). This implies that knowledge influences the formation of subjectivity, practices and interactions. Two distinctions have been developed by Foucault regarding his conceptions of knowledge. For instance, *savoir* specifies "*constructed* knowledge about oneself, knowledge that is produced in experience and relations with others", while *connaissance* stipulates "didactic, received knowledge (such as family values) and is most visible in constructions of self/Other, where a fixed self is defined by its Other (e.g.

man/woman)” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, pp. 50-51, original emphasis). More specifically, Foucault (1994) has explained:

I use the word “*savoir*” [“knowledge”] while drawing a distinction between it and the word “*connaissance*” [“knowledge”] as a process by which the subject undergoes a modification through the very things that one knows... or, rather, in the course of the work that one does in order to know. It is what enables one both to modify the subject and to construct the object. *Connaissance* is the work that makes it possible to multiply the knowable objects, to manifest their intelligibility, to understand their rationality, while maintaining the fixity of the inquiring subject (p. 256, original emphasis).

Further descriptions of knowledge have been developed by Foucault which relate to the *archaeology of knowledge* and the *genealogy of knowledge*. Firstly, *archaeology* is affiliated with the historical origins of history and is loosely focused upon discourses (O’Farrell, 2005). This clear link between knowledge and discourse reinforces the relevance of Foucault’s concepts and discourse analysis used in this study. Furthermore, this reference to historical knowledge emphasises the importance of considering the historical underpinnings of the early childhood field (as explored in Chapter One) when investigating what knowledge is considered privileged by professionals. According to Mac Naughton (2005):

To understand history was to understand the discursive struggles, the different forces, the gaps and the contradictions that produced our pasts and that overlap with our present. Therefore, history could never be a simple chronology where one event logically led to another. Events may have no effect on the future and an event in one century may mark time before its effects are seen in another time and place, but events may be linked through discourse, i.e. shared ways of making sense of the world (p. 148).

This statement reinforces the significance of the historical eras outlined in Chapter One. It is essential to note the chronology of events in the Victorian (and broader Australian) early childhood field. However, the underpinning discourses which may construct and connect these histories and events are just as important for consideration. In regards to this reference, Prado (2000) has advised:

The aim is not to assess the truth of knowledge-systems’ claims, but to understand how those claims come to be claims, how they are deemed justified or otherwise within knowledge-systems, and how some of them come to constitute knowledge within those systems (p. 25).

Archaeology involves the acknowledgement of specific *conditions of possibility* which generate knowledge through a process of bringing to light and examining suppressed knowledge (O’Farrell, 2005). This element assists in pinpointing which knowledge is valued by professionals and their institutions in regards to the knowledge embedded within the reform documents. Prado (2000) has expanded upon this

process, as he described that “in tracing what generates a discipline, an expert perspective, or knowledge, the archaeologist offers an account of the conditions within which one set of judgments and statements is deemed true” (Prado, 2000, p. 30). This process allows an effective evaluation of the conditions and knowledge attributed to the discipline of early childhood education.

Foucault utilised a method of *genealogy* “to explore the traces and absences of the past in our present”, and map practices of power and knowledge within specific institutions (Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 150). This concept of *genealogy* aims to identify differences, similarities, patterns and limitations pertaining to how knowledge is systematised, and focuses upon the historical divide between perceived truths and falsities which are manufactured from power (O’Farrell, 2005). As such, this study attempts to decipher how knowledge regarding early childhood reform is categorised by professionals and what restrictions these categories entail. This reinforces the connection between knowledge and power, and how power influences the value attributed to knowledge.

The concept of knowledge has been described as always being “...shaped by political, social and historical factors – by ‘power’ – in human societies (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 54). It is necessary to analyse the impact these factors have on the constructions and restrictions of knowledge. The influence of politics has been acknowledged by Foucault (1974a) through his reference to *politics of knowledge*, whereby “there cannot be particular types of subjects of knowledge, orders of truth, or domains of knowledge except on the basis of political conditions that are the very ground on which the subject, the domains of knowledge, and the relations with truth are formed” (p. 9). This reference to truth illustrates what Foucault (1997) has described as *regimes of truth*, where specific truth claims from a particular time and place are fictionally produced through *truth games* which convey the politics of knowledge of a particular context and period in time. The concept of ‘truth games’ has been defined as a technology which operates “either on a larger political scale or among local and specific instances of local interaction” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118, original emphasis). In relation to truth in the early childhood context, Mac Naughton (2005) has raised questions about “what we hold to be true about...child development or early childhood curriculum” (p. 5). This is relevant to the field due to the shifting knowledge base and subsequent reforms that have forced many professionals to rethink their perceptions regarding what constitutes early childhood education.

The *politics of knowledge* is also closely connected to the use of language, particularly the ways in which people discuss and describe their own subjectivities, practices and institutions. This concept provides a useful tool for analysing the language used by participants involved in this study, to identify the perceived

truths and politics of knowledge regarding educational reform held by early childhood professionals in the field.

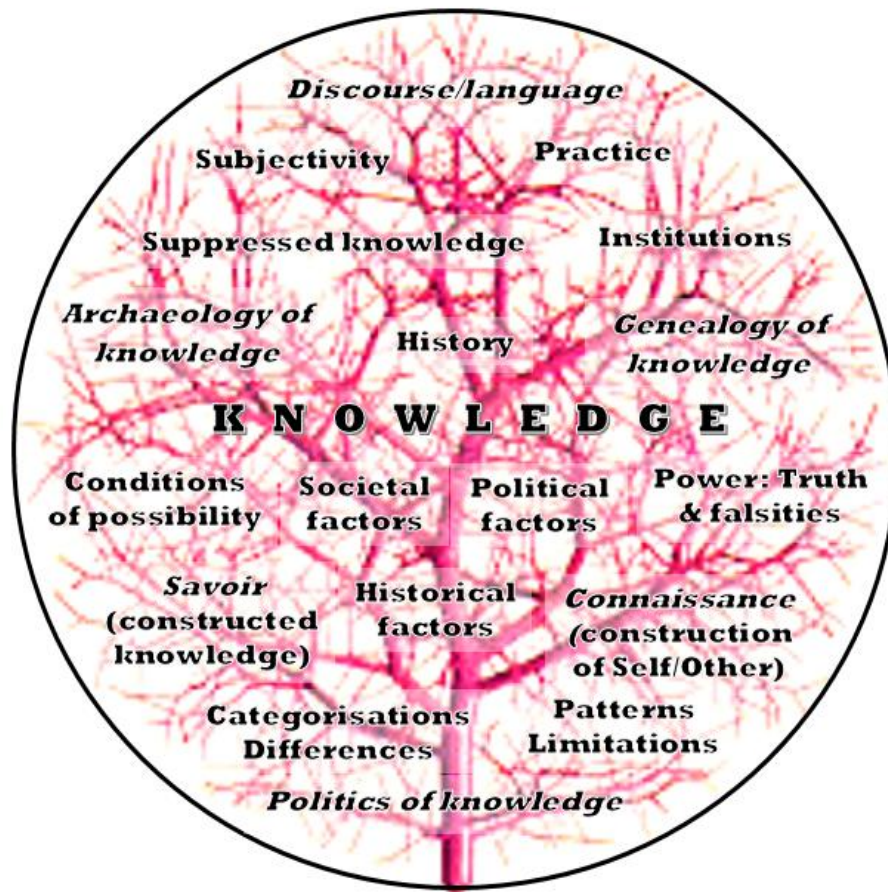


Figure 9: Conceptualisation of knowledge – information adapted from Foucault (1974a, 1997), Jackson and Mazzei (2012), O’Farrell (2005) and Prado (2000)

Conclusively, Foucault’s concept of knowledge is complex and encompasses many elements. Utilising the capillary structure (see **Figure 9**), knowledge is illustrated as the main artery, while other key elements flow through the smaller capillaries. These elements are relevant to this study and assist in effectively exploring how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the engagement and positioning of early childhood professionals in the field. The following section illustrates how Foucault’s concepts of discourse, power and knowledge are utilised for the purpose of the present study.

Conceptualising a framework for analysing educational reform discourses

This study utilised Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge as valuable tools to examine the strategies and positions of early childhood professionals in relation to reform. However, it is necessary to recognise that "over the course of his writings, Foucault's ideas and methods had changed in relation to the problems he worked on... As such, there is no consistent programme of work from which to extract a methodology" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 20017, p. 110). Consequently, an analytical tool has been constructed to portray how these concepts and change models are interwoven for the purpose of this study (see **Figure 10** below, and **Appendix F** for a larger version). For the purpose of visibility, the capillary structure has been faded to grey in order to provide greater clarity of the embedded text. The main artery of the capillary structure illustrates early childhood educational reform as the discursive object (explained in Chapter Four). The smaller branches of the capillary structure represent the concepts of discourse, power and knowledge; while their associated elements flow through the smaller capillaries.

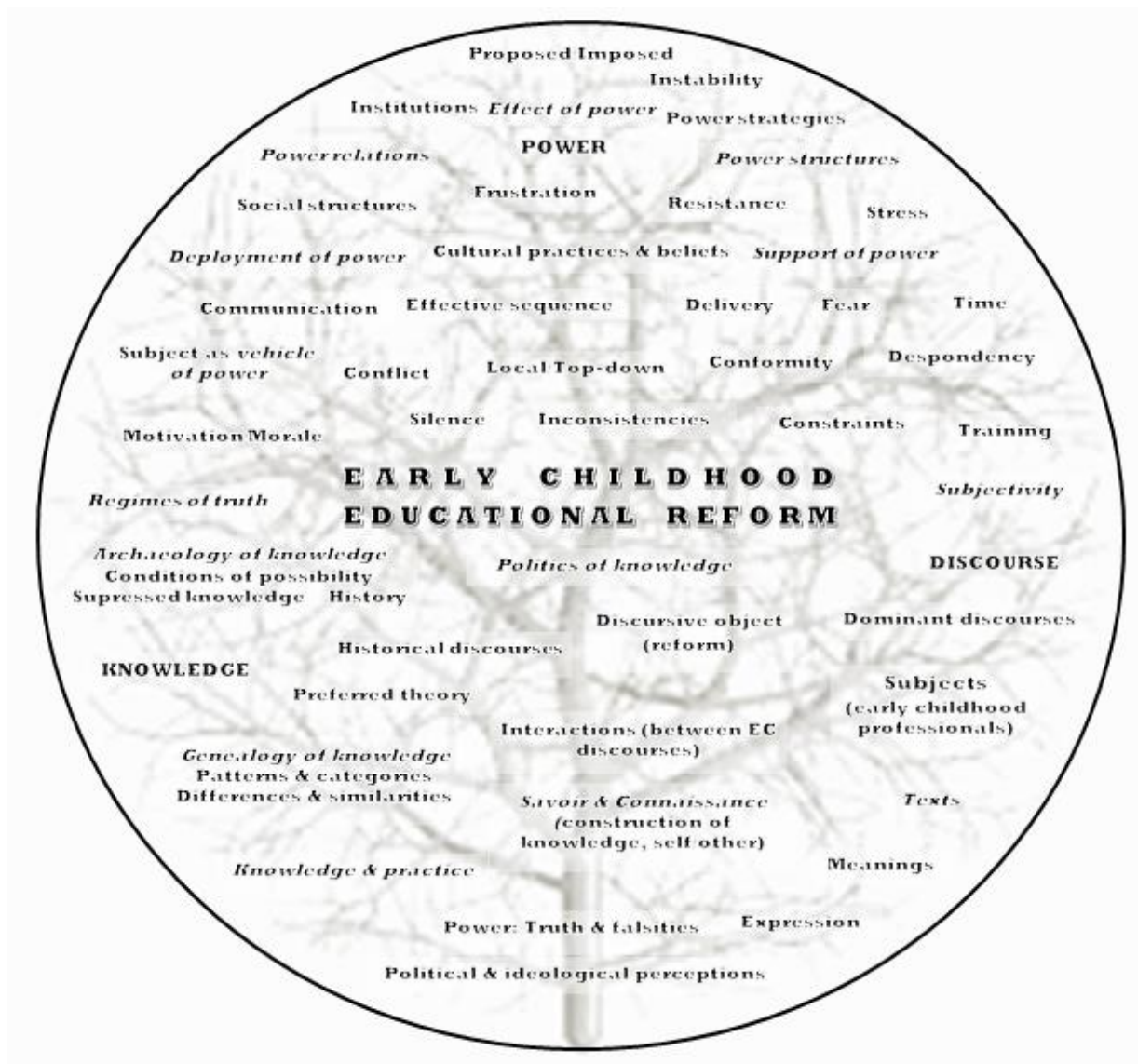


Figure 10: The Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FECR) model, constructed as an analytical framework for the analysis of early childhood educational reform

The Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FECR) model was constructed as an analytical framework for the analysis of early childhood educational reform. It illustrates how Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge can be made visible within early childhood educational reform. This is evident by investigating how the early childhood reforms were initiated (*deployment of power*), how these reforms were received (*effects of power*), whether these reforms required a shift in dominant discourse (*privileged knowledge and regimes of truth*), and how professionals were supported throughout this process (*support of power*). As such, by unpacking the underpinning elements of these concepts during the process of *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* (FDA) (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), a better

understanding of how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the engagement and positioning of professionals is achievable. Based on these underpinning concepts, the Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FEER) model provides an innovative analytical framework for the purpose of the present study.

Summary

This chapter has presented detailed information regarding the conceptual underpinnings of the present study. More specifically, Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge have been unpacked including an explanation of how these concepts are relevant to the investigation of reform engagement in Victorian (and more broadly, Australian) early childhood education. Based on a post-structural understanding of these concepts with a focus on early childhood reform, a conceptual model has been constructed to address the overarching research question: *How do educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in Victorian long day care settings?* The following chapter describes the methodology in which this conceptual framework is applied.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter reveals the research design, methodology and methods for participant selection and recruitment, as well as data collection, transcription and analysis. In addition, ethical considerations, limitations, reliability, validity and researcher position are also addressed. The theoretical framework developed for the present study draws on Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse (1972), power (1979, 1980) and knowledge (1994, 1997), and uses Willig's (2013) version of *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* (FDA). As a point of reflection, the present study explores the research question:

How do educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in Victorian long day care settings?

More explicitly, the study investigates:

- *What strategies are utilised by early childhood professionals to understand, cope and engage in educational reform?*
- *How do educational reform discourses position early childhood professionals within the processes of change?*

For the purpose of this study, a post-structuralist perspective has been taken. According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017), "post-structuralism introduced new theoretical tools for dismantling a monolithic view of power proposed under Marxism and structuralism" (p. 111). A post-structural paradigm is reflective of the literature detailed in Chapter Two, which highlights the shifting discourses relating to the production and dissemination of knowledge (Appleyard, 1996; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994) and the privilege associated with specific content knowledge (Goldstein, 2008; Gomez, 2012; Grieshaber, 2008). In addition, the literature reviewed to date has indicated the presence of power relations involved in the instigation of educational reforms (Baker & Foote, 2003; Moore & Fink, 2003), and the diverse and subjective perceptions of professionals and policymakers regarding these reforms (Gomez, 2012; Liu & Feng, 2005; Wedell, 2009). Furthermore, a post-structuralist perspective "seeks to understand the dynamics of relationships between knowledge/meaning, power and identity" (Hughes, 2010, p. 51).

As such, the concepts of power, knowledge and discourse offered an effective lens in exploring how early childhood professionals engaged with educational reform, and illuminated the notion that "everything and everyone can – and does – shift and change all the time" (Hughes, 2010, p. 50). For this reason, post-

structuralism provided the necessary theoretical understanding to unpack discourses of change within the field of early childhood education (ECE) in Australia through its history.

Research design

This section outlines the research processes involved in the current study which emphasises the qualitative approach of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis [FDA] (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) to the research design, methodology and methods within a post-structural paradigm. Also included are the ethical considerations, limitations, reliability and validity pertaining to the methodological approach of the participant selection, data collection and analysis which underpin this research study.

The research design developed for this study defines a specific set of procedures which reflects my position as researcher. Bryman (2012) noted that the adoption of a particular research design indicates the priority appointed to specific characteristics of the research methods. Moreover, the construction of the research design must be “ethical, purposeful, well designed, transparent, contextualised, credible, careful, imaginative and equitable” (Rolfe & Mac Naughton, 2010, p. 10). These key elements have been thoroughly considered within the research design process and are visible throughout the following sections.

As mentioned previously, this study embodies a qualitative approach to research. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 13). It has been my task, as researcher, to highlight the “constant instability without attempting to ‘capture’ or stabilise it” (Hughes, 2010, p. 50, original emphasis). Thus, my objective has been to utilise a *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* approach, as it allows researchers to examine how participants construct specific processes, experiences and events (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). Using this approach, the decision-making processes regarding my theoretical position, research design and methodology have been significantly influenced by, and reflective of, my overarching research question. In relation to this understanding, Grix (2002) has explained that when conducting research, “...it is our ontological and epistemological positions that shape the very questions we may ask in the first place, how we pose them and how we set about answering them” (p. 179). These positions have been detailed in-depth in chapter Three.

In alignment with FDA (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), this study was structured in a way that portrayed an *inductive* approach (Roberts-Holmes, 2011) whereby research produces theory (Bryman, 2012). Similarly, this type of research can also be defined as *basic research* focused on “obtaining empirical data used to formulate and expand theory” (Ary et al., 2014, p. 38). Although some pre-existing themes have been deduced from the literature (such as the strong connections between change, teacher education and professional development), new ideas have emerged directly from my research data which were conducted “in collaboration with participants, to elucidate the complex and multiple meanings and relationships that exist...” amid specific institutions (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010, p. 52). The inclusion of deductive elements within an inductive approach has been validated by Bryman (2012) as he suggested that “the inductive process is likely to entail a modicum of deduction” (p. 26). Consequently, the data generated by participants has made it possible to interpret their individual and collective contexts and understandings to generate theory using specific qualitative methods. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) have described “methods as being some of the ingredients of research, whilst methodology provides the reasons for using a particular research recipe” (p. 23). As such, the methods associated with participant selection, data collection and analysis utilised in this study are detailed and justified later in this chapter.

The qualitative methodology utilised in the current study is reflective of the integral role these factors play in the study of the social sciences. O'Toole and Beckett (2010) have recognised that “human reality is socially and symbolically constructed, constantly changing in relation to other facts of social life” (p. 63). Correspondingly, this methodology assists in recognising the fluidity of social and contextual factors that influence how participants continuously construct, re-construct and interpret meaning. Furthermore, it effectively examines meaning through language and interactions while utilising diverse strategies for inquiry, analysis and the interpretation of emerging discursive constructions from various data sources generated with participants (Creswell, 2003).

Phase One: Selection and recruitment

The initial action taken for the purpose of this research was to obtain ethics approval via the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) (see **Appendix A**) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) (see **Appendix B**). In order to achieve these approvals, a detailed Explanatory Statement (see **Appendix C**) and consent form (see **Appendix D**) were constructed for potential participants. Upon approval, the research phases commenced, involving specific steps for the recruitment, data collection and analysis phases. Phase one (see **Figure 11**) utilised traditional recruitment

methods such as telephone and face-to-face methods to initially make contact with potential participants at selected research sites.

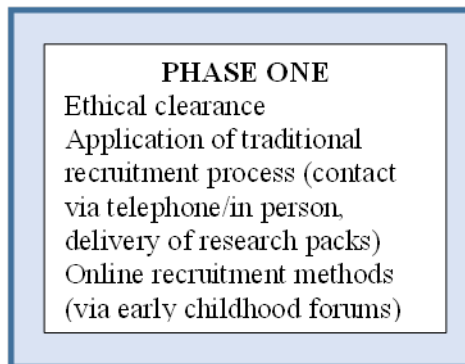


Figure 11: Phase one of the research process

Research site selection

This research study employed a *purposive sampling* method to select and recruit participants. Creswell (2003) has articulated that “the idea behind qualitative research is to *purposefully* select subjects or sites... that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p. 185, original emphasis). Purposeful sampling is a suitable technique for qualitative research which permits the researcher to select participants and sites according to set criteria and relevance to the research question (Bryman, 2012). In addition, it has been acknowledged that “...any context or setting is suitable for analysis as long as it contains a historical sensitivity towards the objects and problems investigated” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 115). As such, sensitivity has been expressed throughout the research process within the six research sites selected from the long day care (LDC) sector.

Research participants within selected sites

For the purpose of this study, participants were selected from a range of early childhood sites which were impacted by the reforms introduced from 2009. As this selection pertained specifically to participants and sites from long day care (LDC), this type of sampling was determined as *stratified case sampling* which involved the “sampling of usually typical cases or individuals within subgroups of interest” (Bryman, 2012, p. 419).

Once the sites were identified, it was important to have an understanding of the different roles and qualifications held by the EC professionals within these different sites and make a decision regarding the selection criterion. Based on the findings Kilderry, Nolan and Scott’s (2017) Victorian study (outlined in

Chapter One: Rationale), and the findings of my literature review in Chapter Two, I decided to recruit participants who had been qualified prior to the implementation of the reforms beginning in 2009, as well as those who had been qualified following the reforms. The purpose for these distinctions was to address tensions found throughout the literature regarding the value of theory and practice (Britzman, 1991; Dyson, 2005; Krieg, 2010; Lohmander, 2004) and to determine how the educational and experiential positions of these professionals have contributed to their level of engagement with educational reforms.

The motives for this selection criterion were to ascertain whether the initial teacher education and educator training of these early childhood professionals had supported their ability to understand and engage in educational reforms (Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). Another aspect involved in the participant selection process related to the positioning of professionals within their early childhood institutions. In particular, how early childhood professionals engage with educational reforms may not only be influenced by their level of qualification and knowledge base (Hargreaves, 2005), but also their hierarchical positioning within their institution. These aspects further validated the inclusion of both Diploma qualified educators and Bachelor qualified teachers within the present study.

Entering the physical early childhood field

As I entered the early childhood field, I applied the traditional recruitment process Denzin (cited in Chen, Hall, & Johns, 2004) which consisted of contacting centres via telephone and delivering research packs for potential participants (summarised above in **Figure 11**). However, this traditional recruitment process proved to be ineffective and led me to refusal, but also responses that indicated that tension might still be present since the implementation of reforms. Some of these tensions related to stress, workload, and already overextended schedules and commitments at various centres. For example, one LDC director suggested that the EYLF was simply “hogwash” and that her centre still predominantly used the developmental milestones in their practice. While, another director from a LDC centre seemed interested in the study but stated that she held no qualification. She also voiced her opinions regarding the quality of early childhood courses offered by the RTOs, as well as educators who had difficulties with the English language. Whereas, another LDC director shared some information that helped me understand the stress, workload and challenges faced by the staff employed within their own specific context. They were in a position of educating and caring for children in a low socio-economic and highly disadvantaged area where the majority of children attending were involved with Child Protection Services.

Although these early childhood professionals seemed to be pushed to their limits, the director indicated that the frameworks worked well and they were lucky to have the support of “critical friends” such as

well-known early childhood academics, while other centres were not so fortunate. It seemed that professionals at this centre had greater priorities and challenges to deal with than their understanding of the frameworks. These conversations put things in perspective for me as a researcher. After consultation with my supervisors, I decided to revisit my research methods in order to become more flexible in my recruitment process. This decision led me to consider other recruitment approaches.

Entering the virtual early childhood field

Responding to the reality of the field, I explored various recruitment methods. Being personally active on a number of early childhood forums, I considered that this might prove to be an effective method for the recruitment of potential participants. Hence, I turned to the literature to investigate if this was possible. I studied how research methods involving social media platforms have been utilised in qualitative research. It was difficult to locate online research methods which were solely applied as a method of participant recruitment, although I located some relevant literature regarding its use in general, as a tool for data collection and as an entire research genre.

In regards to online research as a whole, Fielding, Lee, and Blank (2008) have argued that “It is hardly an exaggeration to observe that the Internet has had, is having, and will have a major impact on research methods at every stage of the research process, and beyond” (p. 3). The increasing significance of online research within qualitative inquiry and social science research has also been articulated by Denzin (cited in Chen, Hall, & Johns, 2004) who explained:

Online research molds traditional qualitative research methods to the Internet environment. This environment encompasses a variety of venues and spaces, including e-mail, chatrooms, web pages, list serves, [and] various forms of ‘instant messaging’ ... Internet research represents a key transformation within this broader social movement. It holds virtual and real-world inquiry into the same set of interpretive practices. The transformations in online and real-world qualitative inquiry that gained momentum in the late 1990s continue into the new century. If today few look back with skepticism on the narrative turn in the social sciences, fewer still will question the pervasive presence and relevance of online environments for qualitative inquiry (p. 1, original emphasis, sic).

This explanation indicates that the evolution of the digital age and society’s online presence has formed an emergence with the world of research. It also infers that using the internet and digital technologies to engage in qualitative research has gained traction and relevance due to the increasingly dominant role it plays in daily life, particularly through social communications. Therefore, the utilisation of online means such as social media platforms to recruit and communicate with potential participants is justified as an effective means for the present qualitative study.

Being satisfied with the validity of this recruitment process, I amended my ethics approval through the *Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee* (MUHREC) to reflect this change (see **Appendix A**). I posted research invitations to a number of Facebook early childhood groups. I also obtained approval from website administration staff to advertise my research through the Facebook pages of key early childhood associations. This recruitment method proved to be an effective process, as many professionals responded via this approach which also led a snowballing effect. This was particularly true for new participants located within the same sites as original participants.

The snowballing effect has been explained by Robins (2015) as a relatively simple process whereby the researcher aims to acquire “a seed set of respondents...interview each of the seed set and obtain a list of their network partners; interview each person on the list of network partners; and so on, for as many waves as required” (p. 114). An example of how snowballing was visible in the current study was when I met with an educator in the south-east, who had previously responded to my online invitation. While I was there, her centre coordinators and two of her colleagues displayed interest in being part of the study. As a result, these early childhood professionals also became participants. The phenomenon of the snowballing effect substantially facilitated the inclusion of participants from a diverse range of perspectives and positions.

Inclusion of broader participant positions

Based on my first experiences of entering the field, it was clear that I needed to include the specific positions of early childhood professionals (see **Figure 12**). Using the capillary structure, the diagram below presents the roles and positions of participants through the main artery. The branches represent how these roles and positions are interconnected and at times, overlapping. Within each of these roles and positions are different discourses. These discourses are enmeshed with one another and are illustrated by the smaller capillaries.

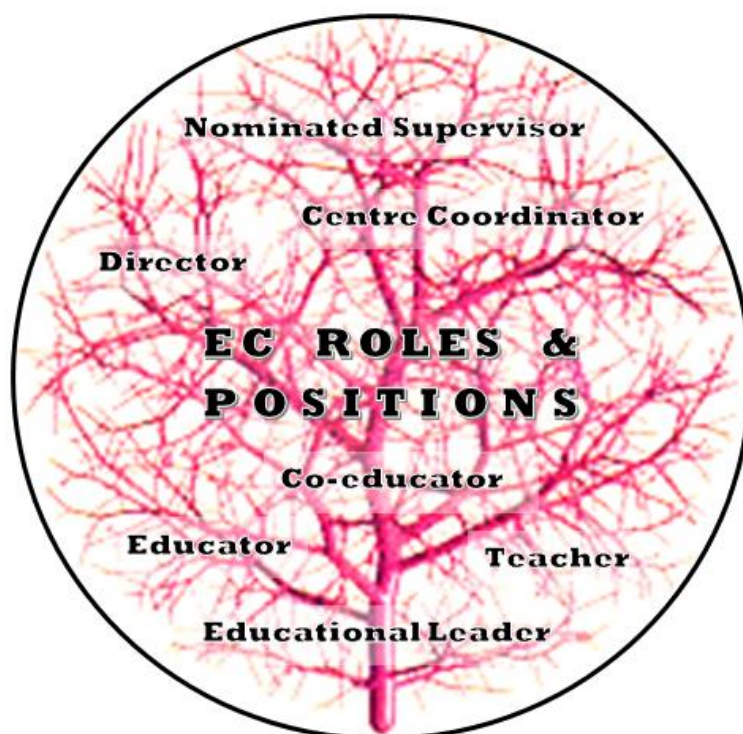


Figure 12: Overlapping positions and roles of participants

Once in the field, I realised that with the implementation of the new reforms, new roles and positions had been created within these sites and I needed to amend my selection criteria to incorporate those new roles into the research. As a result of these amendments, I was able to identify the participants' qualification levels and year of completion, as well as their years of experience, and the positions held by participants within each service type. I chose to include late-career educators, co-educators and directors in the study who were trained prior to the 2009 reforms, as well as early to mid-career educators and teachers qualified following the reforms. This meant that the qualification levels of these participants differed substantially, between Certificate III and Diploma (or equivalent), to Bachelor and Masters Degrees. Levels of experience also varied considerably.

It was necessary to acknowledge the specific roles held by participants, particularly concerning the roles of Educational Leaders (EL) and Nominated Supervisors (NS). These roles are relatively new to the early childhood field, as they were introduced as part of the amended *Education and Care Services National Regulations* in 2011 (MCEECDYA, 2011). The EL role was established to facilitate quality in Australian early childhood programs. Although, Fleet, Soper, Semann and Madden (2015) have indicated that the definition of this role lacks clarity and is constrained by high expectations. However, Nuttall, Thomas and Wood (2014) have acknowledged that these expectations require professionals to understand their own

knowledge regarding leadership, and become confident in their ability to influence the knowledge, learning and practice of their colleagues. Consequently, the issue with this policy initiative is that early childhood professionals generally “have little or no knowledge of how to promote adult learning and development” (Nuttall, Thomas & Wood, 2014, p. 361). Furthermore, it has been emphasised that “one of the key challenges faced by Australian ECECE practitioners is lack of, and access to, relevant, ongoing leadership opportunities” (Fenech, 2013, p. 90).

In regards to the role of Nominated Supervisor, minimal research could be found at the time of the present study. However, according to ACECQA (n.d.), the NS has a range of responsibilities which include: overseeing educational programs, sleep and rest policies, excursions, staffing, entry and exit to the premises, food and beverages, medications, and exclusion from drugs and alcohol. The significant point to take from this description is the reference to educational programs, as this is often considered the responsibility of educators and teachers. As such, discussions with participants surrounding these roles now form an essential part of this study.

My participants

Initially, I intended to recruit 24 participants, however, this number escalated to 39 across three service types, due to the snowballing effect and amendments that needed to be made once in the field. However, due to the magnitude of data collected, I could not honour the participation of everyone within the constraints of the thesis. As such I have decided to only present the data of the long day care group, and include the other data in future publications and book chapters. Hence, 11 participants from Victorian long day care (LDC) settings contributed to this study. A more detailed description of participant demographics can be found in Chapter Five (see **Table 19**).

The participants involved in this study were situated in a range of locations in the south-east, north-east and eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria. The scale of their experience spanned from nine months to 44 years, and they held a number of positions such as director/centre coordinator, teacher (studying or qualified), educator or co-educator. Though, many held multiple positions simultaneously which included the newly appointed roles of Educational Leader and Nominated Supervisor. Meanwhile, the qualification levels of participants ranged from Diploma (or equivalent, i.e. Mothercraft Nurse/grandfathered course), Bachelor and Masters Degrees, and were categorised as being undertaken either prior to, or following the reforms beginning in 2009 (see **Table 19** in Chapter Five). This distinction was made to understand the various discourses and subject positioning framed by different levels of teacher education, experiences and understandings of reforms throughout the data collection phase.

Phase Two: Data collection

Phase two (see **Figure 13**) comprised of data collection which involved the use of three data generation tools which are discussed below.

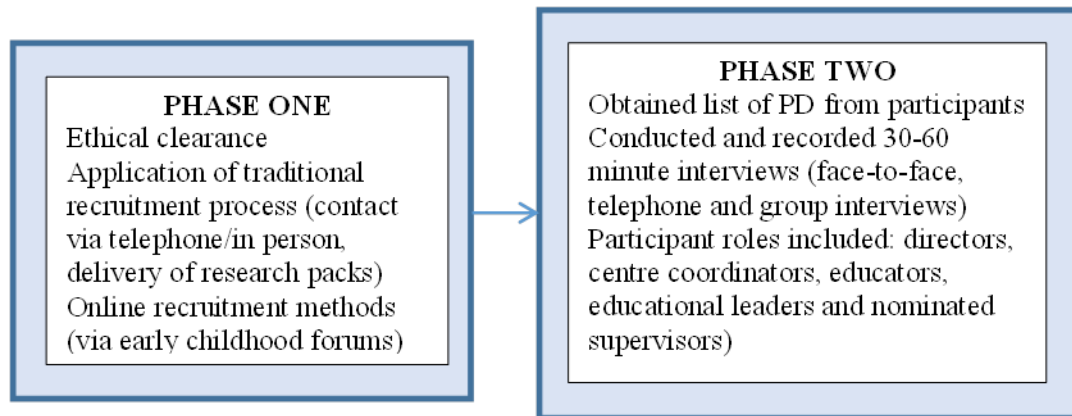


Figure 13: Phase two of the research process

Data generation tool 1: List of professional development programs

Prior to the interview, participants were asked to construct a list of professional development (PD) programs they had engaged in following the 2009 reforms. This involved writing down the date, topic, method and duration of these programs on a PD list template. The benefit of using these PD lists as a data generation tool ensured that participants offered data compiled in a thoughtful and attentive manner (Creswell, 2003). The participants involved in this study were then invited to bring their lists accessed since the implementation of the reforms to the interview for further discussion (see **Figure 14** below, and **Appendix G** for a larger sample).

Attention Participants:
Please list your professional development opportunities that were associated with the recent early childhood reforms. The names of organisations will be replaced with pseudonyms for the purpose of the research study. Please bring this list with you to your scheduled interview. Thank you.

Professional Development Opportunities (associated with recent early childhood reforms)			
Organisation (Who ran the PD?)	Content (What was the topic?)	Delivery Method (Online/workshop/seminar?)	Date/Year & Duration (Hours/weeks?)
- An assessment training officer	- Documentation planning	Meeting with all staff members & centre	3 Feb 2015 - 2 hrs.
Anthony Seaman	'More than just a job'	Seminar	26/2/2015 2-3 hrs
Gowrie	Managing challenging behaviours.	Seminar	10/9/2007 2 hrs.
Gowrie	Implementation of Framework	Seminar	22/4/2010
Childcare centres association of v.i.c.	EYLF	Seminar	13/7/2010
Anthony Seaman	'Educational leader'	Seminar	March 2013
Anthony Seaman	-Introducing EYLF	Seminar	2010
Emergent curriculum Chisholm	-Foster to Emergent curriculum	Seminar	2009
Documenting the Gowrie	communicating the curriculum.	Seminar	14/5/14

Figure 14: Sample from professional development (PD) data

The purpose of obtaining these lists was to refresh the memories of participants about their PD experiences, and to gain an understanding of the types of programs delivered during the reform period. From an FDA perspective (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), this form of data collection allowed for better identification of the available discourses that shaped the subject and object position of participants through the reform processes. Thus, I envisaged that the information obtained from participants would provide greater insight into the discourses that framed their subject positioning and approaches to change.

The PD lists offered a useful way to obtain information about what professional development opportunities were accessible to participants during the transition period to the new frameworks. It also presented a way of documenting the timing, content, duration and delivery methods of specific PDs. However, with the amendments to participation, this data collection tool proved to be stressful for the co-educator and centre coordinators involved in the study. Responding to their needs, I reassured them that they didn't need to physically complete the PD list, but that we could go over the various PDs they believed had impacted their career and I would fill in the form as they went along during the interview. Through a post-structural lens, it was important to acknowledge aspects of power and knowledge visible within the recruitment process and attempt to negate this as much as possible by altering the way that early childhood professionals could contribute without affecting the data source for analysis. Hence, this amendment did not disrupt the use of FDA (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), as this data was still available through the transcript texts of these participants.

Data generation tool 2: Interviews

The method of interviewing provided a useful data generation tool for the purpose of this study, as it encouraged “‘indirect’ information filtered through the views of interviewees” (Creswell, 2003, p. 186). This method is also reflective of the analysis methods selected for this study, as the use of *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* (FDA) “is widely conducted on a variety of speech activities and settings such as...research interviews (e.g. participant’s accounts and narratives)...” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 115). Therefore, following the acceptance of participants to engage in the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Based on the literature and understanding of the field, I developed a set of questions to act as prompts to direct the interview in order to address specific research questions (Eatough & Smith, 2008). All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants for the transcription process. The purpose of these interviews was to explore how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in the field. The interview questions were constructed to identify the discourses framing the engagement of early childhood professionals with the new reforms, and whether any differences or similarities could be identified between service types, qualification levels, experience with reforms, and stages of the change process.

This method also assisted in the accumulation of historical material provided by participants in regards to their perceptions and experiences of engaging with the new reforms over time. The factor of time has formed an important component of this study, as it is reflective of post-structuralism and historical inquiry (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Furthermore, utilising interviews as a data generation tool is complementary to the use of FDA (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), as the interview approach allows for the researcher to identify statements, themes, arguments, and look for unity and discontinuity within available discourses.

Individual interviews

The first round of interviews consisted of the traditional, one-to-one interview sessions with individual participants. The use of individual interviews encouraged discussions with participants regarding key topics that were aimed to answer the overall research questions. The composition of the interview schedule (see **Appendix E**) facilitated this well, yet it was framed in a way that would guide the direction and progress of interview discussions. With each interview, I utilised some rapport-building techniques to support the level of comfort among participants. For instance, I informally introduced myself and was mindful of using language which corresponded with that of the participants. However, there were several issues that arose during interviews which largely related to noise, location and who was present at the time. For example, one interview was conducted at a public library. Consequently, the noise levels at this

location created problems of distraction and audibility for transcription purposes. Meanwhile during one interview, the presence of a relief worker from a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) may have swayed the discussion and perceptions regarding specific Registered Training Organisations.

Another factor that was considered throughout each interview related to my own positioning. I was conscious of my role in developing interview topics. While these questions were informed by the literature review, they were also influenced by my own experiences in the field. I therefore chose my words, tone, mannerisms and body language carefully, as I asked questions and responded to answers during interviews with participants. I followed up each interview with an entry in my research journal which enabled me to reflect upon and evaluate my own position within the interview process. It was also necessary to acknowledge that my position as a researcher represented one of power. For instance, I was the person asking the questions and then publishing the findings, which has the power to position participants in ways they will have no control over for revisions.

The timeframes of these interviews varied significantly. For instance, prospective participants suggested they would be willing to take part in a 30-minute interview instead of a 60-minute interview. This assisted in acquiring a larger number of participants; however, the position held by participants seemed to affect the length of the interview. For example, the majority of interviews conducted with educators and teachers spanned approximately 40-60 minutes, while interviews conducted with co-educators reached only 20-minutes; and some interviews with directors/coordinators were extended to 90 minutes. Furthermore, differences in timeframes were also impacted by the type of interview conducted.

In response to the complexity of the field, a more flexible approach to interviewing was implemented in order to meet the needs of those participants who were eager to contribute to the study, but could not attend individual face-to-face interviews. These additional interview types comprised telephone and group interviews. Originally, 39 individual, telephone and group interviews were conducted with participants from long day care (LDC), kindergarten and school-based early learning centres (ELCs). However, as mentioned previously, due to the volume of data collected this thesis only reports on data from the LDC group (see **Table 17**).

Table 17: Interview types conducted with participants

Interview type	Participants
Individual	6
Telephone	3
Group	2
Total	11

Group interviews

Group interviews were considered to be a respectful approach that can address the time constraints of participants. According to Fontana and Frey (2008) in Denzin and Lincoln (2008), a “...group interview is essentially a qualitative data-gathering technique that relies on the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in a formal or informal setting” (p. 126). Several advantages regarding this method have also been noted by Fontana and Frey (2008) which relate to cost-efficiency, format flexibility, rich data production, and enhanced stimulation of recall for participants. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the group interview method was utilised as a means to conduct several individual interviews at once.

It is important here to clarify the definitions of group and focus group interviews. According to Punch (2009), “the focus group was originally a particular type of group interview used in marketing and political research, but now the terms ‘focus group interview’ and group interview’ are used more interchangeably”, while “group interviewing is now popular in education and social research, though it is not new” (p. 146, original emphasis). However, I perceive that a focus group may place more emphasis upon the interactions between participants, while group interviews are more useful in collecting the responses to an interviewer’s questions from multiple participants at one time (O’Toole & Beckett, 2013).

Thus, for the purpose of the present study, group interviews were implemented with the two centre coordinators involved in the study. This decision was made to offer a higher level of flexibility, and to increase participant engagement. These intentions have been endorsed by O’Toole and Beckett (2013), as they confirmed that individual interview methods “may not always be possible, and focus groups are a way to collect the voices of larger numbers of informants” (p. 132). Correspondingly, changes were made and approved by *Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee* (MUHREC) to obtain consent for the video-recording of group interviews to assist with the accuracy of transcription.

As an early career researcher conducting my first group interviews, several challenges were acknowledged. Firstly, I had to learn to operate the video equipment and how to later recall the speakers within the group for transcription purposes. I overcame this by drawing a diagram of the names and positions of participants during each group interview. Secondly, it was difficult to recognise who was speaking when group members spoke over one another. With practice though, I was able to adopt some directive methods to ensure that this did not become a concern for audibility.

Having an understanding of the field, I considered that power relations could interfere with the responses of different group members according to their hierarchal positioning within the group. This has been acknowledged by O'Toole and Beckett (2013), who contest:

There is a very real danger in focus groups of silenced voices, often because somebody cannot get a word in edgeways and sometimes because a dissentient voice might be intimidated or even dissuaded by the strength of group opinion. A further extension of this danger is... 'group-think', where, quite unconsciously, a group takes on particular opinions and emphases, reshaping their responses (p. 132).

To counter this issue, separate group interviews based on the professional positions of participants were conducted when possible to avoid the silencing of certain participants regarding their perceptions and experiences – particularly those from the same service. The method of group interviews offered a flexible means to obtain the perceptions and experiences of a range of participants simultaneously. However, it was particularly important to acknowledge tensions of power within the analysis of such interviews.

Telephone interviews

Responding to the field, I decided to include telephone interviews for further flexibility regarding time, location and duration. As such, I was able to include participants in more distant geographical locations. The timeframes for these interviews were reflective of the professional positions of these participants, and were therefore consistent with other types of interviews. Some minor concerns however were identified when utilising this method. Firstly, when attempting to conduct two consecutive telephone interviews, the battery of my cordless residential telephone almost went flat. Secondly, distractions were noted during one interview, whereby interruptions from one participant's young children may have affected her level of engagement. Overall though, this method added to the context and flexibility of the research.

As discussed, the data collection methods of this study required increased flexibility to facilitate participant engagement. The importance of reflecting upon data collection strategies assists in answering

research questions – whether this involves employing a single method, or a combination of methods (Blaise, 2010). Accordingly, the telephone interview was selected as an additional data collection method for this study. Creswell (2014) has described the use of telephone interviews as one of the effective qualitative data collection procedures which encompasses “unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants” (p. 190). It was also found that telephone surveys in general were a useful tool in research methods. Lavrakas (2009) in Bickman and Rog (2009) has explored the ongoing development and preference for the use of telephone surveys as a data collection method for research in the United States of America over three decades. The reasons for this have been linked to the reliability, rapid sequence, cost-efficiency and geographical coverage of this data collection method. It has also been acknowledged that telephone interviews can generate “relatively high response rates”, as well as providing participants with a “greater feeling of anonymity” – and hence there may be less interviewer bias and less social desirability bias than with personal interviews (Ary et al., 2014, p. 408). In a clinical nursing research study, the importance of gauging consistency and assessing preparation strategies has been addressed. In particular, this referred to assessing expectations and reflecting on levels of etiquette and challenges faced during the telephone interview method (Musselwhite, Cuff, McGregor, & King, 2007). Hence, it was important for me to monitor and reflect on these factors throughout the data collection process.

Further, as argued by Bourque and Fielder (2003), the “advantage of both telephone surveys and surveys using in-person interviewing is that respondents need not have a particular level of literacy to participate” (p. 15). As such, telephone surveys (or interviews) provide an effective and more equitable access for participants with different levels of literacy skills and from a range of diverse contexts.

Data generation tool 3: Interactive timeline

The use of the *timeline* (TL) as a data generation tool has largely been associated with clinical studies for the measurement of drug and alcohol consumption (Bedi & Redman, 2006; McKenna & Todd, 1997; Sobell, Sobell, Leo, & Cancilla, 1988). This method has also been referred to as *Timeline Follow-Back* (TLFB) (Sobell & Sobell, 1992). In particular, timelines have been utilised as a self-reporting tool during interviews to assist participants with recounting historical information. Correspondingly, Bedi and Redman (2006) have confirmed that “the use of contextual memory cues increases accuracy of recall” (p. 432). The reliability of the timeline method has been assessed by Sobell et al. (1988) who have verified that “while multiple studies have demonstrated that the TL method has very good psychometric characteristics, the evidence for the method’s validity derives mainly from clinical populations” (p. 401). These studies also suggested that the timeline method is used specifically by the interviewer to physically

record historical information offered by the participant. Consequently, the memory recall and engagement of participants may be further enhanced by completing this timeline themselves as an interactive part of the interview process.

The participants involved in the present study were encouraged to engage in discussions and were prompted by semi-structured questions regarding their experiences and engagement with the early childhood reforms beginning in 2009 (ACECQA, 2012; DEECD & VCAA, 2009; DEEWR, 2009), as well as their teacher education and professional development opportunities. This method corresponded with the literature regarding the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) and ADKAR Organisational Change Model (Hiatt, 2006) as it reflected the significance of time in effectively engaging with educational change and reform. This data collection procedure was designed to map the history of the introduction and implementation of the new reforms in order to provide the necessary data to complete a historical inquiry from a post-structural paradigm and a FDA method (Willig & Stainton Rogers, 2008). Further, the data assisted in gauging the current positioning of participants within the process of change and educational reform.

The use of the timeline during the interview process proved to be an effective method for this study (see **Figure 15** below, and **Appendix G** for a larger example). Similar to the lists of PD, the timeline fostered discussion, engagement, reflection and memory recall for participants, as well as being a directive method to keep the interview on topic. However, there were many variations to the approach and structure utilised by participants as they designed their timelines. One participant made a conscious choice to use a range of colours, while others only used a single colour. The majority of participants constructed a horizontal diagram, yet one participant chose to create a vertical list. Meanwhile, a selection of these PD lists were basic in content, while others specified more detail, such as when they felt comfortable in applying the frameworks to their practice.

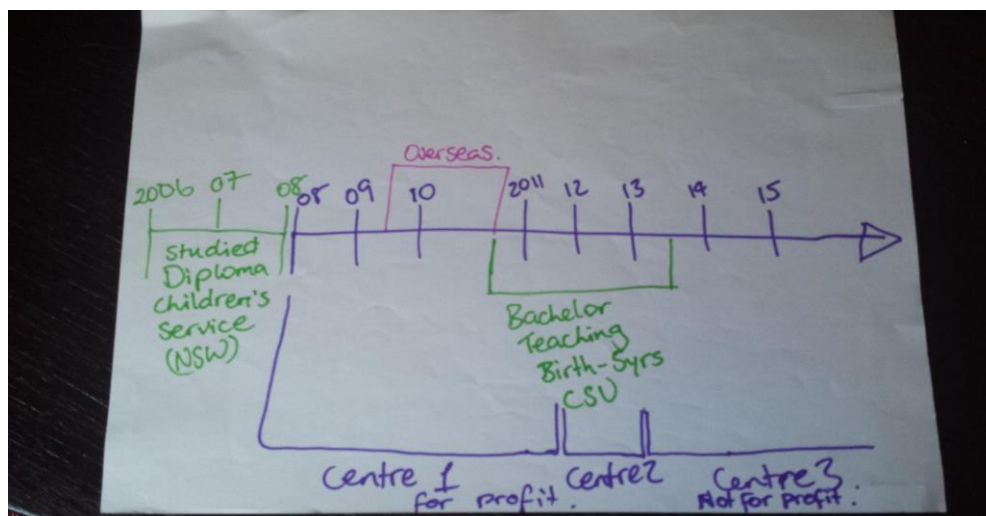


Figure 15: Sample from interactive timeline data

Engagement with this tool proved to be more challenging for some participants than for others. As previously indicated, participants came from a range of expertise and qualifications, and participants who were Diploma qualified or equivalent expressed some unease in using this tool. From the conversations that we had, it became clear that the sense of unease and anxiety was due to their lack of confidence. Responding to the specific needs of this group, I simplified the use of this tool and did not require the form to be completed. Rather, we spoke of their professional trajectories. As the interviews were audio-recorded, I could then go back and transfer the information to a timeline. Although this method lacked some consistency in the physical drawing of the timeline, it did not affect the overall data that was collected, but it did add more time to the analysis of this specific tool.

Phase Three: Transcription and analysis

Following the completion of interviews, timelines and PD lists, the transcription and analysis processes began. This involved a range of stages, as well as amendments in response to the field (see **Figure 16**).

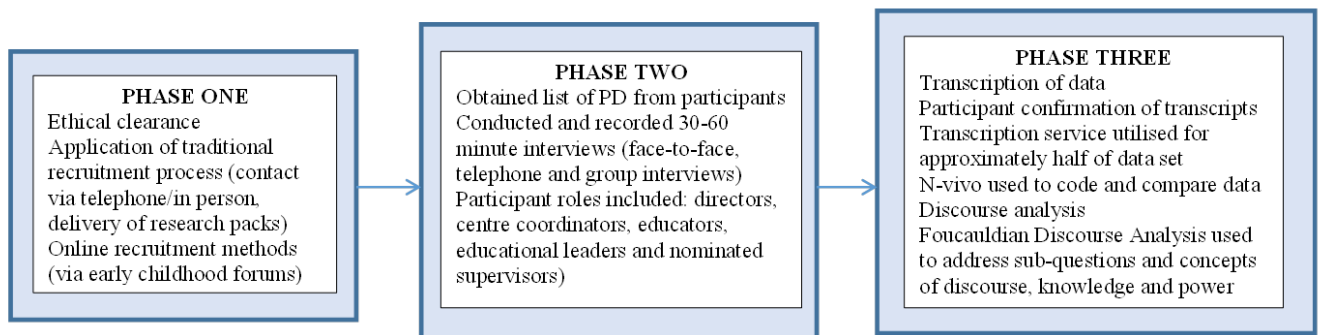


Figure 16: Phase three of the research process

The transcription process

Following the completion of the interview process, the audio and/or visual material was transcribed verbatim and returned to participants for accuracy checking (see **Figure 17** below and **Appendix H** for a larger example).

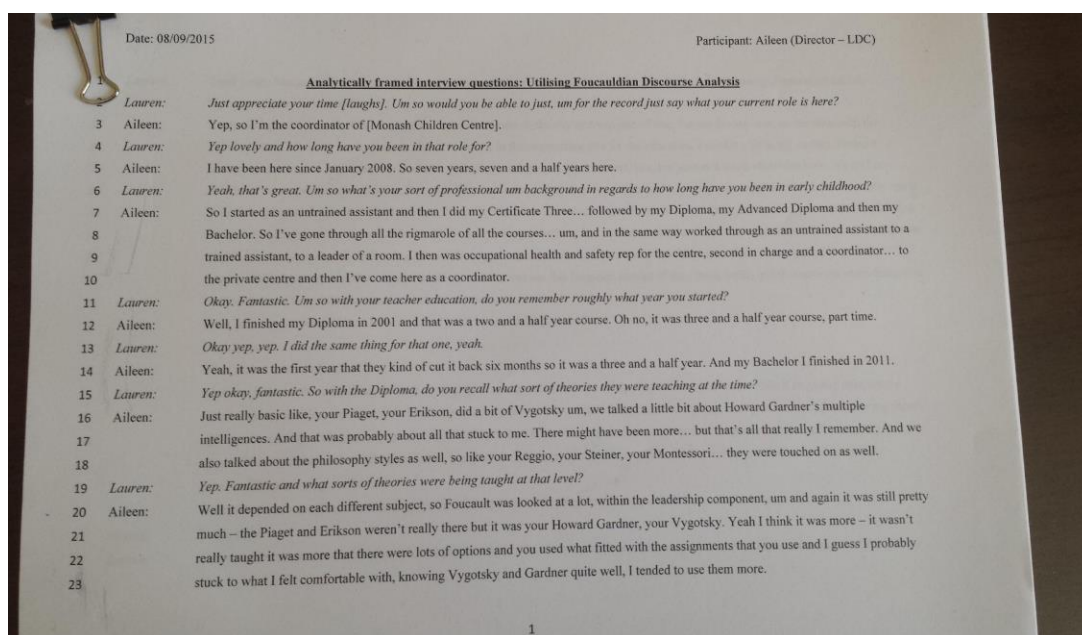


Figure 17: Sample from interview transcript data

The duration of this task was lengthier than first predicted. As such, approval was obtained from my supervisors and Monash University to send approximately half of these interviews to a transcription

analysis process, whereby accuracy, consistency and detail were clarified. The discourse analysis is detailed in Chapter Five.

Using FDA to address research questions

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis [FDA] (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) was established in the 1970s through its application in Anglo-American psychology. As the name suggests, FDA was largely based upon the works of Michel Foucault and post-structuralist theory. It was constructed as a method to investigate “the role of discourse in the constitution of subjectivity and selfhood”, as well as “the relationship between discourse and power” (Willig, 2008, p. 173). Furthermore, it explores how discourse is connected to particular societal and institutional practices, and how subjects and objects are constructed by discourse. According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017), “...discourse analysis is a method of exposing the historical conditions through which psychological knowledge has played a part in shaping the conduct of individuals” (pp. 110-111).

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) is a suitable methodology for the purpose of this study, as it is not perceived separately – but rather, it is very much connected to power and knowledge. Through FDA (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), it is recognised that power and knowledge actually form the discourse – they are all interrelated concepts. Thus, if we look at power as a collection of enforced relations – it is visible. FDA was utilised throughout Phase Three of the data analysis process to examine the interview transcripts with each of the research questions and sub-questions in mind. In other words, they were applied to the data analysis process. The six phases within Willig’s (2013) FDA model (see **Table 18**) was then used to analyse the separate data sets whilst looking for themes within the research sub-questions (see **Figure 19** and **Appendix K** for a larger example). More specifically, this process is outlined below.

Table 18: Table of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) components – information adapted from Willig (2013)

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
Discursive constructions
Discourses
Action orientation
Positionings
Practice
Subjectivity

Firstly, I analysed the first sub-question:

What strategies are utilised by early childhood professionals to understand, cope and engage in educational reform?

I focused upon the discursive constructions of this question and identified the coping strategies for engaging with the frameworks and educational reform. Thus here, educational reform was perceived as the *discursive object*, and the coping strategies were viewed as *discursive practices* within particular discourses revealed throughout the interviews.

TRANSCRIPT QUOTATIONS	What stands out?	Emerging Discursive Constructions	Question One
"...it was a lot about Piaget-type theories" (line 32-33); "very structured planning..." (line 34); "...you planned based on children's deficits basically - not on their strengths and interest" (line 35-36)	Piaget-type theories?	Privileged content knowledge of institution at the time	Sees prior developmental, deficit-based planning as stressor - positioned by past institution
"Just those big, big words that a lot of people – like, especially if you don't have training like in a university – they'd never heard or those words before. That was scary to kind of hear those words before" (line 75-76).	Links new terminology to university-level training	Refers to "big words" within document, often refers to the perspectives of others	Positions self above Diploma educators; Links understanding discourse/content knowledge of document to university-level training
Was training adequate? "No. No [laughs]" (line 62).	Blunt, instantaneous response	So for this person, the PD has not helped her because it's been confusing.	Seems that supportive coping strategies from the intentions of the service's position become stressors
"...in terms of if someone... if an assessor's going to come in, they're gonna pick it apart – which they do, and you have to just articulate what you're doing and sell what you're doing basically" (line 85-87).	Links importance of understanding to assessment	Power: Discourse of threat; Discourse of seeing that the assessors are not there to help them, but coming to pick their work apart, and to make it an unpleasant experience	Identifies assessment process as stressor - views assessor as being in position of power; position of defence
"And I just find I just use that Early Years Learning Framework and the Outcomes religiously, so yeah" (line 92).	Expresses dominant use of EYLF only	Can see that this person's trajectory is not smooth. Although now she says that she is comfortable – but what is making her comfortable is that she is not trying to understand the curriculum. She is just trying to "religiously" keep to the Outcomes.	Supportive coping strategy - finds support in following the EYLF Outcomes in a prescriptive manner - position of confidence as an 'in-expert expert'
"I just pretty much use the outcomes and, you know, some big words from in there [the EYLF] when I'm writing my observations or learning stories. I always go to that, yeah" (line 96-97).	Refers to use of terminology in documentation	Using the Curriculum as a book. And using the words in the curriculum to make sense of what she is doing.	Supportive coping strategy - uses terminology as an add-on in documentation - position of 'doing without knowing'

Figure 19: Sample of FDA in practice (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) to address research sub-questions

In order to achieve this, I read each transcript, looking only for coping strategies. I considered what their coping strategies were and how these were mentioned throughout the interview. I also looked for what they identified as being stressors and supports, and how they were mentioned. I also analysed these strategies in relation to power relations. In particular, this involved the positioning of participants, how the strategies were explained in the case of power relationships of discourse, and what power relations were embedded within the strategies they were using.

Then, I analysed each transcript based upon the second sub-question:

How do educational reform discourses position early childhood professionals within the processes of change?

Here, I viewed the discursive constructions of this sub-question and acknowledged the processes of change as the *discursive object*. I identified how participants were implementing this new curriculum that's supposed to be leading change, and the impact of the regulatory bodies coming in and assessing professionals and services.

As I progressed through these phases of data analysis, I then analysed each transcript sequentially identifying the concepts of power, knowledge, discourse and change, utilising the FDA elements as tools to make sense of these concepts (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013).

Applying FDA to voices from the early childhood field

Following the discourse analysis, Willig's (2013) version of FDA was applied to explore the data, address the research questions, and to identify evidence of Foucault's concepts of discourse, knowledge and power (1972, 1980). According to Willig (2013), the stages of FDA "allow the researcher to map some of the discursive resources used in a text and the subject positions they contain, and to explore their implications for subjectivity and practice" (p. 131, sic).

Firstly, in Stage One of FDA, the *discursive constructions* within the data set were located, with a focus on 'educational reform' as the *discursive object*. The discursive object of educational reform needs to be at the forefront at all times. In identifying the discursive constructions of educational reform, the question of how participants were talking about this needed to be addressed. This included both explicit and implicit references to educational reform. For instance, sometimes participants spoke directly about educational reform, while at other times, they did not make a specific reference to this term, but this was implied. Willig (2008) has explained:

It is important that we do not simply look for key words. Both implicit and explicit references need to be included. Our search for constructions of the discursive object is guided by shared meaning rather than lexical comparability. The fact that a text does not contain a direct reference to the discursive object can tell us a lot about the way in which the object is constructed (Willig, in Smith, eds., 2015, p. 156).

This supports the methodological approach used to identify the ways in which the discursive object of educational reform has been constructed by participants.

Once the discursive constructions were identified, the focus then shifted to "the differences between [these] constructions" (Willig, 2013, p. 132, sic). This is part of Stage Two of FDA which focuses on

discourses. Willig (2013) has clarified this stage as the location of “various discursive constructions of the object within wider discourses” (p. 32). Hence, when looking at the wider discourses through all the cases where participants spoke of educational reform, a number of differences were discovered. In particular, participants constructed educational reform as being either positive or negative. These are visible through the supports and stressors relating to educational reforms identified by participants.

Following the classification of these strategies, *action orientation* (Stage Three of FDA) was implemented. Willig (2013) has described this stage as a “...closer examination of the discursive contexts within which the different constructions of the object are being deployed” (p. 132). More specifically, this refers to questioning what is achieved from particular constructions of the object, and what is its purpose and relationship to other constructions that have been formed? In this case, when participants were speaking of the discursive constructions (supports and stressors identified above), several relational connections can be seen. For instance, participants who have identified as engaging in self-initiated learning may also be more proficient in communicating with their institutions to foster a higher level of support and value of learning. Whereas, the identification of time and workload as a stressor may have led several participants to also struggle with feeling overwhelmed, experiencing diminished morale, a lower tolerance of students, and communication issues with colleagues whose second language is English. Therefore, the focus of action orientation allows for a clearer understanding of what these discursive constructions are achieving within the text regarding how participants have spoken about educational reform. Thus, the support strategies identified by participants illustrate that they are achieving something positive; however, the stressors also indicate that they are achieving something negative through the difficulties encountered when engaging with educational reform.

The Fourth Stage of FDA examines *positionings*. In this case, the participants are not the same. They occupy diverse subjective positions. When examining the strategies, it is important to acknowledge these positions. For example, if participants perceived that the stressors were too immense, how did they engage with educational reform? Alternatively, if they have acknowledged mostly positive strategies, they would likely engage with these reforms more effectively than if they were only seeing or experiencing the stressors.

A *subject position* can be identified as a location for individuals within specific discourses (Davies & Harrè, 1999; Willig 2013). Willig (2013) has further elaborated that “discourses construct *subjects* as well as objects and, as a result, make available positions within networks of meaning that speakers can take up (as well as place others within)” (p. 132). From a researcher’s position, it is understood that “identifying

subject positions allows the analyst to investigate the cultural repertoire of discourses available to speakers” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118). In this instance, if we look at the subject position within the structure or networks of meaning, the participants who felt very positive were those who felt that their institutions were supporting them – suggesting there was support within the structure. Whereas, the stressors identified by participants indicate a lack of support within the structure.

The structure itself can be perceived as the curriculum. The institution and how everything that is happening within the institution (e.g. how the discourse, the power, and the knowledge filter down, and how people are positioned) allows them to feel in control or not in control. This can result from a direct implication of a person’s subjectivity (the taking up of a subject position). Thus, if participants believed there was no guidance and that only stressors were present, then the way they engaged with reforms may have been less positive.

The Fifth Stage of FDA relates to *practice*. This involves the association of discourse with practice (Willig, 2013). It investigates how the discursive constructions (supports and stressors) of the discursive object (educational reform) and the subjective positionings of participants impact their practice. Willig (2013) has offered that “by constructing particular versions of the world, and by positioning subjects within them in particular ways, discourses limit what can be said and done” and “the analysis of discourse maps the possibilities for action contained within the discursive constructions...” (p. 132). This means strategies that inform the practice of these participants must be considered. For example, in regards to time and workload, the subjectivity of several participants seemed to be quite weighed down under all of these structures and associated constraints. Consequently, this may impact their practice through a superficial engagement with the curriculum reforms, as they have merely been attempting to survive these changes. This impact also links back to the action orientation stage (the relationship between the discursive constructions), whereby participants have experienced diminished morale, less patience with students, and a limited ability to understand the curriculum frameworks – as a direct result of the stressors relating to time and workload.

The sixth and final stage of FDA involves *subjectivity*. This examines the connection of discourse with subjectivity. Certain discourses present specific perceptions of the world, with corresponding actions for existing within that perceived world (Willig, 2013). This notion is strongly linked to discursive positioning, as it “traces the consequences of taking up various subject positions for the participants’ subjective experience” (Willig, 2013, p. 133). This final stage is largely associated with the feelings, thoughts and personal experiences held within diverse subject positions. This is achieved by making

connections between discursive constructions and the personal experiences of participants. To elaborate on the previous discussion, if participants perceive the discursive object of educational reform as negative, their discursive constructions may reveal predominantly negative strategies. From this position, their subjectivity and personal experiences may not permit them to view educational reform more positively.

Ethical considerations

It is necessary to consider and prepare for possible ethical concerns which may be encountered when conducting social research. In relation to this point, Cullen, Hedges, and Bone (2009) have suggested that “ethical issues permeate all aspects of qualitative research and require close attention to decision making about research topics and choices of methodologies, methods and dissemination of findings” (p. 116). According to Rhedding-Jones (2005), post-structuralism involves the “*ethics of deconstruction*” whereby researchers “faithfully reproduce or represent what appeared to happen...” (p. 93, original emphasis). As such, it has been necessary to effectively assess, evaluate and reflect upon my own subjective positioning, and the appropriateness of my conduct and practice to better represent the diverse contexts, perceptions and subjectivities of the participants involved. In regards to this, Roberts-Holmes (2011) has indicated that “it is important to reflect continuously upon the ethical concerns throughout the research” (p. 63). Overall, this approach has efficiently facilitated the establishment of constructive relationships with participants through meaningful interactions and discussions.

Ethics require sufficient consideration throughout the development, commencement, data collection, data analysis and reporting processes of research, and how data is reported, shared and stored (Creswell, 2014). More specifically, this refers to ethical considerations such as informed consent, deception, privacy, confidentiality and accuracy (Christians, 2003). Further ethical considerations also include reciprocity, risk assessment, data access, ownership and researcher mental health (Gray, 2014). Throughout this study, I have adhered to the ethical guidelines and processes involved in obtaining ethical approval from *Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee* (MUHREC) and also the *Department of Education and Training* (DET) in regards to participant recruitment, informed consent, privacy and anonymity. Moreover, I have exhibited my comprehension of research ethics by utilising the voluntary methods of semi-structured interviews and interactive documentation, which adequately addressed tensions of power, through the empowerment of choice and collaboration offered to the participants involved. Pseudonyms have also been used to de-identify participants throughout the research, documentation and analysis processes. In relation to this, O'Toole and Beckett (2010) have explained that “there is always an ethical component in the ‘subject-world’, particularly where it involves

a documentary element, for example collecting information or witness statements from people” (p. 25, original emphasis).

The primary research question in this study has exhibited some ethical implications, as they focus upon cultural, societal and political components of early childhood education. Thus, “action in the social domain can only become intelligent action when its intrinsic relation with human purposes and consequences – that is, when the political nature of inquiry in the social domain – is fully taken into account” (Biesta, 2007, p. 17). This means it was vital to demonstrate an accurate representation of cultural identities, groups and practices, while preventing assumptions, generalisations and misinterpretations. However, genuine contextual understanding was also necessary to efficiently interpret the perceptions, experiences and meanings of participants. This approach to research has supported the acknowledgement of limitations associated with this study, and the achievement of greater reliability and validity.

Assessing limitations, reliability and validity

Methodology has been defined by Grix (2002) as being “...concerned with the logic of scientific inquiry; in particular with investigating the potentialities and limitations of particular techniques or procedures” (p. 179). Several limitations are evident regarding generalisability. As a caveat at a level of paradigm, Foucault’s work can never be claimed as being something that can be generalised, as it is relative to specific discourses and power/knowledge. Yet, while the findings are impossible to generalise, the research methods can still be reproduced elsewhere. This research study has been conducted on a relatively small scale, from one specific state within Australia. Hence, due to demographic constraints, such a study may not demonstrate the possibility of *generalisability* and may not result in being “transferable to other contexts of understanding or practice in education” (Bryman, 2012, p. 35). In addition, it is important to acknowledge that the *purposeful sampling* technique does not permit generalisation to a wider population (Bryman, 2012), as it emphasises the subjective inclusion and exclusion of specific criteria. However, the data obtained through these methodological processes still offer a rich illustration of the perceptions and experiences of the early childhood professionals involved in the study.

Limitations

A limitation has been identified regarding the use of social media sites as a recruitment method, as it seemed to attract a majority of younger early childhood professionals. This made sense, as it appeared that many younger or early-career professionals use digital technologies, such as Facebook, to engage

with other professionals. This dilemma has been acknowledged by Best and Harrison (2009) who explained:

Researchers who attempt to solicit participants through Web recruitment must be careful, however, to design ads that are neutral with respect to the underlying goals of the survey [or research in general]. If certain types of people are more likely than others to respond to a particular Web ad, selection bias can result (p. 420, sic).

Due to these factors, it may be beneficial for prospective research to maintain a balanced approach to recruitment methods to obtain a more diverse demographic of participants. Although age was not a motivating factor in participant selection and recruitment, the early childhood field contains many mature-aged educators (trained prior to the 2009 reforms) whose contributions have proven invaluable to the current research study.

When addressing limitations of the data collection methods, utilising the telephone interview method has posed several limitations for this research study. Some of these limitations have been addressed by Lavrakas (2009) in Bickman and Rog (2009), as he claimed that “[a] major disadvantage of telephone surveys – even when well executed – is the limitations they place on the complexity and length of the interview” (p. 511, sic). In correlation with this finding, it was visible that some telephone interviews implemented throughout this research study were shorter in duration than the majority of face-to-face interviews with participants. Lavrakas (2009) has recognised this limitation, as he proposed that “Unlike the dynamics of face-to-face interviewing, the average respondent often finds it tiresome to be kept on the telephone for longer than 20 minutes...” (p. 511). The content obtained when using this data collection method may not always result in quality-rich data. This may be due to the complexity of interview questions which may be more answerable through face-to-face interview techniques or the use of video telecommunication. In regards to this issue, Lavrakas (2009) has highlighted that “...complicated questions, especially those that require the respondent to see or read something, heretofore have been impossible to display via the telephone. With the advent of video telecommunication technology via the Web and telephones, this limitation should diminish” (p. 511, sic). Therefore, for future research, it may be beneficial to include platforms such as Skype as part of the proposed data collection methods.

Although according to Lavrakas (2009), limitations may still exist regarding “potential coverage error”, as some participants may not have access to this kind of technology (p. 511). This implies that telephone interview methods may be exclusionary for some potential participants. Communication difficulties have also been identified as an exclusionary concern by Glogowska, Young, and Lockyer (2011) through their

study regarding student withdrawal in Higher Education in the United Kingdom. This UK study proposed that the telephone interview method may be exclusionary to certain parts of the population, such as those from a non-English speaking background and those with hearing impairments. This is an important factor to consider when exercising telephone interviews in research. Yet, even though there are several limitations associated with this method of data collection, telephone interviews still allow for increased flexibility for participant engagement, when utilising this as an additional method (as opposed to the sole method) for data collection in research.

In relation to the application of group interviews, one significant limitation was identified regarding the effects of group dynamics. Correspondingly, Fontana and Frey (2008) have described that “the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression (a group can be dominated by one person) and ‘groupthink’ is a possible outcome” (p. 128, original emphasis). This means that although the voices of some participants may be heard, the voices of others may be silenced. A corroboration of this viewpoint has been offered by O'Toole and Beckett (2010) as they explained:

...there is a very real danger in focus groups of silenced voices, often because somebody cannot get a word in edgewise and sometimes because a dissentient voice might be intimidated or even dissuaded by the strength of group opinion. A further extension of this danger is... ‘groupthink’, where, quite unconsciously, a group takes on particular opinions and emphases, reshaping their responses and therefore your data in unconscious solidarity (p. 131, original emphasis).

This statement holds significance for the power relations at play during the process of group interviews. Correspondingly, these concerns were acknowledged and addressed throughout the analysis of group interviews involved in this study.

Another limitation of the present study was associated with snowball sampling. Although this method has proven to be useful throughout the recruitment process, some limitations were exhibited. For instance, several participants offered the contact details of their colleagues. Although the majority of these details were correct, some of these colleagues appeared interested in the research upon initial contact, but did not respond to follow-up recruitment strategies. These limitations have been adequately summarised by Robins (2015) who described this as a difficult process, relying on the interest, motivation and accuracy of contact information of the network partners (or colleagues) provided by participants. Subsequently, a number of network partners provided by participants did not eventuate into interviews for the current study.

Reliability and validity

For the purpose of validity, this study utilised the term *crystallization* which has been illuminated by Richardson and St. Pierre (2008):

The central imagery for “validity” for postmodernist texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and the angles of approach (p. 478, original emphasis).

This perspective has positioned itself well within this study, as it has reflected the fluid and multi-directional capillary structure outlined in the processes for data analysis in Chapter Three. This has been accomplished through the collective use of *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* [FDA] (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013), Foucault’s concepts of discourse, knowledge and power (1972, 1980), and the Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FEER) model. It has been cautioned that one limitation of FDA is its inability to make visible non-verbal discourses (Willig, 2013). Another limitation of FDA relates to how thorough research into subjectivity can be when only discourse is applied (Willig, 2013). This is true when considering policy as discourse, as Ball (2006) has proposed that it “may have the effect of redistributing ‘voice’” in such a way that “only certain voices can be heard as meaningful or authoritative” (p. 49, original emphasis). Such concerns have been raised by McWilliam, Dooley, McArdle, & Pei-Ling Tan (2009), as although post-structuralist research claims to ‘make voices heard’; other voices are still silenced despite the researcher’s efforts. This has been validated by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017), as they cautioned that “for discourse analysis to have a future beyond ‘conditions of possibility’, it will need to assemble the diverse threads and entanglements of discursive and non-discursive processes” (p. 120, original emphasis). However, meaningful data has still emerged from adopting this method.

The validity and reliability of this study have been strengthened by the way in which the semi-structured interviews were conducted. These interviews ensured that rapport-building techniques were utilised and the content of interview questions directly related to the objectives of the research, reflecting consistency among all participants (Gray, 2014). The reliability of this study was further enhanced by ensuring that a meticulous approach was adopted throughout the processes of transcription, coding and analysis (Creswell, 2014). Correspondingly, I have cross-checked these processes carefully, prior to the conduction of a thorough examination by my research supervisors. The validity of this study has also been complimented by the implementation of *member checking*, whereby participants were be given the opportunity to check the accuracy of their interview transcripts (Creswell, 2003). As a result, the

reliability and validity of the research findings have been enhanced and strengthened through the utilisation of this multifaceted approach to research design and methodology.

Reflexivity and position of self as researcher within a post-structural paradigm

It is “more honest to reveal one’s starting points, both personal and theoretical” (A. Edwards, 2010, p. 161). Thus, it was important to engage in reflexivity as an important strategy for qualitative research which “encourages us to foreground, and reflect upon, the ways in which the person of the researcher is implicated in the research and its findings” (Willig, 2013, p. 10). Therefore, I was required to acknowledge that my own theoretical positioning and beliefs (or paradigm) have directed the research approach of this study (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). According to O’Toole and Beckett (2010), “a philosophical paradigm is a world-view that underlies the theories and methodologies of the researcher’s practice and research” (p. 28, sic). Mac Naughton et al. (2010) however have described that “each paradigm is a specific collection of beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and about our relationships with it, together with practices based upon those beliefs” (p. 367). As such, I have adopted a post-structuralist paradigm, as I perceive that language, knowledge and meaning are subjective and that these concepts are forever changing and cannot be conclusively determined or explained, rather subjectively understood at a particular point in time (Mac Naughton et al., 2010). Meanwhile, Rhedding-Jones (2005) has suggested that the application of post-structuralism and linguistic practice encompasses deconstruction and reconstruction which is “useful for the agenda of change” (p. 81). Consequently, this provided a suitable paradigm for this study, as it aimed to understand the perceptions of early childhood professionals regarding their engagement with the 2009 reforms – within specific timeframes and stages within the change process. Hence, the significance of recognising my own philosophical paradigm as a researcher has highlighted my “personal beliefs, perspectives, ideologies and assumptions that form [my] own subjectivity” (O’Toole & Beckett, 2010, p. 30, sic).

I have acknowledged that the discourses available to me throughout my own experiences of teacher education, employment and reforms have shaped my subjective positioning as an early childhood professional and as a researcher (see Chapter One: Personal motivation). According to Bryman (2012):

Social researchers should be reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate. Relatedly, reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher’s cultural, political and social context. As such, ‘knowledge’ from a reflexive position is always a reflection of a researcher’s location in time and social space (p. 393, original emphasis, sic).

Thus, I have continuously reflected upon my own values, beliefs and biases regarding the knowledges embedded within my own experiences and practices, and remain sensitive to how my own specific context has influenced my research decisions throughout the current study. This has been markedly relevant when reflecting upon my perceptions and experiences of developmental content knowledge and reform discourses, as I have been aware and mindful that the positions of my participants were influenced by their own set of knowledges and discourses.

Reflexivity has also been a significant strategy during data analysis phase of this study. In relation to this, Creswell has explained:

In qualitative research, the inquirer reflects about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data. This aspect of methods is more than merely advancing biases and values in the study, but how the background of the researchers actually may shape the direction of the study (Creswell, 2014, p. 186)

Hence, I have needed to remain cautious, mindful and reflective regarding the way that I have interpreted and applied meaning to the data. More specifically, my position as a researcher has required me to maintain “an awareness” of my own “contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining ‘outside of’ one’s subject matter while conducting research” (p. 10, original emphasis).

I have been able to apply reflexivity to this research study by engaging in self-reflection as a way of acknowledging and addressing my own biases (Ary et al., 2014); and by developing an open and flexible research design which has allowed me as a researcher “to respond reflexively to unanticipated evidence by slightly reshaping the design of the study” (A. Edwards, 2010, p. 160). This was evident from the adoption of greater flexibility throughout participant recruitment, data collection and analysis processes. Reflexivity has been an important strategy for the purpose of this study, as it has enabled me to carefully reflect upon my own subjective position and how certain discourses available to me have shaped the direction of the research. It is also a suitable strategy to use from a post-structural position, and for engaging in early childhood research, as it “is clearly one of the major advantages of qualitative designs for examining the messy and constantly changing contexts of early childhood (Edwards, 2010, p.161).

Summary

The research design, methodology and methods of this study have been developed in a way that was reflective of my own theoretical position. It was intended that the application of a post-structural

paradigm and the use of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Willig, 2013) would be useful to the data collection and analysis of this research study. The research design and methodology also complimented what had been revealed in the literature regarding the overarching research topic and post-structural paradigm pertaining to this study. In addition, issues of ethics, limitations, reliability, validity and reflexivity were considered and managed appropriately throughout the planning and implementation of the study. From the perspective of an early career researcher, it is anticipated that this study will contribute to the field of early childhood educational change. As Bryman (2012) has declared “...the social researcher is never conducting research in a social vacuum – who he or she is will influence a whole variety of presuppositions that in turn have implications for the conduct of social research” (p. 149).

CHAPTER FIVE: REPORTING ON DATA FROM THE FIELD

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set the scene and to establish a brief background of the 11 participants involved in this study. It also reports on the discourse analysis from data collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews with these participants. Participants were generous and sometimes courageous with their honesty and willingness to be reflective; thus, their ideas have been recounted with respect and generosity. The data presents a range of perspectives from these early childhood professionals, and tensions regarding the implementation and reviews of early childhood policy reforms.

A snapshot from long day care settings

In the beginning, the long day care (LDC) sector proved to be difficult to infiltrate (see Chapter Four, Phase One: Entering the physical early childhood field). Challenges were encountered which appeared to relate to stress, time, and workload. However, 11 participants agreed to contribute to this study and had plenty to report regarding their experiences of educational reform.

The demographical constructs of participants

According to the OECD's (2017) *Starting Strong* report, approximately 97 per cent of the international early childhood workforce is female, with 25 per cent above the age of 50, and 20 per cent below the age of 30. However, in Australia, 25 per cent of early childhood professionals are below 30 years of age (OECD, 2017a). When comparing the demographical information of participants involved in this study, some similarities, differences and overlapping positions were discovered (see **Table 19**). It is important to note that the use of pseudonyms has been applied to protect the identity of participants.

Table 19: Demographical constructs of participants from long day care settings, dated mid-2015

Participants from Victorian Long Day Care centres					
Pseudonym	Location	Highest qualification	Prior/after 2009 reforms	Experience	Position
Alana	South East	Bachelor	Intended completion 2016	20-29 years	Educator
Lucy	South East	Diploma	Completed 2009	< 10 years	Educator
Abigail	East	Diploma	Completed 2004	10-19 years	Educator
Gabrielle	South East	Diploma equivalent	Completed prior to 2009	30+ years	Co-educator (Assistant)
Jade	South East	Bachelor	Completed 2013	< 10 years	Teacher
Paula	South East	Diploma	Completed prior to 2009	20-29 years	Management
Felicity	South East	Diploma equivalent	Completed prior to 2009	20-29 years	Management
Adele	North East	Masters	Intended completion 2015	10 -19 years	Educator
Aileen	South East	Bachelor	Completed 2011	< 10 years	Management
Sonia	East	Bachelor	Intended completion 2015	< 10 years	Educator
Penny	South East	Diploma equivalent	Completed prior to 2009	30+ years	Management

The table above demonstrates the dominant gender (Davis, Krieg & Smith, 2015), and the diversity of qualification levels, experience, geographical locations and positions among the 11 participants from LDC settings. These demographical constructs are important to acknowledge, as they influence the subjective positions of participants and their responses throughout this study. The responses of participants were captured within a dataset that comprised interview transcripts, timelines and lists of PD.

Perspectives among participant positions

As mentioned previously, these participants occupied a range of positions such as teacher, educator, co-educator, director/centre coordinator; educational leader and nominated supervisor, often with overlapping roles. As such, the responses of participants seemed to be influenced by their professional positions. For instance, the majority of directors and centre coordinators responded more about their

experiences of the National Quality Framework and the Assessment and Rating system (ACECQA, 2012), while educators and teachers focused more on their experiences of the curriculum frameworks.

Perspectives on change and reform differed widely between participants due to their diverse demographical constructs. Many early childhood professionals seemed to understand the link between the frameworks, and the growing professionalisation and status of the field. However, a number of these participants were either newly qualified, or seemed to possess self-learning characteristics. Meanwhile, most educators, directors and coordinators who were trained prior to the 2009 reforms, and those who had been in the field for many years were more resistant to these reforms, with some linking them to the political agendas of continually changing governments. This resistance acknowledged by these participants appeared to lead to a much slower uptake of these documents. Resistance was one of many emotive responses discovered among participants. As such, several key words were used during their interviews in relation to their emotive responses of the changes and reforms they had encountered over the years. These responses referred to denial, confusion and struggle in understanding these changes; as well as anger, sadness and regret regarding lack of quality and consistency in training and qualifications across the sector. Although many initial responses seemed quite negative, other more positive emotional responses were also evident among several participants (detailed in later chapters) which involved mindfulness of their attitudes towards change, and illustrations of their resilience and adaptability (Arthur et al., 2018).

Curriculum frameworks

According to participants of the present study, many Victorian early childhood services utilise the state curriculum framework (the VEYLDF) in conjunction with the national curriculum framework (the EYLF). While, some teachers who run kindergarten programs prefer to implement the state framework; due to similarities with the primary curriculum in regards to content, outcomes and language, while many professionals and services use only the national curriculum document. This was also discovered during the initial pilot study (Armstrong, 2013).

In regards to the curriculum frameworks, participants involved in the study expressed stress, rapid transition and limited support available in learning to implement the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and VEYLDF (DEECD & VCAA, 2009). For instance, a Diploma-qualified educator named Abigail spoke of transitioning to a long day care setting from interstate:

I started doing casual work in the start of 2012. And – there was no talk of it in the industry. I was just doing casual with [name omitted]. There was no talk of it – nothing.
(Abigail, lines 63-64).

This indicates that even in 2012, early childhood professionals were not yet implementing these documents within their workplace settings. Meanwhile, Lucy (another Diploma-qualified educator) claimed:

We're going to get assessed and we have no idea what we're doing. Um and even just reading the book, it wasn't enough (Lucy, lines 48-49).

According to Lucy, it wasn't until the NQF (ACECQA, 2012) assessments began to take place that her workplace started looking at the curriculum documents more seriously. Other participants also admitted that they did not implement the curriculum frameworks straight away. In several cases, directors and centre coordinators only encouraged their staff to do so following the introduction of the National Quality Framework and its subsequent requirements. This may imply that some workplace institutions did not perceive the curriculum documents as mandatory until this time.

A number of participants indicated that the change in terminology and addition of theoretical concepts within these documents added to their confusion. For example, Alana (an educator in the third year of her Bachelor Degree) explained that “the terminology in the framework scares a lot of people” (Alana, line 74). In addition, the four participants who had been trained prior to the 2009 reforms were overwhelmed by the size of these documents. One such educator/co-educator was Gabrielle. Gabrielle was an experienced educator with 37 years of experience, but was recently demoted to a relief-educator/co-educator due to the 2011 changes to Victorian qualification requirements. She confirmed: “I struggled with it. I'm not good on big terminology words” (Gabrielle, lines 36-37). These statements emphasise that the language used in the curriculum documents were foreign to some early childhood professionals – particularly those who had been in the field for many years.

Meanwhile, some directors and centre coordinators involved in this study did not have as much insight regarding the curriculum documents, although some did specify they had arranged some professional development opportunities for their staff. In relation to this, one centre coordinator, Felicity, offered:

Oh, we had some staff meetings I guess. And um, in-services as well, um... Yeah, basically. Staff meetings, in-services. And then just trying to put into practice obviously (Felicity, lines 18-19, sic).

Aside from this comment, other directors implied that understanding and implementing these new frameworks was the responsibility of their educators and teachers, and that their qualifications should be enough to guide and support them efficiently throughout this process. In relation to this view, one educator admitted that support from their directors was quite limited:

I don't think our management especially here really had that overall grasp of what was happening. And maybe that aspect of long day care life, the planning side of it, is not really their strong suit. So it was really hard to get their support and that um was actually a real struggle for a while (Lucy, lines 44-46).

This exemplifies the unique position of the LDC sector. Directors and centre coordinators are perceived as responsible for the administrative duties, while teaching and learning is perceived as the responsibility of educators and teachers.

Quality framework and the assessment process

At the time of interviews, the majority of participants did not seem to have a firm understanding of the National Quality Framework and Standards, as they identified that this was largely the responsibility of their directors and centre coordinators. Similarly, some directors and centre coordinators did not take the NQF seriously until they were being assessed under the new assessment and rating system. The majority of participants seemed overwhelmed by the size of the NQF, and some directors did not expect their staff to read it. For instance, a director named Penny confessed:

It was a big... thing... we felt that the staff weren't able to... sit, and read the standards um, the way they were (Penny, lines 108-109, sic).

Overall, once this framework was accepted and understood as a significant document, directors and centre coordinators began to implement relevant PDs for themselves and their staff. As a centre coordinator named Paula proposed:

If we don't go to them, how can we expect them to? If we're not willing to learn, why should they be? (Paula, line 281).

Thus, it seemed that for the implementation of the NQF (ACECQA, 2012), some centre coordinators took a more collaborative approach with their staff.

Historically, the LDC sector has had previous experience with the accreditation process through the NCAC system (NCAC, 1993). However, from the responses of participants, it appears that the new process caused some challenges, “particularly for teachers without experience of the previous accreditation system” (Grant, Danby, Thorpe & Theobald, 2016, p. 38). For example, four participants from one long day care service who initially indicated a limited understanding of the NQF and a lack of preparation described the assessment and rating process as a negative experience. Lucy offered her own account of this experience:

[I]t was pretty rough actually. It was terrible. Probably because we didn't do all that great. We got working towards...which really disappointed me. Well terribly disappointed me. Because I

felt like I was picking up a lot of the slack in some of the areas like again the planning and I'd done a lot of research where other people might not have and that was really frustrating but I'd really busted my guts and tried really, really hard (Lucy, lines 91-94, sic).

Lucy's statement implies that although she engaged in self-learning, her efforts did not prevail. Several participants suggested that there were issues regarding the reliance upon the subjective interpretations of assessors and limited time allowed for this process. According to Aileen (a Bachelor-qualified centre coordinator at another service), "there were periods where we were worried about the level of interpretation based on one or two assessments" (Aileen, lines 114-115). However, for Adele (an educator completing her Masters Degree) some staff at her service had a "fairly positive" experience of the new process (Adele, line 169). This may be an illustration of where some participants enacted certain subjective positionings, whereby their emotive responses to change encompassed mindfulness, resilience and adaptability (Arthur et al., 2018).

The issue of subjective interpretation has been acknowledged by Jackson (2015); however, it was also explained that "flexible assessment processes" were needed to "accommodate the rich diversity of ECEC practice" (Jackson, 2015, p. 50). As such, there seemed to be tensions between consistency and flexibility, as there was "no one right way to meet the NQS standards" (Tayler, 2016, p. 30). Moreover, the concept of quality is very difficult to measure. In relation to this view, the *E4Kids Study* revealed that "because of the multidimensional and co-dependent relationships among the different dimensions of quality, and the differential amounts of program that children receive, E4Kids found no independently verifiable collective level of quality and dosage that assured the production of certain levels of child outcome" (MGSE, 2016, p. 6). This further signifies there is no single means to provide quality assurance in early childhood education. Furthermore, the additional stress and workload seemed to significantly impact staff morale. In contrast, most participants involved in the present study who had participated in the initial pilot process of the new system, and those who had strong PD networks, support and resources appeared to have experienced a positive assessment process.

Understanding a new pedagogical language

As mentioned previously, the language embedded within the frameworks was an emerging discursive construction among participants within the LDC group. It is essential to acknowledge here that "we may only be able to conceive of the possibilities of response in and through the language, concepts and vocabulary which the discourse makes available to us" (Ball, 2006, p. 49). However, the concepts within the frameworks were found to be difficult for participants to understand and translate to practice. According the *E4Kids study: Assessing the effectiveness of Australian early childhood education and care*

programs (MGSE, 2016), teaching practices associated with the concept of intentional teaching were very low (at 87 per cent) across various service types in Victoria and Queensland.

The understandings of such concepts have been discussed among the participants involved in the present study. For instance, Alana had previously completed her Diploma in 2004 which utilised the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) approach (Bredekamp, 1987; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), and expressed the differences of shifting from DAP to the EYLF:

Oh, I think that they were very different. Like maybe we were doing those things in practice in what we were doing every day but we didn't know what they were labeled as or you know... And I think that the terminology in the framework scares a lot of people – like words 'agency' and um... just those big, big words that a lot of people – like, especially if you don't have training like in a university – they'd never heard or those words before. That was scary to kind of hear those words before. Um, like 'holistic practices' - things like that. When I think back well, I'm sure that a lot of us were doing that... in what we do, but we just didn't know it. Yeah, we just didn't know it. Does that make sense? (Alana, lines 73-78, original emphasis).

Here, Alana described the new terminology and meta-language embedded within the framework. She illustrated this by linking these concepts or 'labels' to her current practice, rather than changing her practice based on a deeper understanding of these concepts. It was clear that Alana linked her level of understanding of the content knowledge within the document to her tertiary-level training. Alana's response also correlates with the findings of another Victorian study (Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017), which observed that a "superficial understanding of new policy discourses is gained from being introduced to a document, whereas deep understanding comes about from trialling new learning and knowledge in practice, having a number of supported professional learning opportunities, and knowing more about the origins of new policy initiatives, practices and theories" (p. 352). However, these opportunities and insights may not be available to some early childhood professionals.

Similar to Alana's response, Gabrielle explained that understanding the new terminology within the framework had been an overwhelming process:

I took one look at the huge book and I went – 'I'm not reading that'. I say I struggled with it. I'm not good on big terminology words, so I often would have to go and say to the girls 'what... does this say? Explain it to me in basi...?' And I find it's not...it's way too... big on the words and not enough of explaining it in basic terms. And I can't be the only one that struggles with that. Um, and I think they need to go back to doing it a little bit more basic. And not making it so... you know, paragraph after paragraph. Explain it, get on with it. The girls here are pretty good. Some of the girls... if I struggle, I'll go and see ... someone and ask, and say 'what does this all mean?' Or I... hear how they explain it so... yeah (Gabrielle, line 36-41, original emphasis, sic).

These examples demonstrate tensions with levels of understanding regarding the underpinning concepts and language used in the frameworks, particularly for professionals who had previously been trained using traditional developmental approaches such as Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The discursive constructions presented here correlate with the findings of a study conducted by Kilderry, Nolan and Scott (2017), whereby some Victorian early childhood professionals either expressed or implied “some apprehension or reluctance to use new terminology introduced through the EYLF and NQS”, as they felt “uncertain” and “unfamiliar with the underpinning concepts and practices within these documents (pp. 347-348). However, these perceptions may be dependent upon the subjective positions and roles of participants.

Adapting to new professional roles – self and others

Participants in this study offered mixed perspectives of the new roles of Educational Leader [EL] and Nominated Supervisor [NS] (MCEECDYA, 2011). Again, this seemed to come down to their professional position. For instance, when these roles were first introduced, participants shared their experiences of confusion, as they were unsure of the job description and were unable to locate this information anywhere. This proved particularly difficult for those taking on these roles. Participants who identified as ELs spoke of resistance from their colleagues. For example, Sonia offered:

The first year I think I – everybody pretty much wanted to quit [laughs]. Um, because the staff – I suppose I walked into a service with established educators that have been in their roles for 20-30 years, so to go from you know, developmentally appropriate practice which I suppose in its own way was broad, but it had specific things that you needed to achieve. There were specific things there. To go to something that you choose yourself, it was, yeah, I think I rubbed everybody up the wrong way [laughs] (Sonia, lines 76-79).

Thus, professionals were struggling with the new content knowledge of the frameworks, as well as a new role that shifted the hierarchical context of their workplace. This perspective was verified by other participants who were not in the EL role. Alana offered her experience regarding this:

So we have someone else come in who doesn't really know us... taking on that role. And she is an older lady and she is very much in mind of 'okay, you need to be doing this, this, this, this, this'. Um, which a lot of... even me, I get my back up. I go 'you know what, I've got this under my belt and you don't have that'. That's probably a little bit pig-headed of me, but that's how I feel (Alana, lines 157-159).

It seemed that this role caused a sense of threat for early childhood professionals in the sector, as they expressed their feelings about someone coming in and questioning their knowledge and practice. This role appeared to set in motion a shift in power among professionals – adding to the tensions already visible within the LDC sector. The directors and centre coordinators involved in this study also spoke of their

experiences with their staff adjusting to the EL role and confirmed the challenges of resistance and intimidation. In regards to this view, Penny cautioned:

I think that's what we've got to be very careful... We're asking these to be professional people – and yet you've got somebody running around, looking at their work – questioning them (Penny, lines 243-244).

The majority of participants in educator/teacher roles did not offer much regarding the NS role, as it may not have held relevance to their own professional positions. However, similar to understandings of the EL role, some directors and centre coordinators who identified as Nominated Supervisor [NS] were unsure of their job description. Although many assumed that this was simply another title for their current managerial position. For instance, Aileen proposed:

Being a Nominated Supervisor – I mean that's no different to primary nominee, it's just a change of words... it tends to happen with every government. They want to... doctor something to change the names and it all means the same thing really (Aileen, lines 156-157).

This acknowledges an important point. Policymakers need to ensure that unwarranted changes are not implemented for superficial reasons, as this may cause further tensions in the field.

Ratios, registration, reviews and future reforms

The new ratios were discussed throughout interviews with the participants involved in this study. It appeared that these participants largely shared a positive response to this change as it would improve the quality of care and education for the children. Although one Bachelor-qualified teacher named Jade retorted: “Don’t even get me started on the ratios.... Is that even going to happen?” (Jade, lines 222-226). Some centres were already trialing the new ratios at the time of this study, as Aileen declared “we’ve been well and truly above ratio for a long time” (Aileen, line 223). The majority seemed to have acquired additional staff in order to meet the requirements; however, several centres had raised the number of children in their rooms to accommodate the financial ramifications. While, some centre coordinators spoke of their stress in managing the change in ratios, and subsequent financial, staffing and enrollment issues, as mentioned by Penny, who claimed:

You do have that extra cost on board.... So, impact of the ratios... it just means that you had to re-juggle (Penny, lines 224-226).

There was some dialogue with participants regarding the new VIT teacher registration for early childhood professionals in Victoria (VIT, 2015). Several participants exhibited frustration surrounding what was perceived as yet another task for them to complete. For instance, Jade demonstrated her reluctance:

I've got to do that. I haven't done that yet. Um personally, I think it's a waste of money. I went to the information, they don't provide us with anything, they don't provide us with professional development, they don't (Jade, lines 207-208).

Other participants such as Adele could see the benefits to the professional status of early childhood professionals but argued that cost was an issue:

I think that it's good that they're bringing that in because, um, obviously it's an acknowledgement of our professionalism and, um, teacher status but I guess to me it doesn't really solve problems because just having to pay some money and get registered doesn't actually mean that (Adele, lines 221-223).

Whereas Sonia expressed that this process was quite complex:

That's a very difficult process [laughs]. I have tried myself once and failed [laughs] so I'll try again soon. It's – I think it's a good idea though. I, you know, it gives us more recognition (Sonia, lines 128-129).

Hence, although these participants saw the benefits of VIT registration, they were reluctant to engage in this reform due to issues of cost, workload and implementation difficulties.

When discussing the reviews, participants provided mixed responses. For instance, Aileen reflected upon the possible reasons behind the reviews:

I think again it's just the government trying to push its own agenda. But I think the – this government isn't particularly fond of early childhood, they took things away from us as soon as they came into play...and they're looking at changing it even more.... I think this government is quite confused and doesn't understand early childhood. And probably needs to do its own PD [laughs] (Aileen, lines 160-164).

Most were aware of the reviews into the sector and the National Quality Framework, and agreed that the workload surrounding this needed to be decreased. However, several participants were unaware of the consultations underway regarding the VEYLDF. However, those who were aware of the consultative process (or agreed that an update of the VEYLDF was warranted) seemed to have a strong network, resources and support system at their disposal. Adele reflected on the potential outcome of this review:

It's a hard thing isn't it because everyone's going to want different things... Some people will want more detail; some people will want less detail... It would be very hard to, um please everyone (Adele, lines 208-209).

Thus, it seemed that most participants responded with somewhat neutral statements regarding their perceptions of the VEYLDF review. However, a number of participants had a lot to say when it came to other reviews.

Discussions regarding the reviews of the RTOs led to more negative emotive responses such as anger and frustration resurfacing among participants. Due to issues of quality among some RTOs, a review was conducted from 2014 to 2015 by the *Australian Skills Quality Authority* (ASQA, 2015). When asked about the review of these courses, Adele responded:

I think it's good that they're doing a review of the RTOs because...I've found that the quality of a lot of the...training that has come out since...bringing in the new regulations about training has just been shocking (Adele, lines 194-195).

Overall, participants all demonstrated agreement that this review was urgently needed throughout the LDC sector. Participant responses regarding this issue are unpacked further in Chapter Six.

A number of points were raised by participants that are significant for potential reforms in the future. Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants proposed that the length of time allowed for transition to the frameworks was insufficient for LDC professionals to fully understand and translate these documents into practice. Several participants illustrated a sense of fear and frustration at the prospect of future reforms, and suggested that more transparency and consultation with early childhood professionals and centres is needed. Meanwhile, participants who appeared well-supported and resourced accepted the inevitability of this prospect.

Initial interpretations from the field

From the emerging discursive constructions within the long day care data, a complex web of layers can be seen. For example, the way in which participants are speaking about their colleagues and the people coming through from RTOs is not positive. A strong discourse of power is visible through a common perception among participants, whereby Diploma-qualified educators from TAFE institutions are more competent than those from RTOs; yet, not as competent as Bachelor/Masters-qualified teachers. Therefore, all of these layers are becoming visible – but always dependent on the subjectivity of who is making these statements. For instance, some Diploma-qualified educators do not perceive some Bachelor-qualified teachers as competent, due to their own ample experience, whereas many Bachelor-qualified teachers are new to the field. Thus, there seems to be a sense of tension and feeling threatened. In relation to this, some Diploma courses have not been graded, therefore educators with these particular qualifications may find it more difficult to engage in further study, as those with “a non-graded Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (or equivalent) or an average grade below 60% will be required to provide evidence of literacy and numeracy. For example, by undertaking a STAT or uniTEST” (Deakin University, 2017, p. 1). Consequently, this can lead to feelings of “being left behind” (Abigail, line 262).

When such tensions are present, the engagement of the curriculum itself fades into the background. It is not considered as important as all of those tensions, such as the level of threat and insecurity.

The question therefore is: how does this reflect the way in which these early childhood professionals are engaging with frameworks and change? When discussing engagement, participants are raising issues of tension. This implies that this tension is impacting how they engage with these documents and with each other. This in turn influences how change is understood and applied. When asked about their strategies in dealing with change, participants offered information about matters that were important to them. This sequentially impacts how they read the frameworks and implement them. Although the frameworks can be changed, tensions that have been in the field for generations remain. In some ways they are amplified with every change and they actually become louder. When the history of early childhood education is considered thoughtfully, an ongoing chasm between vocational training and tertiary education can be seen. Subsequently, it seems that this chasm is actually widening, as opposed to merging together.

Summary

This chapter set the scene by providing an overview of the perspectives and contexts of the 11 participants involved in this study. These participants were early childhood professionals from Victorian long day care settings, and held a range of roles, qualifications and experience which have ultimately shaped and reshaped their subjective positionings (see **Table 19**). Several discursive constructions were identified, drawn from the initial discourse analysis of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with participants. The findings from this preliminary analysis revealed challenges regarding understanding and implementation of the curriculum, quality frameworks and assessment process. Tensions were also discovered regarding diverse perspectives of these reforms, as well as new roles and responsibilities, and teacher education practices. To uncover the coping strategies and positions of these participants, a deeper analysis is detailed in the following chapters (see Chapter Six: Strategies for Change, and Chapter Seven: Positions within the Change Process).

CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of the long day care sector based on perceptions of participants in this study. These perceptions highlighted the presence of tensions regarding a range of factors that influence the uptake of educational reform initiatives. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the tentative and contingent nature of post-structuralist attitudes to ‘truths’ do not support unquestioned ‘truth claims’, nor rigid ‘findings’ that suggest ‘cause-and-effect’ relationships or ‘universal’ truths. As such, the findings chapters do not assume the statements of participants as fact or ‘truth’, but seek to question their meaning from diverse subjective positionings of the participants. This chapter provides in-depth discussion surrounding the findings obtained from participants regarding strategies for change. This discussion focuses on these strategies within their wider discourses, and their connections to theory and literature. The diagrams presented throughout this chapter can be viewed as summaries of key findings.

Through the use of *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis* (FDA) (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) and by addressing the first research sub-question, this chapter explores these perceptions more thoroughly, and identifies some significant coping strategies offered by participants in this study. As argued by Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine (2017) and Willig (2013) there are no definite rules for conducting FDA, as it would “formalize an approach that refuses formalization” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 110). As such, the six phases of Willig’s (2013) version of FDA (see **Table 18**) served as guidelines to interrogate the data in order to address the first research sub-question:

What strategies are utilised by early childhood professionals to understand, cope and engage in educational reform?

FDA “allow[s] the researcher to map some of the discursive resources used in a text and the subject positions they contain, and to explore their implications for subjectivity and practice” (Willig, 2013, p. 131, sic). To clarify the way in which the FDA phases were applied to this study, some explanation is needed. Firstly, this study identified ‘educational reform’ as the *discursive object*, and that *discursive constructions* are ways participants spoke of educational reform (either explicitly or implicitly). These discursive constructions were then examined within the broader *discourses*. Meanwhile, *action orientation* presented a deeper understanding regarding what these discursive constructions achieved within the text when participants addressed the subject of educational reform. The *positionings* and the

diverse subjective positions of participants were also explored. Lastly, the relationship between *practice* and discourse was considered.

Based on the use of FDA, a number of coping strategies have been identified by participants as *discursive constructions* and *discursive practices* of educational reform. These strategies have emerged from three key discourses (see **Figure 20**). The diagram below illustrates these three influential discourses which are represented as branches of the capillary structure. These discourses are interconnected by the smaller capillaries, and flow through the main artery of educational reform. According to Willig (2008):

Since discourses make available ways of seeing and ways of being, they are strongly implicated in the exercise of power. Dominant discourses privilege those versions of social reality which legitimate existing power relations and social structures. Some discourses are so entrenched that it is very difficult to see how we may challenge them. They have become ‘common sense’. At the same time, it is in the nature of language that alternative constructions are always possible and that counter discourse can, and do, emerge (pp. 172-173, original emphasis).



Figure 20: Influential discourses for engaging with educational reform in early childhood education, based on participants from the long day care sector

Based on the responses of participants, *learning*, *teacher education* and *workplace* have been identified as influential discourses that affect the capacity of engaging with educational reform in the long day care

sector. Specific coping strategies (discursive practices) have been acknowledged by participants, based upon these discourses. According to O'Farrell's (2005) introduction to the works of Foucault, "discursive practices operate according to rules which are quite specific to a particular time, space, and cultural setting" (p. 79, sic). Therefore, the discursive practices of participants are relevant to their contexts and also their subject positions. In relation to this point, Arribas-Ayllon and Walkderine (2017) have explained that "subject positions define the historical limits of what can be written, said or practiced" (p. 118). Thus, the influences of these limits form a major part of examining the subject positions and discursive practices of participants in relation to educational reform.

The strategies identified in the following sections can offer some understanding as to what the difficulties have been encountered thus far, and what has been successful in implementing educational reform in the long day care sector. These strategies can be seen as positive (supports) and negative (stressors), and emphasise the role that learning, teacher education and workplace discourses play in coping with educational reform. As such, valuable insight is provided regarding the changing expectations of the field, and how early childhood professionals can better prepare and empower themselves by taking up certain discursive practices when engaging in education reform.

The discursive practice of learning as a strategy or effect of power

The perceptions and subjective positionings of participants are influenced by specific discourses. In relation to this, it is important to remember that discourses are not generated by people. Instead, people (subjects and their positions) are produced by discourse (Foucault, 1972; Prado, 2000). The discourse of learning was demonstrated by participants as a significant aspect of engaging in 2009–2012 early childhood reforms. A number of participants identified key discursive practices in relation to this discourse. Foucault's concept of discursive practices concerns "the practices (or operations)" associated with specific discourses (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 173). Thus, discourse involves "the dimension of practice" (Pecil, Vieiral & Clegg, 2009, p. 381), and the "active deployment" of these discourses (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 177). In relation to the discursive practices involved in the discourse of learning, participants have perceived these as being either a support or stress for coping with the reforms. This study has identified two types of discursive learning practices; namely, *self-initiated learning* [SIL] and *duty-bound learning* [DBL] (see **Figure 21**). In keeping with a post-structural perspective, it is important to acknowledge that these practices do not reflect a binary; rather, they represent two specific practices discovered among participants. The diagram below illustrates these learning practices as branches within the capillary structure of learning discourse. The embedded elements of these practices are symbolised by the smaller capillaries, and flow through the main artery of learning discourse.

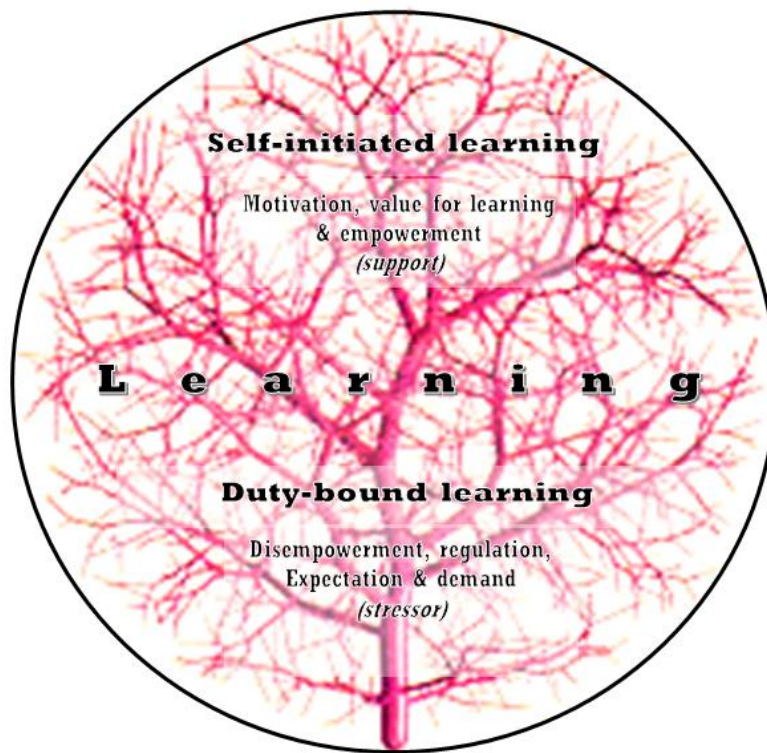


Figure 21: Features of self-initiated learning [SIL] and duty-bound learning [DBL]

The discursive practice of self-initiated learning

The discursive practice of SIL signifies learning which is initiated by the individual. It implies that a level of self-motivation and a value for learning and new knowledge is present among some individuals. Although the literature conveys that educational change can reduce motivation (Moore & Fink, 2003), some early childhood professionals may still possess attributes of self-motivation. This correlates with the second element of the ADKAR Organisational Change Model (Hiatt, 2006), whereby professionals possess a *desire* to change. This self-motivation and desire for learning may ultimately lead these professionals to a sense of empowerment. When looking at this in terms of Foucault's concept of *power/knowledge*, it can be seen that knowledge (i.e. that acquired through self-initiated learning) "is not just a product; it reciprocally enables and sustains *power relations*" (Prado, 2000, p. 77, emphasis added). Thus, for these participants, power relations are enabled and sustained through their engagement in the self-initiated learning of new knowledge. This can be seen as a *strategy of power*, whereby power is developed within the social structures of the early childhood sector and the learning practices of professionals (Foucault, 1980).

Features of SIL have been visible among four of the seven educators, teachers and co-educator involved in this study. For example, Abigail described that she was “really involved” and was drawn to “actively participate”, as she demonstrated a “genuine interest and a genuine passion” to apply the frameworks to her practice (Abigail, lines 190, 308-310, original emphasis). Meanwhile, Adele perceived herself to be “really self-motivated” and “ambitious”, as she explained: “I want to learn more.... I want to lead...” (Adele, lines 100-101). This suggests that for these participants, the uptake of SIL as a discursive practice influenced their own subject positioning, whereby they were empowered to navigate the shifting discourses of educational reform with more confidence and efficiency. The importance of engaging in such learning practices has been acknowledged by Mac Naughton (2005) who proposed that early childhood professionals should become “critically knowing” in times of change, and reconstruct themselves “as powerful agents of equity and innovation who can practise for liberty” (p. 211). Again, this emphasises that engagement in the discursive practice of SIL can be utilised as a strategy of power to engage in educational reform.

SIL can be viewed as a significant practice for developing more profound levels of understanding regarding changing early childhood discourses. Varying levels of SIL have been presented by participants as they began to engage with the 2009 curriculum frameworks. For instance, Alana has proposed:

...the majority of the work that I did...in terms of my own practice and planning...was – just trying to refine it and add bits and pieces and trying to make sense of it myself... (Alana, lines 83-85).

This indicates that for Alana’s own professional practice, a basic degree of SIL, a sense of ownership and internal personalisation have shaped a supportive coping strategy, as a strategy of power. This strategy is valuable for understanding reforms such as the new curriculum frameworks, as they are considered to be interpretative documents which are dependent upon the subjective positioning and comprehension of the reader (Sumsion et al., 2009). As such, diverse interpretations and understandings of these documents are present among early childhood professionals throughout the field. However, these interpretations and understandings are influenced by their own subjective positioning. According to Davies and Harrè (1999):

Once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned (p. 35).

Hence, the understandings of educational reform discourses (such as the 2009 curriculum frameworks) seem to have led to some early childhood professionals taking up certain subject positions, whereby they

engage in specific learning practices as a strategy of power (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017). This has been further corroborated by Ball (2006) who explained that "...we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies" (p. 48). This suggests the policy documents themselves have made certain discourses, positions and practices available. Meanwhile, a more assertive and externally informed SIL strategy has been offered by Abigail:

I myself started going online, and reading, and researching, and finding out all of this stuff.... But as far as me – it was because of my own research that I've learnt about it all (Abigail, lines 68-69, 139-140, original emphasis).

For Abigail, SIL has functioned as a support as she began to translate and apply the Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF] to her practice (DEEWR, 2009). By enhancing her understanding of this document, Abigail's use of SIL, as a discursive practice, resulted in an increased motivation for further learning and a position of power. This correlates with the findings from a study conducted by Kilderry, Nolan and Scott (2017) who discovered that some Victorian early childhood professionals "showed some confidence with unfamiliar discourse...due to their own professional learning" (p. 346).

The pre-service training of many early childhood professionals across Victoria (and Australia more broadly) was previously entrenched in Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (DEEWR, 2011a; Edwards, 2007; Fler & Robbins, 2004). This was the case for Lucy, who had accomplished her DAP-based Diploma in 2009; however, after nine years in the field, she was able to utilise SIL to enhance her understanding of the new frameworks and inform her practice:

Most of it was our research.... I think as I've learnt the framework and really started to implement it and feel like it's embedded, it...gets a bit more understanding under it and it sort of has a bit of flow I think about it. It was always so forced beforehand (Lucy, lines 21-24, 47-48).

Lucy's response to the new frameworks is positive, and reflects positive emotive responses such as resilience and adaptability (Arthur et al. (2018). Whilst the contrast between the flexible nature of these documents and the more prescriptive discourses of DAP signifies how SIL can be enacted as a discursive practice to assist in understanding the diverse approaches to early childhood curriculum, despite the historical knowledges (or the 'archaeology of knowledge') associated with early childhood discourses. As Foucault (1978) claimed, "In a way we are nothing other than what has been said, centuries ago, months, weeks ago" (p. 469). However, this archaeology of knowledge offers "a model of what has happened that will allow us to free ourselves from what has happened" (Foucault, 1974b, p. 644). This implies that early childhood professionals can still move beyond knowledges of the past.

SIL has also been used by participants to understand the more contemporary discourses of knowledge that underpin the 2009 curriculum frameworks. For instance, Abigail could not recall learning about specific theorists within her pre-service training. Instead, she admitted to “going and having to do my own research on them” (Abigail, lines 21-22, original emphasis). This reinforces the importance for early childhood professionals to engage in “ongoing development” as discursive practices within the discourse of learning throughout their careers: whether this is to find new knowledge, or simply to refresh their prior knowledge (OECD, 2017a, p. 104). In this instance, knowledge and power can be perceived equally, through the “notion of ‘power-knowledge’, where power and knowledge generate each other in endless cycles” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 67, original emphasis). Ultimately, SIL offers early childhood professionals a discursive practice as a strategy of power, whereby they can feel empowered by their acquired knowledge, understandings and practices of educational reform discourse.

The discursive practice of duty-bound learning

The discursive practice of *duty-bound learning* [DBL] represents a type of learning which is perceived as compulsory (bound by duty). This type of learning is often based on regulations, demand and expectation, ultimately leading to a feeling of disempowerment. When looking at Foucault’s *Four Facets of Power*, power is perceived “as a collection of enforced relations” (1980, pp. 92-93). Correspondingly, the enforced way in which the reforms beginning in 2009 were introduced illustrates a *deployment of power* (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017). As a result, the uptake of DBL as a discursive learning practice may be seen as an *effect of power*.

In this study, DBL has been identified by four participants in relation to themselves or their colleagues. The following discussions exhibit feelings of disempowerment and lack of motivation, which correlates with the educational change literature (Moore & Fink, 2003). As a point of reflection from Chapter Five, an educator who was trained prior to the 2009 reforms described her first experience with the EYLF:

I struggled with it. I took one look at the huge book and I went – ‘I’m not reading that’ (Gabrielle, lines 36-37, original emphasis).

Gabrielle’s response reflects that resistance to change is still present. According to Foucault, “resistance to power is part of the *exercise of power*” (Kendall & Wickham, 2003, p. 50, emphasis added, sic). Furthermore, resistance is also a common response to educational change (Arthur et al., 2015; Block, 2000; Gomez, 2012; Pendergast et al., 2005). While this response emphasises lack of motivation aligned with DBL, it also illustrates the need for all early childhood professionals to allocate time for learning (Mac Naughton, 2005). Nonetheless, the uptake of DBL or SIL is dependent upon the subject positions of

individuals. Alana has offered some insight into the features of DBL in relation to the positions of her colleagues:

People are having a lot of trouble because they're not wanting to learn about the Early Years Learning Framework because it seems too hard to them and because they're set in their old ways – they fight. They don't want to change, they're not interested (Alana, lines 132-134, sic).

Although this statement appears to demonstrate a negative emotive response, it also portrays a mindfulness of attitudes towards change (Arthur et al., 2018). Lack of motivation from Alana's colleagues may stem from a resistance to change. However, it is essential to acknowledge that "resistance is the 'counter-stroke' to power" (Hunt & Wickham, 1994, p. 83, original emphasis). If we think about the cycle of change (Pendergast, 2006), early childhood professionals may be positioned within different stages "on the continuum from resistance to acceptance of new ideas" (Gronlund & James, 2008, pp. 21-22). Therefore, a variety of emotive responses to change are likely to occur. In relation to this point, Gronlund and James (2008) have put forward:

We may need to rant and rave in anger and denial until we accept that the change is inevitable and necessary. Then and only then can we embrace it and truly grow in our thinking and our practice. And that takes time and effort (p. 18).

This reinforces that resistance is part of the change process, but time is also necessary for meaningful change to occur (Moore & Fink, 2003).

It is vital for early childhood professionals to recognise the features of SIL and DBL, and those who engage in these discursive practices within the discourse of learning. Engagement in these discursive learning practices illustrates the presence of power relations, whereby discursive practices can be seen as either strategies or effects of power. It also reinforces the importance of acknowledging specific learning styles and practices taken up by certain subject positions of early childhood professionals, as they attempt to engage in educational change (Gronlund & James, 2008). This knowledge offers a valuable contribution for professionals to better understand the positions and attitudes of their colleagues towards learning and change. Moreover, it indicates the need for early childhood professionals to be mindful of their *own* attitudes toward learning, as this can empower them as they engage in future change. Though, it is also essential to explore the role that teacher education discourses play in engaging with educational reform.

Teacher education discourses

Although specific types of learning were found to influence the engagement of early childhood professionals in educational reforms, it was important to examine teachers' education discourses and where the knowledge attributed to these learning discourses resided. According to Kendall and Wickham (2003), "the field of knowledge can be said to be dominated by the primacy of discourse" (p. 48, sic). As such, the knowledge available is dependent upon specific discourses. *Teacher education* discourses have been acknowledged by participants as an essential area for engaging in educational reform. For the purpose of this study (as outlined in Chapter Two), the term *teacher education* encompasses pre-service and in-service teacher education and educator training of these participants (as outlined in Chapter Two, **Table 11**). Coping strategies (or discursive practices) involved in the discourses of teacher education relate to *pre-service* (qualifications) and *in-service* (professional development) teacher education. Yet, features of these strategies can be perceived as either a stressor or support for early childhood professionals (see **Figure 22**). The diagram below utilises the capillary structure to illustrate teacher education as the main artery, pre-service and in-service strategies as the interconnected branches, and the embedded elements of these strategies as the smaller capillaries.

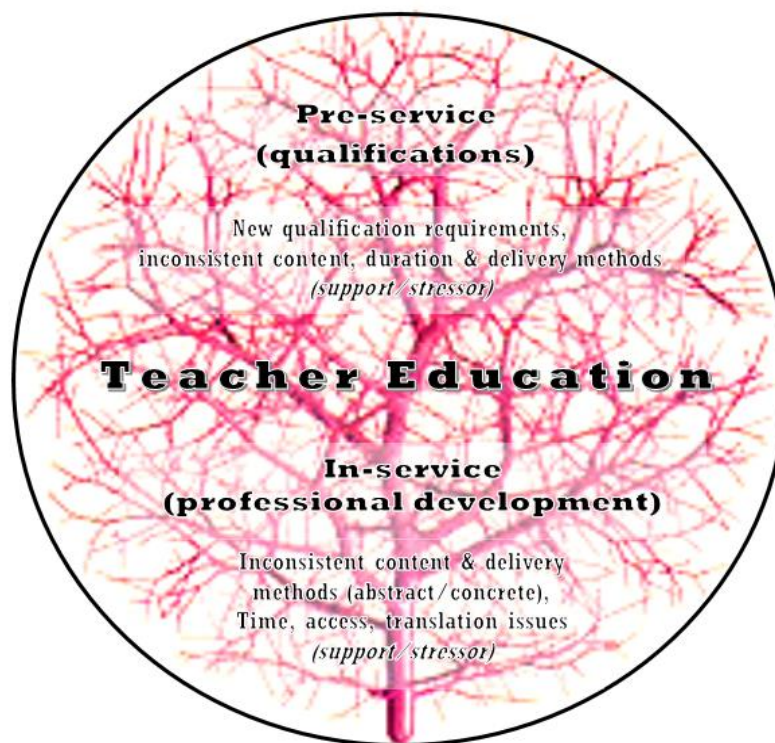


Figure 22: Features of pre-service and in-service teacher education as strategies (discursive practices) for engaging in educational reform

Before discussing the responses of participants regarding their teacher education, it is important to review their demographical information, as this forms another layer to their subjective positions. According to **Table 19** presented in Chapter Five, the participants involved in this study held specific qualifications. These ranged from Mothercraft Nurse, a grandfathered course, Certificate III and Diploma courses, and Bachelor, Honours and Masters Degrees in early childhood education. Collectively, the qualifications of these participants were acquired from 1965 and were ongoing in 2016. Of note, participants with Certificate III and Diplomas obtained these qualifications from 2001 to 2009 – prior to the early childhood reforms that began in 2009. While those who obtained Bachelor, Honours and Masters Degrees did so from 2011 to 2015 – following the first of the reforms (namely, the EYLF and VEYLDF in 2009). This timeframe makes sense, as the new qualification requirements for Victorian early childhood professionals were introduced during this period (MCEECDYA, 2011).

Pre-service teacher education

Pre-service qualifications can be seen as a discursive practice within the discourse of teacher education. In relation to this point, many issues were raised by participants. For instance, several early childhood professionals described their experiences of Diploma training as being more focused upon practical skills and resources, while those who completed their Diplomas prior to the introduction of the curriculum and quality frameworks recalled being taught predominantly traditional developmental theories. Thus, these courses demonstrated which content knowledge was privileged within these institutions at the time (Gomez, 2012; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003). As such, it can be seen that power and knowledge inform each other. In relation to this point, O’Farrell (2005) has explained:

...knowledge is always shaped by political, social and historical factors – by ‘power’ – in human societies. It is absolutely essential to examine the relationship between knowledge and the factors that produce and constrain it (p. 54, original emphasis).

In this case, power has been developed as a strategy within the social structure and practices of specific teacher education and educator training institutions (Foucault, 1980). This is evident through the power structures of these institutions (Goldstein, 2008; Grieshaber, 2008). However, this knowledge may have been constrained by the historical significance (archaeology of knowledge) of traditional developmental content knowledge, rather than more contemporary content knowledge relevant to the new frameworks.

Although some early childhood professionals with pre-2009 Diploma qualifications may have struggled, one participant seemed to adapt quite well to the frameworks. For example, Jade (a Bachelor-qualified

teacher) had come from teaching early childhood education interstate and was therefore already familiar with using a curriculum framework. This prior experience of engaging in educational reform discourse acted as a supportive discursive practice and strategy of power (Foucault, 1980). She spoke of her understanding of the frameworks in relation to her Diploma course completed in 2009:

...I think they were actually a little bit ahead of their time because we learnt a lot about It was a curriculum framework that was developed by the [Department of Community Services – DOCS in New South Wales] It's called the [New South Wales Curriculum Framework] It's a really beautiful document. So we were encouraged to write learning stories back then and use this curriculum framework back then and we were already being encouraged to move away from that whole...developmental age and stage appropriateness back then and I moved down to Victoria and they were still doing this developmental age and stage appropriateness and I didn't know what to do with it – and I had a mental breakdown, and I went, 'oh my gosh, I don't know how to work with this'. Um, so I, when the framework came out, I went oh, I can work with this. This is fantastic. So which was really, that was really good for me (Jade, lines 31-40).

So in a way, Jade experienced the opposite to most early childhood professionals in Victoria, where she had learnt to use a curriculum framework, and then had to backtrack to more traditional developmental approaches. This demonstrates Jade's resilience and adaptability (Arthur et al., 2018), as well as the conflicting privilege and availability associated with different content knowledge at the time. It also relates to Foucault's relationship between knowledge and power, where "the ways some knowledge is made available by the operations of the institutions involved instances of governance while other knowledge is not made available" (Hunt & Wickham, 1994, pp. 90-91). Consequently, this new content knowledge had been made available through government bodies and teaching institutions in some states of Australia, but not yet in Victoria. Though, when the frameworks were introduced in Victoria in 2009, Jade was able to more easily understand and translate these documents to her practice. As such, the prior use of an interstate curriculum framework can be seen as a supportive coping strategy and discursive practice for engaging in similar reforms.

Changing discourses of teacher education

In addition to new qualification requirements in Victoria, there was a shift in knowledge discourses from traditional to more contemporary approaches to early childhood education. Again, this reflects the availability of specific content knowledge among institutions (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gomez, 2012). As such, participants were asked about theories learnt during their pre-service education. For instance, Alana spoke of the very developmental approach taught during her Diploma from 2004 to 2007:

...we weren't taught about any theories at all. Oh, maybe Piaget....it was a lot about Piaget-type theories (Alana, lines 31-33).

The fact that Alana did not recall the theories taught straight away, and referred to ‘Piaget-type theories’ implies that she may not have been using these approaches in her daily practice. Lucy recounted the prescriptive approach she was taught during her Diploma in 2009:

Writing goals over and over again and yeah, the deficits... (Lucy, line 19).

This prescriptive approach was also described and compared to the approaches used now by Alana:

...planning – very structured planning, and you had to have a goal and it was an umbrella. And you had to have little goals coming off the major goal... You know, you planned based on children’s deficits basically – not on their strengths and interests... Um, very different to now, I guess (Alana, lines 34-37).

This foregrounds that not only have theoretical discourses changed, but so too have pedagogical approaches. However, the shift in these approaches had not yet occurred for Sonia during her Diploma in 2007, as she admitted:

Yeah, we had the developmentally appropriate practice. Yeah, so yeah [laughs] (Sonia, line 31).

These accounts illustrate that the changes to early childhood theoretical discourses and pedagogical practices had not yet occurred among educator training institutions that offered early childhood Diplomas. Although early childhood knowledge discourses had shifted, institutions were still producing and disseminating traditional developmental content knowledge (Appleyard, 1996; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994). In relation to relevance to current practice, developmental knowledge discourses of the Diploma have been discussed by Lucy:

Ah, I feel like half of it’s out the window but then on the other hand.... I think that really helped really knuckle down with the language and...knuckle down about behaviour guidance and.... Engagement with the children, I think that’s helped a lot. And then also...just the basic developmental things even though they’re irrelevant in our planning process, well not irrelevant but you know, less relevant.... I think it sort of prepared me in lots of ways but lots of it is irrelevant as for the same time. Half and half really (Lucy, lines 27-34, sic).

Here, Lucy has alluded to tensions between the relevance of traditional developmental discourses compared to more contemporary discourses which underpin the frameworks. Therefore, if Diploma-qualified educators feel that their prior educator training is irrelevant to their current practice and understanding of the frameworks, how are they expected to engage with these documents effectively? This may be particularly relevant to tensions between the values of theory and practice (Britzman, 1991, 2003; Dyson, 2005; Krieg, 2010; Lohmander, 2004). As such, the divide between privileges attributed to these discourses within teacher education and educator training institutions may be developing another

layer of confusion for early childhood professionals in the field – as an *effect of power* (Foucault, 1980), and a stressor for engaging in educational reform (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gomez, 2012).

In contrast, participants who had completed their Bachelor Degrees (and in some cases, higher), presented a different understanding of these theoretical and pedagogical changes. This correlates with evidence from the literature that specifies these differences between content delivered in *Technical and Further Education* [TAFE] and *Higher Education* [HE] institutions (Choy & Haukka, 2010). Teachers who completed their Bachelor Degrees were taught a more eclectic range of theories. However, some early childhood teachers who had completed their Bachelor Degrees during or following the introduction of the curriculum frameworks implied that these documents were not yet being taught at that time. For instance, Adele explained her thoughts about her Bachelor Degree completed in 2011:

...for the lecturers and everyone...they were still...the course content hadn't changed yet. So...I guess, some verbal understanding that things are changing but what you're learning is still...more traditional.... I feel like it was at a time of change where...we had all those traditional theorists but also then...framing that, that things were changing (Adele, lines 41-45).

Thus, the new content had not yet filtered through to some teaching institutions, or perhaps teacher-educators were still grappling with these changes themselves. Again, this shows the unavailability of privileged content knowledge associated with specific institutions (Hunt & Wickham, 1994). Conversely, two participants had been privy to well-known mentors or academics who were originally involved in the development of the frameworks. These interactions made possible the construction of *strategies of power*. As a result, these participants appeared to possess a greater understanding of these documents. For example, Lucy explained the benefits of having a supportive teacher-educator during her Bachelor Degree:

I was studying at that time of change when the frameworks were coming in and ...the coordinator of my Degree course at [university name] was actually a part of the...working group or, um, reference group for the framework... and so she was quite, I guess, proactive in...introducing that to us, you know, at the time that it was unfolding. So I think...that was a real, um, benefit for me... (Lucy, lines 38-41).

Meanwhile, Jade mentioned a mentor who had been involved in planning new course content at a tertiary institution based on the reforms:

There was another lady that used to work at this centre who was my mentor while I was studying my Bachelor. And she writes modules for the [university name] Bachelor course that's just come out (Jade, lines 4-5).

These statements reflect the importance of teacher education institutions and their teacher-educators being aware (and if possible, involved) in the processes of educational reform. In this case, the fact that Lucy and Jade's teacher-educators were involved in this process meant that they were aware of upcoming changes, understood these changes, and were able to pass these onto their students and mentees. This correlates with the first stage of the AKDAR Organisational Change Model, where people have the *awareness* of the change (Hiatt, 2006), and also understand the *how* and *why* of change (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009). For Lucy and Jade, having supportive and involved teacher-educators and mentors during their teacher education and educator training was perceived as a supportive discursive practice (and strategy of power) to better understand these reforms, which ultimately elevated their subjective positions in the process.

In relation to theoretical knowledge discourses, Alana spoke of "learning about all of them" (Alana, line 33) during her Bachelor Degree that was due for completion in 2016. She described her experience with the theories during her studies:

Well, we've learnt a lot about ecological systems. We're doing that now. Um... they talk a lot about sociocultural theory – they're probably the main ones.... yeah, I think it's mainly those two that we kind of focus on. They seem to be the most common theorists that are going around. And we can all relate to them in this kind of service anyway (Alana, lines 39-41).

Although Alana stated she was being taught all of the theories during her Bachelor Degree – she only referred to two. It may be that these two theories (ecological and sociocultural) were dominant theories (or privileged content knowledge) within this course (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gomez, 2012). Or alternatively, they may have been the most relatable to Alana's practice, in which case, Alana's knowledge and uptake of these theories can be considered as a strategy of power for engaging with these changes to theory. In regards to the former point, the power/knowledge of institutional discourses have infiltrated how this participant positions herself within the discourse, and as a result – this then influences the discourses available to colleagues working with her and how she sees and engages with curriculum reform (Foucault, 2002, 2003; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; O'Farrell, 2005). In Alana's case, her teacher education institution may have privileged the specific content knowledge of ecological and sociocultural theories. Although this content knowledge may have better positioned early childhood professionals for engaging with the 2009 reforms, this may also prove limiting for future reform engagement – because the institutions may have positioned professionals as only seeing the world in two ways.

According to Sonia, her Bachelor education (due for completion in 2015), also focused on more contemporary theorists:

Um, well we're learning about theorists and...how...all their theories sort of make up everything we know about early childhood....like obviously they're expecting us to - to know about developmentally appropriate practice and the Early Years Learning Framework. So they don't really talk about it as much as the theorists that make up where all this information has come from basically (Sonia, lines 35-38, sic).

This institution focused on the contemporary theories embedded within the 2009 curriculum frameworks, yet the link between the two had not been made; nor had the value of the more traditional developmental approaches to child development. Again, this may be perceived as the issues of un/availability of relevant knowledge (Hunt & Wickham, 1994); or it may be that an either/or approach to theory and practice is being taken by some institutions (Britzman, 1991, 2003; Krieg, 2010). It seems that in Sonia's case, pre-service teachers were expected to know about developmental discourses of child development, and the curriculum frameworks, but these connections were not visible to Sonia during her course. As such, the expectations of Sonia's teacher education may be perceived as a stressor, and an effect of power (Foucault, 1980).

Subjective views of qualifications

Aside from changing knowledge discourses, participants acknowledged other differences between the Diploma courses and Bachelor Degrees which added to the stress of coping with the reforms which began in 2009. This related to the fact that Diplomas were largely based on practical skills through vocational institutions, while Bachelor Degrees were more theoretically based through tertiary institutions (Dyson, 2005). Issues were raised in regards to this divide. For instance, Abigail (a Diploma-qualified participant) had mixed perceptions about the subject positions of Bachelor-qualified teachers:

I remember that they had employed a Bachelor – a girl that had just finished her Bachelor [Degree]. And she was coming out fresh to the centre and she had a lot of knowledge of the Elf [EYLF] from being just completed her Bachelor – and the framework and everything sort of put together (Abigail, lines 59-61, sic).

In contrast to Sonia's previous account, this suggests that the Bachelor qualification holds valuable content knowledge regarding the 2009 frameworks. But in a contradictory statement, Abigail also claimed: "You could run a kindergarten room better than someone that's done a Bachelor [Degree]" (Abigail, line 213). This means that although the knowledge may be present within Bachelor Degree courses, perhaps the practical skills are lacking (Britzman, 1991, 2003; Krieg, 2010). If so, this may be viewed as a stressor and an effect of power for early childhood professionals, as they attempt to translate new knowledge relating to these reforms to their practice.

Directors and centre coordinators had less to offer in regards to the curriculum frameworks, but essentially proposed that newly qualified professionals should understand these documents and know how to implement them. In a way, a higher value was attributed to the subject positions of these newly qualified professionals. Qualification and experience can be perceived as discursive practices of early childhood discourse. However, since the requirements for employing Bachelor-qualified teachers within Victorian LDC settings were relatively new, the directors and coordinators seemed to hold the subject positions of experienced and competent early childhood professionals in higher regard than those of newly qualified professionals. The value attributed to experience over theory was also present among a number of the educators trained prior to the reforms beginning in 2009 – possibly in relation to their own subjective positioning. This positioning “offers not only a perspective from which to view a version of reality, but also a moral location within spoken interaction” (Willig, 2008, p. 102). Moreover, “they allow individuals to manage, in quite complex and subtle ways, their moral location within social interaction” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118). This was true for Gabrielle (an educator trained prior to the 2009 reforms):

Yeah. But you’ve still gotta get experience, and I understand that. But yeah, some of them are just qualifying on... they’re not really doing enough of the experience skills to... And a lot of them come out and are immediately put into a team leader job – have no... no idea. It’s like anything, you should start at the bottom and work your way to the top (Gabrielle, lines 81-83, original emphasis, sic).

Based on this statement (and others like it), the moral vantage point and subject positions of some educators encompasses experience over qualification. As a result, this divide between teacher education and experience seems to be adding to tensions in the field. This can be seen as an *effect of power*, as the values attributed to new qualifications in the Victorian sector emerge – particularly when newly qualified teachers are seen as being more knowledgeable about the reforms which began in 2009. As such, these tensions and effects of power have created a stressor for experienced educators in the field. Although a hierarchy has always been present, new qualification requirements have raised the professional status of newly qualified (and often younger and less experienced) early childhood professionals. In turn, the qualifications of these new professionals can be seen as a *strategy of power* that has been developed through the social structures and practices of teaching institutions (Foucault, 1980). In comparison, many educators who were trained prior to the reforms beginning in 2009 have been demoted in their professional roles. This means that they may feel pushed out of the field, as they either need to increase their qualifications or move on. Conversely, some more experienced educators feel that this is not an option:

I could go back and do a training course I suppose but I’m too old. Um, but I do struggle with it (Gabrielle, lines 31-32).

For Gabrielle, age is a key factor in the notion of re-education, which ultimately involves the conflicted processes of power that are changing and repealing these relations between the subject positions of early childhood professionals (Foucault, 1980). In addition, the shift from practical to theoretical approaches of new qualification requirements in Victoria also represent a stressor developed from the changing privilege associated with specific content knowledge in teacher education (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gomez, 2012).

The value of experience has been acknowledged as valuable support for several participants, particularly regarding prior experience with the old accreditation process in the long day care sector (NCAC, 1993), which seems to have assisted in a smoother transition to the new NQF system (ACECQA, 2012). In addition, experience in general has led to a growth in confidence over time. According to the literature, confidence to change is generally experienced by professionals who hold a middle-career subject position (Hargreaves, 2005). As evidence of this argument, Abigail has offered:

I do think my experience has been able to help me, because although there is a lot of new things, the whole basis and understanding of it, is very similar – the foundations are basically the same (Abigail, lines 188-189, sic).

For Abigail, her prior educator training and experiences as an educator have shaped her subject position in a way that acts as a supportive strategy (and a strategy of power) in her understanding of the frameworks.

Practical knowledge and skills can be seen as discursive practices of teacher education discourse. The need for practical skills in teacher education was a strong talking point for two participants. For instance, Gabrielle explained her pre-service training experiences:

I suppose 'cause when I trained, ours was a lot of practical.... What I learnt then – beats anything that I learnt in a class (Gabrielle, lines 89, 93-94, sic).

This represents the value associated with the hands-on approach to early childhood education. In particular, it recognises the power relations involved within teaching institutions regarding their preference for certain types of knowledge (i.e. theoretical or practical). The preference for practical knowledge is reflective of traditional Diploma courses. As a result of prior engagement with these courses, the subjective positioning and learning types of some early childhood professionals may reflect this practical approach. This has been acknowledged as having a significant impact on the ability to

engage in educational reform (Gronlund & James, 2008). The divide between theoretical and practical knowledge in dealing with educational reform has also been discussed by Abigail:

I really believe back then that a lot of that was on-the-job training. I still believe that actually. You can learn only so much, but once you get out there, it's a totally different story (Abigail, lines 33-24).

For Abigail, value is attributed to workplace education opportunities as a discursive practice (and a strategy of power) for engaging with change. It also reinforces the importance of gaining practical skills through the workplace, as opposed to privileging theory-based teacher education (Dyson, 2005). Though, the sector needs to ensure that teaching institutions that offer these opportunities provide a balance of theoretical and practical knowledge (Choy & Haukka, 2010). Due to different preferences for theoretical and practical knowledges within various teaching institutions, and their influence on subject positions and learning types of early childhood professionals, teacher education can be deemed as either a supportive *strategy of power* or a stressful *effect of power* in dealing with educational reform.

Diverse methods of teacher education

More in-depth questions were posed to participants about their thoughts on the different pre-service education available. Eight participants demonstrated concern regarding content, duration and delivery of some programs – particularly those offered by some *Registered Training Organisations* [RTOs]. Additional early childhood courses were rolled out as a result of new qualification requirements outlined in the updated Regulations (MCEECDYA, 2011). Although the government approved this move as a strategy of power, this may be perceived as a predominantly negative effect of power for some early childhood professionals.

It is important to acknowledge that only some RTOs have had their quality called into question (ASQA, 2017). However, this seems to have impacted the reputation of all RTOs for the participants involved in this study. When discussing the Diploma courses offered principally by online RTOs, all participants had plenty to put forward. It was clear that these professionals did not value this type of teacher education. They demonstrated feelings of anger and frustration with lack of content, duration, experience, quality and support offered to students studying some of these courses. Emotive responses are common when change is occurring (Baker & Foote, 2003; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Gronlund & James, 2008; Hochschild, 1979; Moore & Fink, 2003). In this case, emotive responses were present as a result of the increased roll out of some short RTO courses in the sector. When considering the duration of these courses, Jade replied:

What a load of crap. Did you also hear recently that 70 per cent of qualifications that are out there are being done within a year? And that's not okay (Jade, lines 158-159).

This emotive response raises issues regarding how much knowledge and skills can be learnt in such a narrow timeframe. Here, the content knowledge and delivery methods of some of these teaching institutions are not being valued within the field. This perception of some RTOs from within the field can be seen as one subject position – how these individuals from these RTOs are received and judged as inadequate. While there are very negative discourses towards some RTOs, it is important to note that these discourses project specific subject positions for the individuals trained by these RTOs. This provides a discourse of ‘disempowerment’, because if they enter the field and feel that the workplace receiving them already holds a negative view of their qualification, what is their subject position within this discourse? It begs some important questions – what are the subject positions of educators who emerge from this type of training? What are they like to work with, and are they equipped to deal with the reforms which began in 2009? One answer was offered by Abigail:

I've worked with a lot of these people that have got their Diplomas and you know, they don't even know how to... one – run a room, or two – write a program, or create a program in a room, you know? So it's just very frustrating actually (Abigail, lines 53-54).

Use of the term ‘these people’ demonstrates the negative manner in which some RTO-qualified educators are addressed. It is clear that they have already been positioned in a very negative discourse where they should not belong to the early childhood field. According to ASQA (2017):

For RTOs, there are risks to both reputation and commercial viability, where unduly short training can create an unsustainable ‘race to the bottom’. Over time, this can drive RTOs to compromise their standards (in order to remain viable) or to exit the marketplace altogether. RTOs who want to invest in high-quality programs that have sufficient time to enable learners to gain all of the required skills and competencies are facing unfair competition because of the increasing prevalence of short courses being offered in the VET market (p. 104).

Hence, the field appears to be positioning these individuals within a certain discourse; however, these individuals are located within another set of discourses – because it is the government who supports RTOs, though this broader picture does not seem to be visible to early childhood professionals in the field. According to Abigail, rather than leading to more qualified educators in the field, the increased roll out of some of these courses have added to the original problem of greater numbers of under-qualified (or under-skilled) educators. As a result of these issues, participants explained that they felt obligated to babysit and spoon-feed information to these students. Subsequently, the power relations involved in increasing RTO courses in the sector can be seen as *enforced*, and as an effect of power, adding to the

stress and workload of professionals in the field (Foucault, 1980). As such, this adds a further layer of stress for early childhood professionals as they endeavour to cope with the reforms.

Several early childhood professionals discussed challenges when dealing with students and newly-qualified educators from RTOs who have English as a Second Language (ESL). It is important to note here that these responses were based on the observations, experiences and subjective positionings of participants. For Abigail, concerns were raised regarding the differences between her own qualification and that of an RTO-qualified ESL educator:

So...that's a big worry for me. This is someone with English as a second language that has these courses... And that's where I feel, yeah, it's stressful for someone like me – where, I finished my qualifications 11 years ago. And I'm in the old format. And if I don't...start doing something now, then I'm going to be left behind by all these people. You know, they've got more qualifications than me – but they don't know anything (Abigail, lines 259-263, original emphasis).

This questions the perceptions regarding the content knowledge of some RTO courses, but also the understanding and capabilities of RTO-qualified ESL educators. According to ASQA (2017):

For employers, unduly short training poses an immediate risk to the enterprise and a longer term, risk to industry by workers who are credentialed but not actually sufficiently skilled or competent, impacting productivity; and/or work health and safety and client outcomes. Some employers have commented on the need to retrain new employees on the job, incurring additional costs, or have established their own enterprise registered training organisations to avoid this risk (p. 104).

In Abigail's case, she expressed frustration about these disparities, and the personal pressure and potential need of re-education. Thus, Abigail is questioning the subject positions of these educators in comparison to her own.

It was acknowledged that there were perceived difficulties with communication and documentation for ESL educators. In relation to this point, Aileen (a qualified and experienced centre coordinator) has offered:

...we do have a lot of educators who have English as a second language. And so for some of them it can take a bit longer as well (Aileen, lines 77-78, sic).

This means when learning new approaches to documentation (as previously required for the reforms beginning in 2009), it may be perceived that ESL educators need additional time to develop their understandings. According to the literature, time has been established as an element needed for meaningful and sustained change to occur (Fenech et al., 2010; Gronlund & James, 2008; Hall, 2013;

Hiatt, 2006; Kilgallon, Maloney & Lock, 2008; Waniganayake et al., 2008). Although early childhood professionals should be able to support their colleagues through this process, language barriers may be problematic:

A lot of people that come here wanting training... can't even talk to us, you know, they don't speak any English... (Alana, lines 188-189).

Whether from the perceived subject position of ESL educators, or from the positions of other professionals in the field, dealing with language barriers can create additional challenges when attempting to implement change. In regards to these language barriers, an experienced centre coordinator named Felicity has tendered her thoughts:

I'm certainly not like...racist or anything like that – but sometimes there are language barriers... And okay, whether they're doing the work or getting someone else to do the work for them, or they might be clever enough to do the work themselves – that's fine – but sometimes even the language barrier... um, it's all good...to have a piece of paper, but coming into the field and having everything that needs to be done and said for the assessment – you know, that's two different things.... And sometimes...you'll get resumes...and again, it'll be a cultural thing...or a language barrier...but you can just see that...it's not up to scratch (Felicity, lines 83-88, sic).

This account alludes to a possible presence of certain racial discourses. It may be that this participant's historical knowledges and experiences have situated her in this particular subjective position. Felicity's statement suggests that the qualifications held by ESL educators may be questioned and discounted by the directors of some early childhood settings. If this is indeed the case, it is a double-edged sword for RTO-qualified ESL educators, as they are positioned within a discourse where this method of training is not considered reputable. In relation to perceptions of RTOs and alleged government agendas, Paula (another experienced centre coordinator) claimed:

...they [RTOs] get paid extra for the more non-English speaking that they put through and I'm sure if you land in the country, and they go [to – government support agency name] and they say 'do child care, it's easy' (Paula, line 329, line 326, original emphasis).

Again, this statement seems to imply the existence of racial assumptions and bias regarding the positioning of ESL educators from RTOs. It is essential to consider that the way racial discourses position these educators may present as a major stressor as they attempt to seek employment, but also as they try to engage in educational reform. In contrast, the positioning of directors who are influenced by such discourses may be more reluctant to employ these educators, as they may perceive that employing educators with language barriers can become a stressor for staff, particularly when a level of understanding regarding certain knowledge discourses is needed to implement educational reforms. From

both subject positions of the ESL educator and the director, this issue can be seen as a stressor and an effect of power.

It was also found that RTOs had been reported by early childhood professionals and blacklisted by LDC settings for passing what they deemed as incompetent students. This judgment ultimately led to early childhood settings applying strategies of power as they made the decision to report some RTOs and exclude students from their services. Consequently, several participants knew of educators who had been stripped of their qualifications following the closure of their RTOs. In relation to this, Alana proposed:

My boss actually won't take students from quite a few RTOs because it just seems to be um... they're just pumpin' 'em out.... And I just find, yeah, the quality's not there, definitely not there.... Yeah, but quite a few of them are just terrible. Terrible (Alana, lines 187-191, sic).

While at another LDC setting, Abigail provided a similar response:

We've had plenty. In fact, we actually stopped students for twelve months at our centre. Because... we actually had a situation where we were just having people come in and... They were... awful. They had no idea what they were doing. They... were...just... they had no idea – what they were doing. They had no understanding of what things were going on (Abigail, lines 224-226, original emphasis).

The perceived subject positions of the RTO students highlight another layer to the complex nature of the sector. These subject positions have been influenced by teacher education discourses available to them through pre-service educator training. Unfortunately, this subject position is perceived as incompetent and inexperienced by others in the field. Again, this demonstrates that early childhood professionals in the field are looking at this from one perspective only – through the discourses that are available to them – perceiving these individuals as deficient through the effects of power, and the regimes of truth that they attribute to specific knowledges. As such, professionals are not seeing things from the wider discourses and how people are positioned within those discourses. When considering the need for collaboration and enacting reforms, it is important to contemplate who is providing support for these students in the field. According to an experienced director named Penny, support was limited:

They were here, working in a centre, but they weren't getting ...the teaching. You know, they just worked. And the [room] leader...would just teach them what needed to be done during the day. And then, they just read their book and copied down and did the assignments and got a Diploma. And that's where the frightening part is and there was no looking at the child as a whole... And you can read a book, and it's all there, but you needed to have the guidance. And it wasn't because the staff weren't capable of guiding them, but...these people are there as workers... and doing their Diploma... It means that there's not good practices coming out in the Diplomas. And it's not just here...it's all over the place. So you're not getting those people with the skills that are needed to be looking at the child (Penny, lines 50-57, original emphasis, sic).

This emphasises the additional time, stress and workload needed to accommodate newly qualified educators who have come through the RTOs. As explained by Lucy:

...it was as soon as the funding came in... That last six months in there I got funded for and then boom...there were these training organisations just exploded after that and um yeah, I think all the funding is just [to] put money in people's pockets and shoved people out the door and in seventeen weeks you've got your Diploma. It took me bloody three years. Makes me very angry. And but you can see the difference, you can tell the difference (Lucy, lines 159-167, sic).

Thus, it is clear that this stressor has led to mounting tensions between early childhood professionals and emotive responses throughout the field regarding the legitimacy and content knowledge of their educator training qualifications. Issues of incompetence, inconsistency and increased stress, time and workload spent with students and educators from some RTOs have been substantiated. Hence, teacher education (including educator training) discourses available through some RTOs (and the students of these institutions) has become a major stressor and effect of power for early childhood professionals – particularly as they attempt to cope with educational reforms. As previously discussed, it is not only a stressor for the early childhood field. Although this discussion has foregrounded the stressors regarding RTOs from the perspective of the field; it needs to be acknowledged that these individuals in the field are struggling, as they are being forcibly positioned within a very negative discourse which does not value them as educators, due to their second language perspective and RTO training. Thus, these issues may also be a major stressor and effect of power for the students and educators from these RTOs. This stressor impacts the long day care sector on a range of levels – at an individual level (for individual students/educators from RTOs, and educators/teachers attempting to support and guide students/colleagues); at management level (for maintaining their centre's quality, professionalism and reputation); and at a community level (for families' assurance of quality education and care for their children).

Although the courses offered by RTOs have aimed to provide diverse methods of educator training, the perceived quality of some institutions has further complicated an already complex field. As such, it is viewed by the majority of participants as a stressor and as an effect of power – and ultimately, a further hindrance as they endeavour to engage in educational change.

In-service teacher education

In-service professional development opportunities [PDs] can be seen as another discursive practice within the discourse of teacher education. Participants in this study were asked about their PD experiences –

particularly pertaining to the introduction of the reforms beginning in 2009. In relation to the reasons behind the influx of PDs at this time, one centre coordinator explained:

I think again it's just the government trying to push its own agenda. But I think...this government isn't particularly fond of early childhood, they took things away from us as soon as they came into play...and they're looking at changing it even more.... they're willing to say that we all need professional development but aren't willing to match it with professional wages or support that, they took those professional wages away from us which were honoured and told that we're going to have them by the previous government. So...I think this government is quite confused and doesn't understand early childhood. And probably needs to do its own PD [laughs] (Aileen, lines 160-164).

This demonstrates the perceived agenda behind roll out of PDs at the time of the reforms, and lack of support and funding available for services to engage in these PDs. So even though the government used this as a strategy of power, it was perceived by many early childhood professionals as an effect of power. A number of participants have offered their perspectives regarding this type of education, and whether they perceive this as a stressor or a supportive strategy (or discursive practice) in understanding and engaging in educational reform.

Subjective views of content and delivery

During the introduction and transition period of the curriculum and quality frameworks, professional development opportunities [PDs] were offered to early childhood professionals through their early childhood settings. Though, according to one participant, this involved a sudden decision made by management, with no consultation with educators/teachers:

So we're getting all of a sudden, we're getting from above, 'oh, you have to do this PD and you have to do that PD because we're going to have to start implementing this framework soon, now' (Jade, lines 90-91, original emphasis).

This account resembles a top-down approach which demonstrates the added pressure put on educators and teachers as enforced power relations (Foucault, 1980); thereby it can be seen as a stressor in itself. As discussed in Chapter Two, top-down approaches to educational reform often impact the motivation, engagement and morale of professionals (Moore & Fink, 2003).

The in-service PDs at the time of the reform period became a major stressor for one participant who was trained prior to these reforms. Her subject position had been developed over time, and encompassed traditional knowledge discourses which privileged practical knowledge, as well as the discursive practice of experience. However, this subject position was perceived as problematic in engaging with the reforms. In relation to this, Gabrielle described one of her PD experiences:

I'm as were referred to once at an in-service – where I got quite wound up about it and had some words with the person – They called us dinosaurs. You know, and he said 'you dinosaurs need to get up with the new-age stuff and start learning it'. Well, fair enough. I didn't... I didn't disagree with that. But you know, you don't... you haven't got where you've gotten without us dinosaurs. And the experience that we have... needs to be taken in and absorbed (Gabrielle, lines 141-143, original emphasis).

This is very similar to the negative discourse identified for some RTOs in the previous section. Aside from dealing with the new reforms coming in, Gabrielle was faced with the added pressure of a PD presenter's perceptions of her. This interaction singled Gabrielle out in a group setting, discounted her prior knowledge and experience, and pressured her to conform to change. This type of approach can be seen as enforced power relations (Foucault, 1980). Clearly, this negative discourse of 'disempowerment' and exclusionary experience affected the subject position of this educator, and will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

Participants also identified that the content knowledge of these PDs and the interpretations of PD presenters were not consistent and seemed to confuse early childhood professionals further. According to Ball (2006):

...there are real struggles over the interpretation and enactment of policies. But these are typically set within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment (p. 49).

Hence, these struggles of policy interpretation were present among professionals *and* PD institutions, further constraining the possibilities for enactment. Unfortunately, the translation of this knowledge to early childhood professionals was based on the understandings and subjective positionings of the presenter. For instance, Alana offered:

Well, speaking on my behalf – and I know a lot of the girls here that I work with as well – found all of the information very conflicting. And everyone had their own interpretation so what we learnt from one in-service was... it felt like wrong information. Because we'd go to the next one and we would say 'oh okay, but we didn't learn that at the last one' or we were told that it's kind of inappropriate.... And we found the more... the more PDs we went to, the more confusing it became (Alana, lines 64-70, original emphasis).

Alana's statement is representative of issues regarding which content knowledge was being privileged within specific PD institutions (Foray & Hargreaves, 2005; Gomez, 2012). The confusion from this conflicting content knowledge disseminated from these PDs may have been influenced by roll out of so many PDs at the time, as well as the basic level of understanding of PD presenters regarding the new

frameworks. Nevertheless, the delivery of these PDs also seems to have impacted how content was interpreted by professionals in the field:

They are a little bit vague sometimes. I think they allow...for that different people coming in different ways.... we had a lady from [name omitted] in one of our in-services and I asked her. I said 'can you tell me why we don't have a set way of doing everything? Like, these books that you bring in for us to...' She couldn't answer me, because I don't think they've thought that far through.... saying that, I probably don't go to enough of them. Yeah, and they're pretty full-on the in-services. Like, the person will be telling you...and you're trying to take it all in your head, and you come back to read the book – you know, whatever their books are – and it's all... too much (Gabrielle, lines 119-126, original emphasis).

This account demonstrated ambiguity among some PD presenters, possibly influenced by their own initial lack of understanding regarding how these reforms were to be translated to practice. Thus, the subject positions of some PD presenters were perceived as unprepared and uninformed regarding the shifting knowledge base of early childhood discourse. Subsequently, some early childhood professionals were left feeling overwhelmed and confused by their PD experiences. This confusion was also acknowledged by Lucy:

Probably...for about the first two years, I'm going, what the bloody hell are they talking about? Because again...it wasn't...embedded. It wasn't really a deep understanding...I was six months out running a room and then they go, 'oh, here, everything you've learnt is different'. And then...I had to...try and make sense of what they were saying (Lucy, lines 59-61, original emphasis, sic).

Again, this illuminates inconsistencies regarding the privileged content knowledge of specific institutions. Then again, this was present among and between both pre-service and in-service institutions. So, many early childhood professionals were confused and anxious, as they felt that their pre-service qualifications that had shaped their subject positions as educators prior to the 2009 reforms were no longer relevant. This account also demonstrates that time is needed for early childhood professionals to understand and translate new knowledge to their practice.

Accessibility, time constraints and workload

Accessibility, time constraints and workload have been identified by participants as stressors associated with in-service teacher education and PDs. It was found that PD attendance was often limited to a small number of professionals from one LDC setting. According to Alana:

...a lot of the times when we have our meetings, whoever's gone to a PD will relay their information, kind of back to us (Alana, lines 213-214).

Alana's centre coordinator agreed that this approach was often utilised at their LDC setting:

So sometimes someone will go and then when there's a staff meeting they'll come in and say what happened at that one (Paula, in: Alana, line 218).

Hence, the understanding of early childhood professionals was subject to the interpretation and translation from those who actually attended. This can be seen as a double-layered problem, whereby professionals attending the PDs need to understand the content knowledge being delivered. Though, their understanding is based upon their subject position. In addition, this knowledge is relayed to other professionals who are required to understand the translated version of this knowledge, which is also based on their own subject position. Clearly, this approach to PD can be perceived as a stressor for these professionals (the translators and the receptors). It is also evident that this approach portrays an effect of power, as management does not permit everyone to attend.

The reasons for using this approach were discussed further by Alana's centre coordinator:

Because not everyone...I mean they're so expensive too. So not everybody can go – and depending on the days – can everyone go? (Paula, in: Alana, lines 215-216).

Funding issues and financial strain on LDC settings to provide PD opportunities have also been acknowledged by Lucy:

I think some of the finances were a struggle here because you know, independent places don't necessarily want to pump all their money in, but um that was a bit hard but like I said, we did get a lot of training so probably we've been a little bit lucky. I feel like I've been to millions and millions of them (Lucy, lines 136-138).

These issues can limit PD opportunities for early childhood professionals employed at certain early childhood settings. As such, this creates disparities among the opportunities available to professionals across these different settings. Although Lucy stated she had attended many PDs, the financial strain was still recognised. However, there is an expectation for early childhood settings to finance and implement these PD opportunities. As highlighted by Cheeseman and Torr (2009), adequate funding is essential to facilitate the pedagogical leadership and support for early childhood professionals. However, funding issues can contribute as a stressor through limited access to PDs. For educators and teachers, this refers to the enforced power relations regarding new knowledge requirements; and for directors and centre coordinators, this relates to the enforced expectations of providing PDs, and the effects of power associated with added financial strain (Foucault, 1980).

Workload has also been identified as a stressor for engaging in PDs. For example, Jade described her first PD experience regarding the Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF] (DEEWR, 2009), and the new ways proposed for daily planning:

...it ended up being more paperwork than was necessary. So, but I think that was the biggest thing. People didn't know how to put this down on paper. Like 'yeah, yeah. We get the idea but how do we put this down on paper?' And I think people are still struggling with that (Jade, lines 106-108, original emphasis).

Thus, confusion regarding the frameworks' translation to practice has led to an intensification of workload for early childhood professionals. This can therefore be seen as a stressor and effect of power resulting from the reforms.

The stressors of workload and time constraints were also discovered in relation to PD attendance. For instance, Alana stated:

...a lot of them are offered while we're working.... And quite often, staff don't stay back because they don't get paid for their time, so... And they're tired, 'cause a lot of them have 6am starts so... Yeah, so that's a valid point for why some people don't do it (Alana, lines 217, 221-222, sic).

This implies that early childhood professionals may be too fatigued from their already immense workload to attend PDs, particularly when there is no financial incentive (or strategy of power) for their attendance.

This was further clarified by Alana's centre coordinator:

And you don't get time off in lieu either. It's just expected. I think it's how most child care works. I don't know, I've only worked here [laughs].... And people have their own lives, their own families. They can't always attend (Paula, in: Alana, lines 223-224, 226).

The expectations for professionals to attend unpaid PDs (often in their own time) illustrate the problematic nature of these requirements. It also highlights the importance of acknowledging the lives and family constructs of professionals outside of their workplace setting. The planning and implementation of PDs requires policymakers and teaching institutions to understand the subject positions of their target audience more clearly. As it stands, the stressors of accessibility, time and workload further add to the complexities of in-service teacher education.

Translation to practice

When participants were able to overcome the stressors of accessibility, time constraints and workload, and actually attended the PDs about the reforms, further issues were found. Not only were they required

to understand the content offered through these PDs, they also had to understand how to apply this new knowledge to their practice. In relation to this, Gabrielle offered:

Oh, we had meetings and... in-services. But sometimes they're... I'm struggling with – and I've said this before... [name omitted] does her programming one way. [name omitted] does it another. [name omitted], our Programming Coordinator comes over and she said 'do it this way'. So, we might get these in-services and go 'oh great, there's great ideas'. But then that either doesn't work for that room or someone's done another qualification somewhere else at another TAFE and they come and they go 'well, that's not how we were taught'. So, that's another thing they need to look at in all these... Either make it general... Do something because all the schools and TAFEs are doing it all different. So it doesn't matter how many in-services or courses we do – depending on who that person is telling you – you might do it their way, then the next course, they've been taught separate – and away it goes again (Gabrielle, lines 111-117, sic).

Even though this new knowledge may have been well received by some early childhood professionals, the practical implications caused confusion and became a stressor. Again, this appears to relate to the diverse and sometimes conflicting content knowledge taught through different in-service and pre-service institutions; and also how these institutions perceived this knowledge should be applied to practice.

The diversity of PDs available also means that some PDs are valued more highly among LDC settings, particularly those offered by well-known and respected PD presenters in the early childhood field. It seemed that these PDs were more effective because the presenters enabled a greater understanding among early childhood professionals by translating abstract concepts into more concrete examples. For instance:

We had maybe two or three in-services with quite a few people – one of them was [name omitted] – and I think his PDs we get the most out of. He comes to our services often, so we know him quite well. Um, and he seems to have a way with his words and he makes everything sound... okay. I remember when he was telling us about the Early Years Framework. All he'd done was... he drew a picture of a house and he said 'This is a framework. What you put in it is totally up to you'. So a lot of us went 'Ohhh, okay, right'. You know, that's how he made it understandable for us (Alana, lines 147-151, original emphasis, sic).

In this instance, the presenter utilised a more concrete delivery approach to the PD, which ultimately assisted Alana's understanding of the content. This approach clearly suited Alana's preferred approach to learning, and acted as a support for her understanding of the reforms (Gronlund & James, 2008). It is clear that this PD presenter considered the subject positions of professionals – in particular, the educators whose subject positions have been influenced by more traditional and practical approaches to early childhood discourse. As a result, these PDs may form a more positive discursive practice and strategy of power for early childhood professionals who hold this subject position, as they engage in educational reform.

Lucy had a different perspective regarding the same PD:

I remember one scenario where [name omitted], he's amazing, obviously. But at the time, I was very frustrated because he's saying you know, everyone's curriculum is their apartment and you know, you furnish your apartment the way you furnish it and I'll furnish it differently and that's all that matters and I'm, can I just, tell me how many things I need to do. Tell me you know, how to plan them, they need to, like but I was really frustrated with this whimsical way until of course that, that sort of clicked into place a couple of years ago really. Where I went 'okay. That's what he's talking about. I understand now'. It's about everyone, you know, doing it their way and finding that process that suits their methods and their philosophies in their own personal ways (Lucy, lines 62-68, original emphasis, sic).

For Lucy, the approach of the presenter was frustrating, as it did not fit with her preferred approach to learning and subject position. As such, this became a stressor and an effect of power, as it further hindered her understanding of the reforms. The difference between the perceptions of these two participants signifies that PD presenters and institutions need to be aware of, and cater for the preferred learning approaches and subject positions of different professionals in the field. It also illustrates that practical approaches need to be provided, even when dealing with such interpretative frameworks, where there is no one correct approach to practice.

Other participants also described their experiences of PDs as a supportive strategy. For instance, Jade explained how this assisted her in understanding how to translate and apply the new frameworks to her practice:

I went to the same PD twice because I found her really enthusiastic and I think the biggest problem with the framework was that before, we were so used to filling out boxes in a table and all of a sudden there was no set structure about how to do things and people were like, well how do we do this? There's no you know, we're not filling out the activities for the cognitive and we're not filling out the activities for the physical. It's um however we want to now. How are we going to do this? And those PDs were very much about how you can do this. And it was a good transition because the way she had set up her planning sheet, her room planning sheet was still in boxes but it was much more conducive to the Early Years Learning Framework (Jade, lines 94-99).

This shows how some PD institutions offered an effective transition in moving away from the more prescriptive approaches used in the past, to more contemporary methods for the purpose of planning and documentation. In Jade's experience, the content knowledge of both traditional and contemporary early childhood discourse were acknowledged. In this way, the PD presenter was able to find middle ground for professionals in transition. So in this case, these initial PDs were perceived as a supportive strategy of power in translating and applying the frameworks in practice.

Similarly, Abigail expressed her enthusiasm with engaging in PDs regarding this transition:

I walked out of there and I thought I could change the world [laughs] I said to the Director at the time 'we need [PD presenter, name omitted] here!' Because he made me feel like I can change the world and I believe that if somebody else came in then, you know... but of course – those resources – you can't get [name omitted] into a place – a 20-staff centre. Like, that's just ridiculous (Abigail, lines 93, 109-112, original emphasis, sic).

For Abigail, these PDs were perceived as a major supportive strategy and effect of power, not only for translating applying the frameworks to her practice, but also improving her practice and that of others. It illustrates the positive response of resilience and adaptability (Arthur et al., 2018) and sense of empowerment that quality PDs can ignite among early childhood professionals when planned and delivered effectively.

It is important to acknowledge that although PDs have been a key area of teacher education among early childhood professionals; different levels of understanding about the reforms remain. This has been supported by one centre coordinator, as she acknowledged:

...everyone's at a different level. So it's about just constantly reviewing and reflecting and even though you think you've got it and you're finally working on it, that's probably when you need more PD. To push you to the next stage anyway (Aileen, lines 69-71).

As such, it is essential to remember that changing discourses and new reforms in the early childhood sector warrant the presence of continuous professional development – whether perceived as a stressor (an effect of power), or as a support (a strategy of power). Overall, there were issues raised regarding the content and delivery of PD programs. This correlates with a study about the National Quality Standards (NQS) PDs conducted by Barber, Cohrssen and Church (2014), which revealed that “neither the professional development opportunities available to educators nor the delivery of the content met educators' reported professional learning needs” (p. 21). This is a significant point that emphasises not only the need for relevant PDs, but also the need for workplaces to understand how PDs are relevant for their educators and teachers.

Workplace discourses – levels of support

Workplace discourses offer up a range of discursive practices that influence the subject positions of those who reside within them. Although power relations are at play within the institutions of the workplace, they bidirectionally affect and are affected by relations of power. The workplace discourses and institutions within the early childhood sector are affected by the ‘apparatus of the state’. This term was

devised by Foucault “to indicate the various institutional, physical and administrative mechanisms and knowledges structures, which enhance and maintain the exercise of power within the social body” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 129). Here, the social body represents the early childhood sector, and the mechanisms and structures involve the influences of governmental and political agendas on policymakers, and the content knowledge privileged by teacher education discourses. Although it seems that workplace institutions are essentially affected by these power relations, they also affect these relations in the way they enact the policies and knowledge from within their own mechanisms and structures. As such, these power relations occur through actions within these institutions. As “power is impersonal, it is not *anyone’s* power, because it is a web of relations among actions rather than among agents” (Prado, 2000, p. 73, original emphasis).

The workplace has been identified by a number of participants as being either a stressor or support in their engagement with the reforms in the Victorian LDC early childhood sector. This section highlights some significant discursive practices identified within workplace institutions regarding pre-service (qualifications) and in-service (PD) teacher education (see **Figure 23**). The diagram below utilises the capillary structure to illustrate workplace discourse as the main artery; and the strategies of support, time and workload, and preparation and responsibility as the interconnected branches within this discourse. The embedded elements within these strategies are represented by the smaller capillaries.

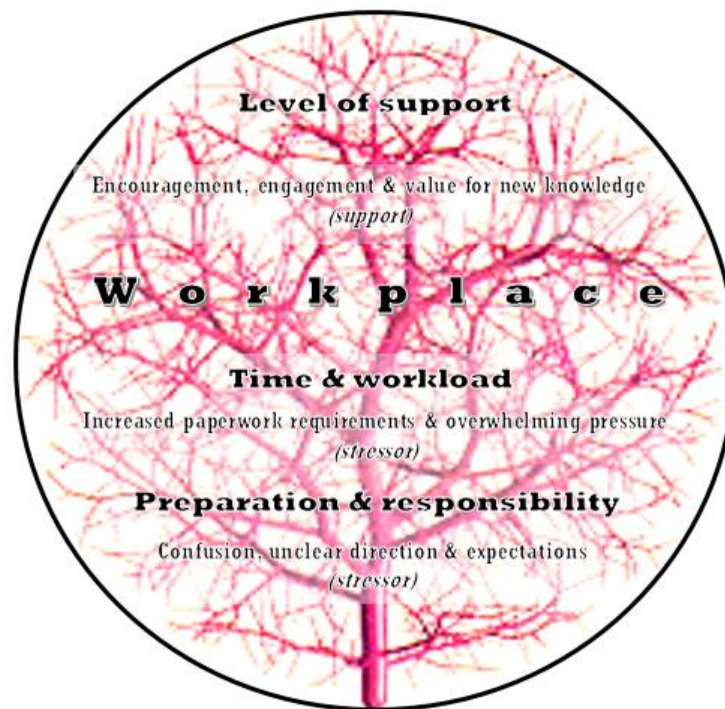


Figure 23: Features of workplace institutions regarding pre-service and in-service teacher education as discursive practices for engaging in educational reform

The institutions of early childhood workplace discourses can differ in their ability to provide support for educators and teachers as they engage in educational reform. For instance, accessibility to PD opportunities often relies on the value attributed to ongoing learning and knowledge acquisition within individual workplace institutions (Colmer, Waniganayake & Field, 2015). In this way, workplace institutions can “structure and constrain” the possible actions of others within their institutions (Prado, 2000, p. 77). For one centre coordinator, learning and knowledge were valued, which ultimately encouraged professionals within this institution to act upon PD opportunities as a strategy of power:

Yeah, we did do some professional development. We have a big professional development day, where the centre closes and we close we go with the other two [centres] and we have a PD day and we did have several sessions on that and staff have gone out to all individual ones. We actually just had one here for six educators with [name omitted] recently (Aileen, lines 67-69).

However, these levels of support can vary among settings. For instance, at the time of the reforms, one centre coordinator offered:

Oh, we had some staff meetings I guess. And um, in-services as well, um... Yeah, basically. Staff meetings, in-services. And then just trying to put [them] into practice obviously (Felicity, lines 18-19, sic).

This brief statement may reflect a more nonchalant approach to PDs, and the value attributed to learning and knowledge within this particular LDC institution; or possibly lack of understanding regarding translation to practice. According to Colmer, Waniganayake and Field (2015), the success of professional development can be enabled or constrained by the understandings of directors regarding reform management, leadership, and social and systemic influences of curriculum reform. Hence, directors who have a limited understanding of these factors can limit the actions of their staff through an effect of this power relation.

Meanwhile, some institutions were more reluctant to engage in PDs until they realised they were obligated to adopt the EYLF (after the NQF came into effect):

...slowly before the end of 2010, it sort of became realised that things were changing and that we were actually going to have to start using this document and that...the NCAC was out and ACECQA was in... so mid-2010 to mid-2011 was lots of professional development around the Early Years Learning Framework and how we can use it (Jade, lines 52-55).

This suggests that some LDC settings may only have taken these reforms seriously once the requirements were understood as mandatory. According to Prado (2000), “we are all variously juxtaposed to each other and to groups and institutions in relations that affect what we do and can do” (p. 74). So, the actions of these settings were affected only when it was realised that other workplaces were acting on these reforms enforced through relations of power by governmental institutions.

Changes to actions within workplace institutions were also brought about in response to the needs of their staff. For instance, some LDC settings eventually got on board with PD requirements as they realised their staff were struggling to understand the reforms:

We said ‘we need some PD’. And they did offer it. Yeah. Heaps of it. We did, we’ve done lots of training, lots of sessions of it and I kept trying to go because like I said, I was floundering. So yeah. I did lots of training early on (Lucy, lines 53-55, original emphasis, sic).

Conversely, even though PDs were implemented, this may have resulted in an overload of new content knowledge disseminated by in-service institutions.

One centre coordinator recognised the need for ongoing engagement in PDs, particularly regarding the less qualified staff:

...we’ve continued doing more as well obviously and for other staff as well. Especially the Cert Threes you know, doing obs [observations] and that. So even recently this year we’ve had a lot

more stuff. The girls have been to a few earlier this year as well so it's a continual thing (Felicity, lines 21-23, sic).

This signifies a level of value attributed to ongoing knowledge acquisition and in-service teacher education within this particular workplace. Although the new knowledge is considered mandatory for early childhood professionals to learn, the acquisition of this knowledge acts as a strategy of power for professionals to become up-to-date regarding changes in the field. As Foucault has stated "...power perpetually creates knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, pp. 51-52). Yet, it is known that "knowledge is not only a product; it reciprocally enables and sustains power relations" (Prado, 2000, p. 77).

Another example of this has been offered by Alana regarding her Bachelor Degree:

And our boss...she's more than willing... 'If you want to go to it – I'll let you go'. Yeah, she's very good like that...very supportive.... she's just 'no worries...you're improving yourself'.... And I think that's 'cause I can bring information back (Alana, lines 251-255, original emphasis, sic).

So Alana's workplace invests in their staff, and values the knowledge of the Bachelor qualification. As a result, Alana and her workplace have formed a reciprocal relationship with bidirectional power relations. It may be that this workplace understands the power of the new Bachelor education knowledge, because "as 'knowledges' and disciplines develop they produce the experts who determine not only how we should act but also what we are" (Prado, 2000, p. 77, original emphasis). This reflects that the teachers who possess the new Bachelor education knowledge may be viewed as the new 'expert' subject position within the sector, thus seen as a strategy of power.

Evidence of supportive discursive practices among workplace institutions was also visible through the account of a director in a leadership role who had knowledge and understanding of the 2009–2012 frameworks. For example, Aileen (a centre coordinator) was involved in the initial consultation process for the EYLF, and has persisted with her own early childhood studies. As a result, Aileen's engagement in teacher education discourse and continued knowledge acquisition has influenced her subject position. This subject position utilises certain actions and discursive practices as strategies of power within her workplace institution. Thus, her staff are affected by these power relations which benefit their potential actions within their professional practice. Aileen has also recognised the connections between her workplace's prior practice and the practices and principles of the new frameworks. In relation to this point, Aileen explained: "it didn't really change anything that we did here, other than how our documentation looked" (Aileen, line 31). The limited level of change needed, and the proactive approach

taken seems to have supported her understanding of these reforms, thus guiding her to provide a “supporting role” as a strategy of power for her staff (Aileen, line 27).

Nevertheless, some accounts provided by participants have exhibited the opposite. For instance, Sonia has described a lack of PD opportunities within her workplace:

...the Director and the Second in Charge went to some [PDs] – ah, I think it was a few days where they did some seminars on it. And gave us some feedback, but we really had nothing else aside from those two books to go off and that was it [laughs] (Sonia, lines 45-46).

For Sonia, these initial PDs were only available to staff members at management level, which illustrates the presence and effects of positions of power within the workplace. Moreover, this statement alludes to the possibility of subjective tensions, as the knowledge acquired from these PDs was dependent upon the interpretation of these staff and their translation of this knowledge to their educators and teachers.

Another perspective regarding inadequate support was related to the limited understandings of those occupying management positions. In regards to this limitation, Lucy shared her initial struggles within her workplace:

I think we got handed the book and they said, ‘this is what you have to do now’. And I don’t think our management especially here really had that overall grasp of what was happening. And maybe that aspect of long day care life, the planning side of it, is not really their strong suit. So it was really hard to get their support and that um was actually a real struggle for a while (Lucy, lines 44-46).

This reflects the presence of tensions between how the frameworks were initially introduced, and a discourse of ‘not knowing’ amongst management and their staff. An element of this sense of ‘not knowing’ may be related to the uncertainty of who is responsible for educational reform. For instance, Abigail’s director had proposed that the responsibility rested with the educators and teachers: “She would always say to me ‘oh, you know what you’re talking about. I’ll let you deal with it’” (Abigail, line 150, original emphasis). As previously mentioned, some workplaces did not perceive these documents as mandatory until the NQF was introduced.

The findings outlined in this section provide some insight regarding the levels of support among workplace institutions available for early childhood professionals who are coping with educational reform. It is evident that these levels of support can be influenced by various contextual factors (or cultural phenomena). “Foucault sees cultural phenomena as the results of power relations” and “sees the subject as emerging from discursive and behavioural practices and from interactions with emergent

others” (Prado, 2000, p. 22). So, the contexts of workplace institutions encompass a range of power relations between early childhood professionals through certain discursive practices, actions and interactions, which ultimately shape their subject positions. For the purpose of this study, it has been vital to understand the presence of these positions, how they are formed, and their impact on engaging in educational reform.

Summary

This chapter has addressed how Victorian long day care early childhood professionals understand, cope and engage with educational reform. Discursive constructions have been made between educational reform discourse and three key discourses of influence including *learning*, *teacher education*, and *workplace* discourses (summarised in **Figure 24**). The diagram below positions the discourses along the main artery of the capillary structure. These discourses encompass a range of discursive practices that can be perceived as coping strategies (stressors or supports). In the diagram, the practices are represented by The findings and discussion detailed in this chapter provide some insight into the state of educational reform in the Victorian LDC sector, and what support is considered valuable regarding effective engagement in educational reform initiatives. More specifically, these findings have effectively addressed the first research question by illuminating some key strategies that either supported or hindered the participants’ ability to understand, coping with and engage in change and early childhood reform.

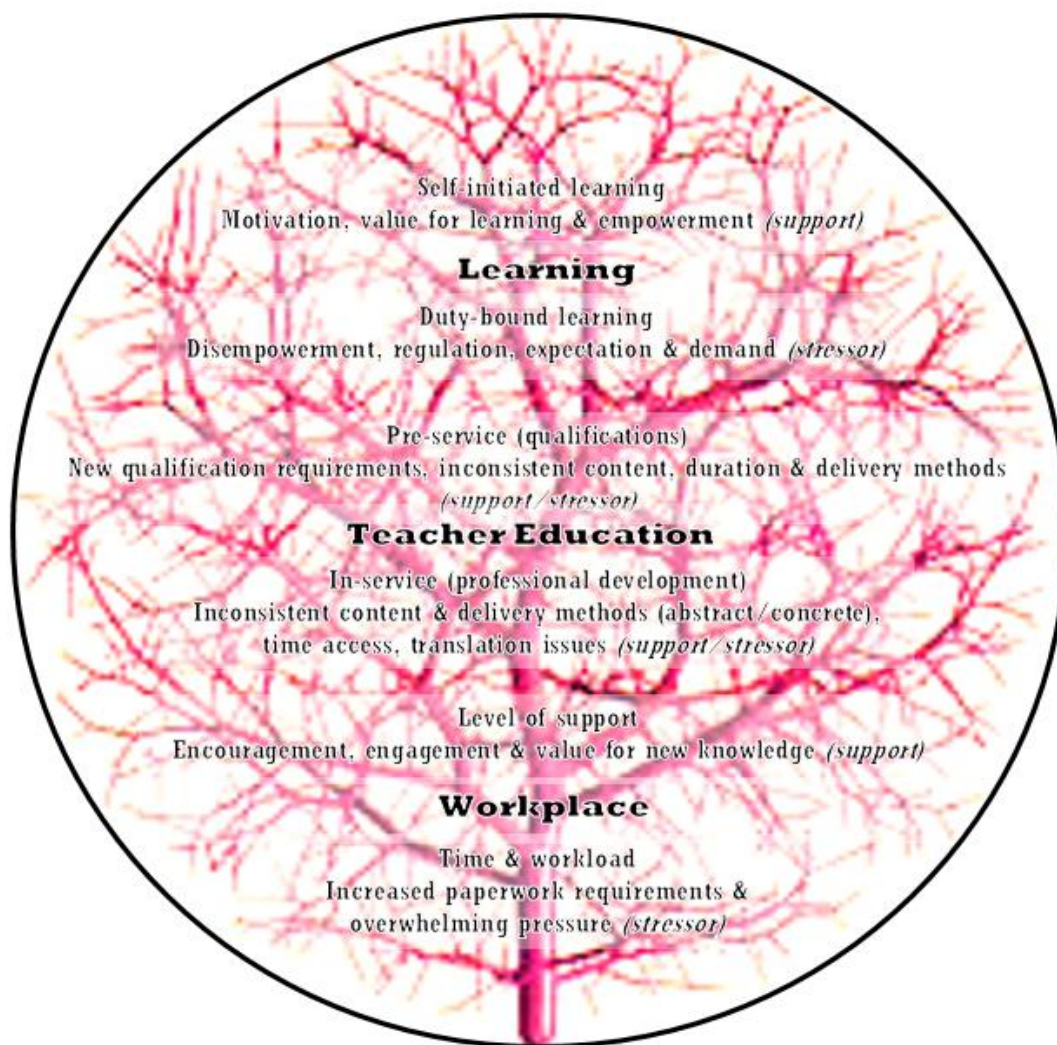


Figure 24: Key areas of influence for engaging with educational reform in early childhood education, and their underpinning coping strategies (stressors and supports)

The use of FDA proved a useful tool in unearthing the different discourses and subject positions taken up by the early childhood professionals involved in this study. According to these participants, a number of coping strategies are embedded within these discourses, which are perceived as either a support or stressor for engaging in educational reform initiatives. As a result of these findings, it is evident that early childhood professionals can benefit from engaging in self-initiated learning [SIL]; participating in quality pre-service and adequately informed in-service teacher education opportunities that cater for diverse learning styles; and working in supportive and well-resourced workplaces that value new knowledge, and view educators and teachers as a meaningful investment for the future of the sector.

CHAPTER SEVEN: POSITIONS WITHIN THE CHANGE PROCESS

Introduction

This chapter examines how participants are positioned within specific discourses throughout the reform process. Although power and knowledge are present, to avoid repetition, it is acknowledged that these concepts were discussed in detail in the previous chapter – however, they are not separate, rather they are enmeshed. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis [FDA] (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) has been used to explore the subject positions of the participants involved in this study. Moreover, these subject positions have been analysed in light of the consultative and implementation processes of early childhood reforms that began in 2009. It also emphasises the way that specific discourses and their corresponding discursive practices shape and reshape various and often overlapping positions. In addition, this chapter examines how these participants are positioned within the process of change posited in the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) and other key change literature. The diagrams portrayed throughout this chapter can be observed as summaries of these key findings. More specifically, each diagram attempts to capture how all elements are enmeshed, capturing the complexities of the field

The 11 early childhood professionals involved in this study occupied their own unique subject positions. According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017):

Subject positions define the historical limits of what can be written, said or practiced. Identifying subject positions allows the analyst to investigate the cultural repertoire of discourses available to speakers. They are not only positions on which to ground one's claims of truth or responsibility, but they allow individuals to manage, in quite complex and subtle ways, their moral location within social interaction (p. 118).

When considering educational reform as the discursive object of this study, it became evident that the subject positions of participants influenced their perceptions and discursive practices regarding the discursive object/discourse. These positions have been shaped and reshaped by their personal and professional experiences, theoretical and pedagogical content knowledge and discourses underpinning their pre-service and in-service teacher education, and their own preferred learning styles. This chapter examines these subject positions (explored more thoroughly in Chapter Eight) in order to address the second research sub-question:

How does educational reform position early childhood professionals within the process of change?

This question refers to key changes that have underpinned the historical landscape of the early childhood field, and more specifically, significant reforms that have occurred over the years.

Reform consultations

The literature on change demonstrates that involvement in the consultation process of reform initiatives can more effectively position people to be prepared and motivated to engage in meaningful change (Fenech et al., 2010; Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006). Though, in this study, data analysis indicated that none of the seven educators, teachers or co-educator have been and/or felt that they had been meaningfully consulted as part of the early childhood reform processes. For instance, Sonia admitted to being aware of the consultations for the VEYLDF review in 2015, but not personally participating in it:

I have but I haven't really had much to do with it though. I heard it somewhere along the line [laughs] (Sonia, line 136).

At this time, there were wider discourses (or capillaries) of reform present in the field. As explained in Chapter Three, Foucault's "capillary forms of existence" (Foucault, 1980, p. 39) have been emphasised throughout this study as a way "to capture the fluidity of available discourses" present among social interactions and practices (Rivalland, 2010, p. 95). However, these discourses can produce certain limitations. The discourses available and the position taken up by Sonia limited what she could say and do regarding the processes of these reforms. These limitations have been acknowledged by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017), emphasising the interconnection between subject positions and the discourses available.

These discourses may have resulted in limitations for Sonia, as she was not totally aware of what was happening in regards to the changes. Similar responses were offered by the other six educators, teachers or co-educator, whereby they knew of the consultations, but did not engage in the process. They had no knowledge about any consultations for the EYLF or NQF. This illustrates the influences of power/knowledge (Foucault, 2002, 2003; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; O'Farrell, 2005), as previously discussed in Chapter Six. As such, certain discourses were not available to these participants and led to 'constrained' power about what could "be said, by whom, where and when" regarding the consultation process (Hook, 2007; as cited in Willig, 2013, p. 130). These participants believed that their centre directors/coordinators were aware of the changes, but at the time, they did not include their staff in the conversation regarding these changes. As such, there was no discourse (or "shared language") associated with the consultation process (Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 20). According to Quiñones and Ridgway (2015), a shared common language can support the transitional process of policy reforms to professional practice

(p. 146). So, the participants situated within the discourses made available to them had identified limitations which ultimately shaped their subject positions. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that out of these reforms, the discourses of early childhood reform provided limitations – or in some cases, opportunities (possibilities) that affected the subject positions of specific participants.

Participants made “claims of truth or responsibility” as they were discussing their responsibilities (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118). Within various discourses, different subject positions were identified based upon what participants interpreted as being their subject position and their responsibility. It is essential to recognise that all of these discourses are enmeshed. For instance, once a centre director takes up a subject position of not being aware, this then provides a specific discourse for their staff. Thus, because these were subject positions that certain individuals had taken up and which affected their responsibility, the discourse they then provided to their staff had diverse affects, different limitations and opportunities/possibilities. These responsibilities, limitations and possibilities have a flow-on effect for other individuals, and this is what happened in the engagement with early childhood reforms.

Meanwhile, the subject positions of some directors within these early childhood institutions were influenced by the discourse of ‘transferable responsibility’ and ‘non-dissemination of new knowledge’. This relates to the way responsibility of understanding and implementing the reforms was transferred by some directors to their staff, and therefore important knowledge about the reforms was not passed on to these professionals in the field. As such, the discourses available within these institutions were “bound up” in their own practices (Willig, 2013, p. 130). Ultimately, this shaped *inexpert expert* subject positions among these professionals through a discourse of ‘not knowing’ about the state of the early childhood field on an internal, external or political level. To clarify, there is no definite demarcation between ‘inexpert’ and ‘expert’; rather, these came to the fore in the way that participants perceived their subject positions within the available discourses. In this way, limited knowledge and ownership among early childhood professionals may have added to their struggle in understanding the *how* and *why* of these reforms and constructing their positioning within the change process (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009).

When it came to the four centre directors and coordinators involved in this study, the two coordinators (who worked together) claimed they were not aware of the consultation process and therefore not involved:

No. Not us here as such. I don't know whether [name omitted] did or not. But yeah, we didn't from here as such, no (Felicity, line 13).

The discourse available to Felicity provided a subject position which she interpreted as a ‘lack of availability and incentive’. Her statement also reflects the discourses of ‘not knowing’ and ‘transferable responsibility’ that have shaped her subject position as *not responsible*. It is important to acknowledge here that it is the discourse where the individual is located that provides these subject positions on which to ground their claims. Felicity’s subject position was consistent and shaped the way she enacted her position as a centre coordinator. She remained uninformed about the reforms and was therefore unable to provide adequate support for her staff throughout this process. Felicity located herself within the discourse of ‘transferable responsibility’ whereby her “claim of truth or responsibility” for implementing the reforms rested primarily with the educators and teachers (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118). This transfer of responsibility points to Felicity’s limited engagement with the process of change. The literature posits a need to have clear communication lines among all early childhood professionals for reform to be successful. It highlights that the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the initiation of reform requires knowledge, time, access, availability and incentive (Gomez, 2012; Hall, 2013; Moore & Fink, 2003; Pendergast et al., 2005; Wedell, 2009).

From the participants’ perspectives, availability and incentive seem to be an issue in light of the reforms. As discussed, participants had some knowledge of these reform initiatives, but centre directors/coordinators of early childhood institutions held the power to allocate time and access for themselves and their staff. Therefore, the dominant discourses privileged within this institution legitimated its power relations and social structures (Willig, 2013). Thus, for Felicity, this limited availability and incentive may have led to a transfer of responsibility. Meanwhile, Penny (another centre director) occupied a *revolutionist* subject position that utilised a role of supportive leadership and responsibility for her staff. This position encompasses a specific set of discursive practices which include leadership, responsibility, self-initiated learning [SIL] and value for new knowledge. Penny’s occupation of this subject position led her to raise some concerns regarding the consultation process:

Quite often there weren’t enough, or sometimes they were way out of your area. And I think that’s the biggest thing that...you might have something over at [suburb name omitted] or somewhere like that. And when you’re trying to work and you’re living in the east and this is over in the north... they really could have done with a few more around the area...because they book out really quickly. And if you haven’t had the time to see an email... sometimes you’re isolated – the centres ... you do rely on emails and confirmation that these things are happening (Penny, lines 175-179).

These concerns exemplify lack of incentive and feelings of exclusion that early childhood professionals have experienced from this process. Hence, the discourse did not provide the empowerment necessary for them to take action. The emphasis on time, location and effective advertisement implies that there was a

failure for policymakers to consider issues of availability and incentive which can result in people feeling left out and unimportant. In turn, emotive responses such as anger and resentment can occur (Gronlund & James, 2008) as well as feelings of disempowerment due to perceptions of reforms being *imposed* upon them (Baker & Foote, 2003). This was evident amongst responses from participants who admitted that “the first year I think...everybody pretty much wanted to quit [laughs]” (Sonia, line 76), and that many educators were “...set in their old ways – they fight. They don’t want to change, they’re not interested” (Alana, lines 133-134, original emphasis). Looking back to the change literature discussed in Chapter Two, the ADKAR organisational change model (Hiatt, 2006) illustrates some of the key processes necessary for meaningful and sustained change to occur (see **Figure 3**). The first two elements of this model are significant here – whereby individuals need to have an *awareness* of why a specific change is necessary, and a *desire* to supportively participate in the change. For instance, although early childhood professionals appeared to have an *awareness* of the reforms, some did not participate in the process for various reasons – including a lack of incentive or *desire*.

Penny exhibited such awareness and desire, as she spoke of the introduction of the NQF (ACECQA, 2012). She demonstrated an awareness of this reform and a desire to engage (Hiatt, 2006), but perceived this to be the responsibility of centre directors:

When they first came out – I was aware of them. When I was working at another centre and I was in a Network Group. Um, and the Network Group of all – in the Shire – all got together. And we then decided as a Network that we needed... it was a big... thing, with the Framework. It wasn’t just something that we could just sit and look at... that we needed to work on it. So we broke into groups...and we all took... a Quality Area. And we broke it down... because we felt that the staff weren’t able to... sit, and read the standards...the way they were (Penny, lines 105-109, sic).

Penny’s subject position involved taking on the responsibility of learning about and engaging with this reform. By utilising ‘collegial networking’ as a discursive practice with directors from other centres, *collective understandings* of this reform could be constructed (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2011; Hiatt, 2006). Although Penny’s position was quite strong regarding her own engagement with this reform, she did not mention any engagement with the curriculum reforms. It may be that like Felicity, she transferred the responsibility of these reforms to her educators and teachers. From the statement above, it is evident that Penny also occupied a position of not believing that her staff were capable of reading or understanding the NQF document effectively. However, if those in charge do not trust or believe in the value of their staff, this can cause tensions. This reinforces the presence of overlapping and enmeshed subject positions (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017) held by early childhood professionals. More specifically, it emphasises how the positions of centre directors and coordinators can affect what discourses are available for the educators and teachers within these settings.

For Penny, these positions may have resulted in additional complications for her staff, as they relied on this new reform knowledge being interpreted and translated by their director. In saying this, Penny also held a position whereby she knew her staff well, and understood that a more practical approach was needed. Thus, Penny perceived that her staff occupied a *traditionalist* subject position. This position is shaped by developmental early childhood discourses and subsequent practices such as duty-bound learning [DBL] more traditional approaches to practice, and valuing practical experience. Ultimately, it is perceived that professionals who occupy this subject position are less capable of understanding and engaging in educational reform effectively. This subject position has been shaped by historical perceptions regarding the lowest ‘unqualified’ qualification (Certificate III), the Diploma and the discrimination of Bachelor-qualified teachers against working in childcare settings, due to poor conditions (Watson, 2008). This division between the *traditionalist* subject positions of the Diploma-qualified educators and the *revolutionist* subject positions of the Bachelor-qualified teachers is a persistent and entrenched problem that the early childhood field has not been able to shake up until now.

Further tensions between theory and practice (Britzman, 2010), and the status of educators as professionals or skilled workers (Dyson, 2005) have also shaped the “cultural repertoire” of this position (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118). These perceptions demonstrate how Diploma-qualified educators have always had to fight this subject position of not being as capable as their more qualified peers. This is particularly evident through engagement with the EC reforms. However, Penny’s statement exemplifies much more than issues of translation to practice. It also explains the subject positions of professionals working with this centre director. Her own subject position (as a person in power) reflects that her staff were not capable, which would limit the discourses available to them, and result in a lack of initiative (and/or self-initiated learning [SIL] practices). Though, it is important to understand that discourses not only construct the social practices within an institution, they also construct meanings and individuals through maintained and changing power relations (Kenway & Willis, 1997).

Aileen (another centre coordinator) also took an active role in the initial reform consultations. Even though the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) did not directly affect her daily practice as a director, she still found value in engaging in this process:

I did a bit of the consultation forums in the city and was part of that, but not having been on the floor with the children I didn’t have to use it as much. But it was more in that supporting role for the educators. I used it a bit in my studies. Because obviously that was – I was doing my Bachelor at the time so it played hand in hand (Aileen, lines 26-28).

For Aileen, contemporary early childhood discourses and the value for new knowledge influenced her occupation of a *revolutionist* subject position. Specifically, this position includes the discursive practices of supportive leadership and engagement in self-initiated learning [SIL]. Thus, Aileen's engagement in the consultation process reflected a subjective position of empowerment within this process. This was evident through her engagement in the ADKAR processes (see **Figure 3** in Chapter Two) – through her *awareness* and *desire* to participate in the reform consultations, and the ability to seek out the new *knowledge* for effective implementation (Hiatt, 2006).

Another element relates to the awareness of expectations involved in the consultation process. This is a significant point for educational reform processes, because if expectations are not clear, confusion can arise regarding who is responsible for the change process (i.e. the director/centre coordinator or the educator/teacher). This sense of confusion can ultimately impact participation and engagement with the process of change. In regards to the participation in the VEYLDF review consultations, Aileen offered:

Yeah, look I didn't feel either way. I didn't kind of go, 'Oh it's all in there'. Or... 'So much has been missed out'. I think because we were following a lot of conversations that were happening and they were quite up front in the consultations that we knew what to expect I guess... as time was going on (Aileen, lines 46-48, sic).

So according to Aileen, the way in which the VEYLDF consultations were conducted seemed to be relatively transparent in its agendas and expectations. As outlined in the change literature, this relates to the *why* and *how* of the reform (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009). Additionally, these consultations also appeared to be efficient with the dissemination of new knowledge for Aileen (Appleyard, 1996; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994).

Penny also offered her perspective regarding her involvement of the VEYLDF review consultations:

Not at this centre, but yes I was. There were the consultation sessions; I know I went to the [name omitted] town hall for...quite a few of them.... they were informative. Like, [organisation name omitted] and places like that would have people come out and talk about the changes, what's happening... Um, the reviews... Did we agree with it or didn't we agree with it? They were informative (Penny, lines 172-173).

For Penny, these consultations were informative in their dissemination of new knowledge (Appleyard, 1996; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994), and the organisers also appeared to value her opinion about the changes. By engaging in this bidirectional and collaborative approach, Penny has been permitted to manage her position through social interactions within the consultation process (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017).

Reform implementation

The literature indicates that implementing new reforms requires knowledge, skills, time, support and resources (Fenech et al., 2010; Gronlund & James, 2008; Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006; Kilgallon, Maloney & Lock, 2008; Waniganayake et al., 2008). It has also been acknowledged that change is a gradual process (Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006; Pendergast et al., 2005; Wedell, 2009). In the early childhood field, services were given approximately one year to implement these reforms (Sumsion et al., 2009). In regards to the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), the implementation of this document varied among LDC settings:

Oh, pretty much straight away because we had the draft the previous year or whatever it was, and um, yeah, straight away, pretty much. Um, yeah – how successful, I don't know but yeah – pretty much straight away (Felicity, lines 15-16).

Here, Felicity implied that her service was prepared to implement this change immediately because they had had access to the draft document the previous year. This can be perceived as a strategy of power (Foucault, 1980), as Felicity was provided with the *awareness* of the impending change (Hiatt, 2006). Meanwhile, Alana expressed the availability of time to absorb the new content knowledge within the document, and support provided from her service:

I think it might have been about 2010 here. Books started coming a little bit earlier and we had a while to read through the documents. We had a lot of PDs on it.... Yeah, just to help us get our head around it and to understand it. But I think probably 2011 – that's when we kind of started to change the way we think about things and how we plan (Alana, lines 53-56).

However, these statements conflicted with that of another participant working at this service which highlights the diversity of subject positions held by the different professionals with this institution. This participant implied there were limitations regarding direction and support from within the workplace discourse:

...I think we got handed the book and they said, 'this is what you have to do now'. And I don't think our management especially here really had that overall grasp of what was happening. And maybe that aspect of long day care life, the planning side of it, is not really their strong suit. So it was really hard to get their support and that um was actually a real struggle for a while. So most of us girls really had to bounce off each other and really work together and sort of yeah, do our own research really. Most of it was our research and then we came scrambling back saying, 'please tell us what we're doing.... We're going to get assessed and we have no idea what we're doing' (Lucy, lines 44-49, original emphasis).

For this early childhood institution, it was only realised that the curriculum frameworks were mandatory once the NQF was introduced in 2012. So from 2009 to 2012, some professionals at this setting were struggling due to the limitations of the available institutional workplace discourses which provided

seemingly limited understanding of the reforms and support for their staff. This demonstrates how one discourse from one particular area – as dominant perspectives of certain individuals/groups at a specific period in time (Grbich, 2004) can filter down and affects the discourses available to others, and ultimately impacts subject positions occupied by individuals. Thus, the power/knowledge coming from the dominant discourse provided different subject positions (Foucault, 2002; 2003, Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; O’Farrell, 2005). In particular, the discourses of ‘transferable responsibility’ and ‘availability and incentive’, which were available to the centre coordinators at this setting, allowed for possibilities and limitations of specific subject positions (e.g. *not responsible*). In turn, this led to the availability of particular discourses (e.g. ‘not knowing’) within the setting. Thus, the subject position of the centre coordinator portrayed that educators and teachers were responsible for implementing the EYLF, and her awareness of her staffs’ struggle to understand and translate this document to their practice was limited.

Consequently, the discourses available to these professionals impacted their subject positions, and ultimately led to the possibilities and discursive practices of *collegial networking* and *self-initiated learning* practices as they attempted to construct a *collective understanding* of this reform (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2011; Hiatt, 2006). However, according to Hall and Hord (2011), understanding educational change begins and ends with the individual. Thus, there were various levels of understanding among Lucy and her colleagues. For example, a response from Gabrielle previously recorded in Chapter Six illustrates a certain position:

I struggled with it. I took one look at the huge book and I went – ‘I’m not reading that’. And I struggle with it ‘cause I’m a practical person, I’m not a theory person (Gabrielle, lines 36 and 48, original emphasis).

The influence of traditional developmental early childhood discourses has shaped Gabrielle’s *traditionalist* subject position, as its discursive practices encompass largely practical content knowledge, skills and experience. Again, this statement exemplifies lack of practical support as a limitation from within the available discourses of this early childhood institution regarding this reform process (Wedell, 2009). Similarly, Lucy expressed her limitations within these discourses:

...even just reading the book, it wasn’t enough. You know you say, but how many obs [observations] do I need to take...to get your head around it? It didn’t matter. You had to just do the quality and you had to do the, the planning around...interests and abilities and strengths rather than the deficits... (Lucy, lines 49-51).

Although Lucy’s initial educator training was based on developmental early childhood discourses, she was attempting to take up a *revolutionist* subject position. However, the available discourses within

Lucy's workplace limited the level of support that was needed to reshape her subject position from *traditionalist* to *revolutionist*.

Whereas, some early childhood professionals specified that their workplace discourses provided possibilities for them, as they already reflected elements of the curriculum framework prior to its introduction. For instance, Adele claimed:

...the framework came in as part of that journey but...we were already sort of heading in that trajectory. It just sort of...reinforced what we were doing (Adele, lines 91-93).

So for Adele, the contemporary early childhood discourses and discursive practices of her workplace institution have constructed possibilities to reshape her positioning for learning to engage with the content knowledge of the new curriculum framework from a *revolutionist* subject position.

However, a participant from another setting recalled elements of resistance as a limitation within her workplace discourse:

...it was like something else we have to learn. If we don't have to do it, we won't worry about it....slowly before the end of 2010, it sort of became realised that things were changing and that we were actually going to have to start using this document and that...the NCAC was out and ACECQA was in.... And then it wasn't until the NQS started and it was like 'well, actually now we have to use it. Okay'....so I guess...mid-2010 to mid-2011 was lots of professional development around the Early Years Learning Framework and how we can use it (Jade, lines 52-55, 85-87, sic).

These statements acknowledge the emotive response of resistance (Arthur et al., 2015; Block, 2000; Fenech et al., 2010; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Gomez, 2012; Pendergast et al., 2005), followed by recognition of *imposed* change (Baker & Foote, 2003). Hence, this discourse does not allow individuals to feel empowered, as the imposition of the perceived top-down approach of this reform reflected a clear effect of power for these professionals (Foucault, 1980). Although resistance to imposed change is a common emotive response, it can directly impact the subject positions of individuals. One example of resistance was described by Penny (an experienced centre Director):

You know, as a director, I felt that's what they needed to know because I'm not there when the assessor's there... and they need to know everything, so they needed to know this book... Through and through. But then I found that they didn't want to do it. You know, there's...resistance. But this is our Standards (Penny, lines 124-126, sic).

It is also clear that some workplace institutions were attempting to understand and implement both the curriculum and quality frameworks simultaneously. Consequently, this may have caused further

limitations and additional stress to the subjective positions of early childhood professionals, as an enforced effect of power (Foucault, 1980). It is also indicative that the limited communication and information between policymakers and early childhood institutions at this time may have hindered the efficiency of the implementation process (Moore & Fink, 2003; Wedell, 2009).

Taking an opposing viewpoint, Adele spoke of the new assessment process as a possibility for boosting her confidence as an early childhood professional:

I think...we went through our assessment...at the start of last year and – and that also...reinforced what we were doing and gave us confidence because we did well and then we sort of felt like, ‘oh yeah, okay’, because you just never knew if what you were doing was right because there wasn’t really any feedback or – you know, it was open ended. So you sort of think, ‘oh, I think I’m doing things right’ but you never really know (Adele, lines 117-120).

Although Adele’s statement implies that a discourse of ‘not knowing’ was previously present within her workplace institution, it is evident that her assessment experience reshaped her subject position through available conditions of possibility.

Meanwhile, Abigail spoke of a loss of confidence due to the slow implementation of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) in 2012:

...it wasn’t until I... I came back... I started doing casual work in the start of 2012. And – there was no talk of it in the industry. I was just doing casual with [centre name omitted]. There was no talk of it – nothing (Abigail, lines 63-64).

It is evident from Abigail’s account that the uptake of the curriculum framework was slow – spanning roughly two years. This limitation demonstrates a lack of direction and support through the institutional discourses available from policymakers and management of some services (Gomez, 2012; Moore & Fink, 2003; Wedell, 2009). Subsequently, the subjective positions of early childhood professionals may be impacted through associated limitations of confusion, stress and loss of confidence in their practice.

Loss of confidence can also be related to the *implementation dip* within Pendergast et al’s (2005) *Educational Change Model*, where early childhood professionals may experience a “drop in confidence and a loss of momentum” (p. 88). Notably, some may be situated in the *Consolidation phase*, but if the uptake of this framework was slow, then they may still be located within the *Development phase*. Thus, not only is the uptake of reform influenced by the limitations and possibilities of early childhood professionals’ subject positions, but their positioning within the change process can also affect their subject positions.

There were conflicting views regarding translating the new frameworks to practice. An interview conducted with Abigail (who completed her Diploma in 2004 and held 12 years of experience) expressed her anxiety about translating theory to practice:

...I was actually having anxiety because I'm the Educational Leader. I can talk the talk. I know what I'm talking about. But I've actually got to actually walk in here and implement this stuff. This is a completely different story (Abigail, line 286-289).

This signifies a connection between Abigail's confidence in understanding the underpinning theories of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and putting them into practice. Abigail expressed her confidence with the theoretical knowledge; however, she had experienced significant anxiety during this transition period when attempting to transfer this to practice. This correlates with a study conducted by Kilderry, Nolan and Scott (2017), where early childhood professionals initially demonstrated anxiety when discussing their practice using "unfamiliar educational discourse", followed by visible confidence regarding "familiar educational discourse" possibly "due to their own professional learning" (p. 6). Translation of theory to practice has been identified as an issue throughout the literature (Dyson, 2005), particularly when shifting from traditional to contemporary content knowledge. Although Abigail's present engagement with contemporary early childhood discourses can be perceived as a condition of possibility, the practical implications for translating this new knowledge to practice can be initially viewed as a limitation.

In regards to translation to practice, Alana took a different approach to her engagement with the EYLF, as she described:

I just pretty much use the outcomes and, you know, some big words from in there [the EYLF] when I'm writing my observations or learning stories. I always go to that, yeah (Alana, line 96-97).

For Alana, she was utilising the EYLF as a reference book, and used the words within this document to make sense of what she was doing. By taking this approach, Alana was applying the terminology as an add-on in her documentation. So the contemporary early childhood discourses have resulted in a limitation for Alana, whereby she occupied a subject position of *doing without knowing*, or an *inexpert expert*.

This discourse of ‘not knowing’ appears to stem from the remaining sense of confusion and limitations surrounding how to best engage with the frameworks. This is evident throughout the following statement offered by Sonia:

...the benefits have been pretty much seeing it - seeing them [colleagues] develop and understand it. But the challenges have been getting them to that point where they do understand it. And I still think that there's the stigma around it where people don't actually understand it, because it's so broad there's nothing really set in place, and you still wonder if you are doing it right. Or if you're doing it wrong or if you've completely missed the mark altogether so yeah [laughs] (Sonia, line 65-68).

Sonia's account illustrates a transition to collective understanding of the frameworks occurring among early childhood professionals through the possibilities offered by the “shared language” of contemporary early childhood discourses (Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 20). According to Irvine and Price (2014), shared understanding and collaborative professional conversations are key approaches in supporting policy reform and changes to practice. As such, these approaches can be seen as an important aspect of meaningful and sustained change (Fenech et al, 2010; Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006), which can support early childhood professionals in effectively engaging in change from a *revolutionist* subject position. However, there is still a reference to the 'stigma' (or discourse of 'not knowing'). Sonia has linked this limitation to the broadness of these documents and questioned the ability to understand and interpret what might be considered the ‘right way’ of translating these documents and applying them to practice. However, as discussed previously, tensions exist between consistency and flexibility (Jackson, 2015), meaning that there is no one ‘right way’ for implementing these reforms (Tayler, 2016).

The influence of subject positions on feeling comfortable with reforms

There was a difference in opinion regarding the time taken to feel comfortable in engaging with the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). For instance, Abigail specified:

...it took me a good couple of weeks of trying to get on top of it, but then once I did – it was great (Abigail, line 286-289).

Here, it is important to consider Abigail's subject position. Although Abigail was Diploma-qualified prior to the frameworks being released, she exhibited some quite assertive self-learning learning [SIL] characteristics. This means she occupied a position which valued new knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, Abigail was able to engage more consistently with the EYLF once she took on a permanent professional position in 2012. Whereas, Alana offered a different perspective:

Confidently? Oh, probably only this year, within the last, probably, four months I'd say [approx. April 2015] (Alana, line 82, sic).

In contrast to the position of Abigail, Alana has taken four years to implement the EYLF confidently within her subject position, even though she was in the third year of her Bachelor Degree at the time of the interview. Meanwhile, Lucy and Sonia were more on par, as Lucy proposed:

I'd say probably the past two years; I've felt really comfortable... (Lucy, lines 70-71).

This statement suggests that it took Lucy two-to-three years to become comfortable in using the EYLF in her subjective position. While Sonia associated her increased confidence with further in-service teacher education:

In 2013 after I had attended some more training [laughs] (Sonia, line 52).

Similar to Lucy, Sonia became comfortable with engaging with the EYLF in 2013 – two-to-three years after its introduction. While, Alana also offered a similar perspective:

So it's taken me probably a good two to three years to be able to get into a place where I go 'no, this is how I do my programming for children'. I've got an intentional teaching program and a child-led program and I'm more than comfortable to explain it. So it hasn't been until this year where I've been in a really good place. It's taken me a good three years I'd say, yeah (Alana, lines 86-89).

So for Alana, her sustained engagement in this reform had enabled the possibility of establishing a more confident subject position. Over time, the original limitations involving communication issues may have potentially confused and overwhelmed some early childhood professionals about what was actually required for implementation. One participant spoke about this transition:

I mean, now when I think back, like, I realise how new and how, I guess, naive to it all we were because it was sort of – yeah. It was sort of like you're taking this thing and trying to do it in a really – yeah. Like, it was – it was something new that we were aware that we didn't know how to really do yet, whereas now it seems quite – you know, it's not – you don't have to do it. It's just part of everyday life... (Adele, lines 63-66).

Adele's account regarding the translation of the EYLF to practice illustrates the importance of understanding the *why* and *how* of reforms (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009), and their influence on the subject positions of early childhood professionals in the field. Whereas another participant whose subject position incorporated prior experience with an interstate framework gained confidence more quickly:

...so I when the framework came out, I went 'oh, I can work with this. This is fantastic'. So...that was really good for me.... So I had a little look through it and I went 'oh yes, this is quite similar to what I was using before', I kept using what I was using before.... And I just went 'oh yeah, I feel really confident with all of this'. Like, I just felt really quite confident with all of it. Because...of the previous study I'd done with the Diploma.... I think it was definitely an easy

transition.... I'm not saying I've got all the answers and that I'm fantastic at what I do or anything. I'm just saying that to me, the Early Years Framework was much more embrative than how they were doing things before (Jade, lines 39-40, 51, 55-57, 75-76, original emphasis).

So this recognises that prior experience with an interstate curriculum framework has assisted in shaping Jade's subject position. Her response also acknowledges how her Diploma course influenced her subject position regarding how she understood and engaged with this reform. This was similar for Adele's subject position, as she explained:

I'd probably say that by the time I finished my Degree and started teaching, which was in 2012...that I felt quite...comfortable with it, but each year it definitely gets...I always feel more comfortable with it (Adele, lines 115-117).

Adele's statement acknowledges that the provision of time is essential for learning to translate new reforms and apply them to practice, and can ultimately affect the positionings of individuals within the process of change (Pendergast, et al., 2005). Though according to Gabrielle, sufficient time is not always provided:

It probably should have been brought in a little bit slower and given time for. And then almost as soon as you got it – bam, your first assessment was done. It was just...quite different to the old way you used to do it. Yeah... maybe more information... and time to...process all that information would have been better. And give the girls more time to understand what was going on... (Gabrielle, lines 182-185, original emphasis).

This statement reinforces the role that workplace discourses play in shaping and reshaping the subject positions of their staff in engaging with new reforms. In relation to this, several perceptions were offered by the directors and coordinators involved in this study. For instance, Felicity explained:

Well, initially it was probably a little bit hard I'm assuming. But the girls are probably the ones to talk to more because they're the ones that are actually – doing it.... I personally didn't because I'm more... obviously in the office.... I think it was... especially for some of the oldies that have done it years and years and years ago. Um, yeah. Going from the...programming a certain way.... Whereas now... yeah initially, I'd definitely say, yeah, it was a difficult transition time initially, yeah.... When did it come out? [Laughs]. Yeah. I reckon, yeah. Like I said, I reckon this year's probably been the best grasp, we're grasping it all, like pretty... yeah. Um, but yeah... it took a few years (Felicity, lines 23, 28-31, 36-37, sic).

As discussed earlier, Felicity placed the responsibility of the reforms on her staff through a discourse of 'transferrable responsibility'; yet, she acknowledged that the more experienced educators (trained prior to the 2009 reforms) were struggling. Hence, the discourses available to these educators would have been limited for the purpose of engaging in the reforms, shaping their subject positions as *inexpert expert* for a

long period of time. Similar perceptions were also held by Paula (Felicity's centre coordinator counterpart):

Still learning. I think...the older ones perhaps are getting their head around it a bit more, it's taken them longer.... Because it was all up to the Diplomas to do. That's taken a long time for them to work out how to do it all. Because before – they didn't do any of that. They were just the assistants.... They just helped. They didn't have anything to do with... Whereas now, it's expected that they all are involved in the paperwork. So that's taken a long time. And it's been a lot harder on the Diplomas (Paula, lines 165, 167-168, 170-171, original emphasis, sic).

This account highlights the changing requirements of qualification-types in the sector. Specifically, it recognises that Diploma-qualified educators now have additional workloads that place an emphasis on written work, as opposed to the largely practical discursive practices of traditional developmental early childhood discourses – such as those present within many Diploma qualifications (Choy & Haukka, 2010; Dyson, 2005). This is a significant recognition, as it portrays tensions between the changing professional roles of these educators and a potential lack of correlation with their actual subjective positions, whether they are *traditionalist* or *revolutionist*.

Meanwhile, Penny spoke of her staffs' current positions in their understandings of the new reforms:

In their learning stories – they're terrific. Um, they've really got it down to a pattern of writing learning stories and working out the Outcomes.... Um, relaying it in their programs and in their reviews that they have with the parents.... sometimes they feel as though they're hitting heads, but they are following the EYLF. And they've found that's been really good. Actually...some of them with the Standards – could be... more up-to-date in their reviewing and reading of them. But on the whole, they've embraced it quite well (Penny, lines 161-163, 168-170).

Penny's own *revolutionist* subject position encompasses leadership and support as discursive practices of contemporary early childhood discourse. As found in the change literature, such supportive leadership can influence the way in which educational reform is understood and applied (Gomez, 2012; Moore & Fink, 2003; Wedell, 2009). Correspondingly, Aileen portrayed a similar position:

...look for me I'm someone who can pick something up and utilise it quite easily and I think for all educators, it's a different... I can't comment on how quick. Some of them picked it up straight away and played with it really quickly. And some of them are still working through it now. And I don't think it matters what level of qualification they have or how many years' experience they've had in the industry or how many years' experience they've got all together but sometimes it's how much time they actually spend doing the documentation. The more they do it the more comfortable they are (Aileen, lines 73-78).

Thus, Aileen occupied a subject position which entailed value for learning and new knowledge. As a result, her own position may have impacted those of her staff as they attempted to understand the new reforms. Again, the element of time was acknowledged as a major factor within this process.

Visible subject positions among participants

The examination of particular discourses available to the participants in this study has made their subject positions visible. As Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017) have explained:

...the turn to discourse does not really offer a theory of subjectivity. Instead, it provides a set of explanations of the local and heterogeneous *subject positions* within discourse and power. That subjects occupy 'positions' within discourse means we can only write, speak or think about a social object or practice in specific ways within a given historical period (p. 111, original emphasis).

Several subject positions have been identified among the participants in this study as a significant contribution to knowledge. It is clear from the data that the level of success associated with engagement in the reforms has been dependent upon the subject positions of early childhood professionals. These positions have been influenced by specific discourses and their associated discursive practices available to early childhood professionals during the reform implementation period. A number of positions have been identified among participants involved in this study (see **Figure 25**). This corresponds with a statement by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017), whereby subjects encompass "a multiplicity of positions which are contradictory and discontinuous" (pp. 111-112). Utilising the capillary structure, the diagram below illustrates a number of subject positions which were revealed among participants. These positions are situated along the main artery and branches, and are surrounded by interconnected discourses flowing throughout the smaller capillaries.

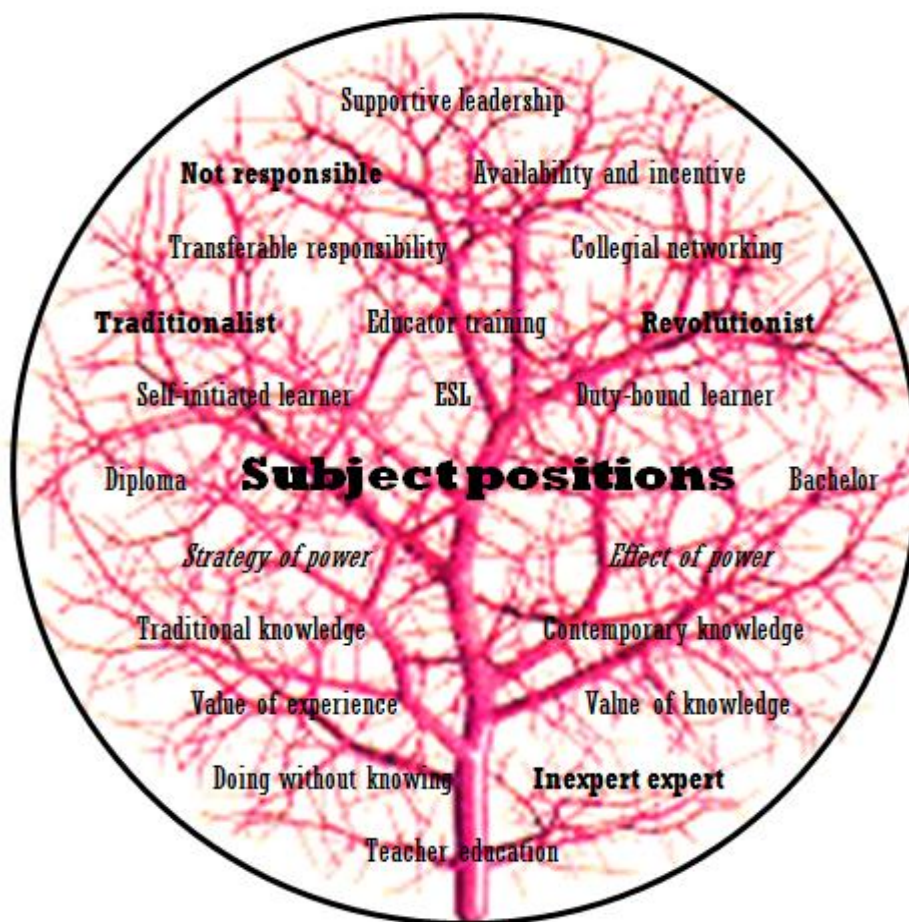


Figure 25: Various subject positions identified among participants

These positions comprise of interconnected relations and often overlapping elements within wider and enmeshed discourses. The complexity of this analysis allows the possibility of “...exposing the multiplicity of relations through which subjectivity is constituted” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 112). By examining these relations embedded within the data from this study, various subject positions were identified.

The ‘traditionalist’

The *traditionalist* is a subject position shaped by traditional developmental early childhood discourses and value for experience. This position utilises practical knowledge and skills, and seems to favour duty-bound learning [DBL] as discursive practices. Emotive responses to change (such as denial, resistance and resentment) may be evident for professionals who occupy this position. In regards to early childhood reform, this position can be perceived as an effect of power, as the reforms do not reflect the discourses

that influence their subject positions. As such, additional support is required for early childhood professionals who occupy this position.

The ‘revolutionist’

The *revolutionist* is a position shaped by contemporary early childhood discourses and a value for new knowledge. This position utilises self-initiated learning, collegial networking and supportive leadership as discursive practices. This position appears to act as an effective facilitator of change for engaging in early childhood reform, as the reforms which began in 2009 are reflective of the discourses that influence this position.

The ‘inexpert expert’ and the ‘not responsible’

The *inexpert expert* position has been shaped by a discourse of not knowing, and through the discursive practice of doing without knowing. It appears to be influenced by the *not responsible* position held by those in power (e.g. directors and centre coordinators) within workplace institutions. This position is shaped by the discourses of transferable responsibility and non-dissemination of knowledge, and utilises availability and incentive as discursive practices. These two positions can be seen as a hindrance on the change process within early childhood reforms.

According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017), “...individuals are the product of historically specific ‘discourses’ that seek to know and govern the social as a domain of thought and action” (p. 111, original emphasis). As such, particular discourses were visible among the subject positions of participants. These included Diploma and Bachelor discourses, specific types of teacher education, English as a Second Language [ESL], and their value for specific content knowledge, experience and learning practices. These positions also acknowledged the influences of supportive institutional leaders, and leaders who positioned themselves as *not responsible* for engaging in the change process, such as those associated with the reforms.

The identification of these subject positions offer a significant contribute to the knowledge of early childhood reform. They are important for early childhood professionals in the field, as they continue to navigate their way through ongoing reforms alongside their colleagues – who often occupy other subject positions than themselves. These positions are essential for policymakers, teacher-educators, educator trainers and PD presenters to acknowledge, as the successful translation and potential uptake of reform initiatives are dependent upon understanding the subject positions of early childhood professionals in the field.

Positioning within the change process

In addition to subject positions, it was also important to analyse the positioning of participants within the change process and in accordance with the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005). In Chapter Two, it was acknowledged that change was a cyclic process that spanned between eight and 17 years (Garvis et al., 2013; Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006). However, as mentioned previously, early childhood professionals were only given one year to understand and implement these reforms (Sumsion et al., 2009). Consequently, the timeline [TL] method (Bedi & Redman, 2006; McKenna & Todd, 1997; Sobell, Sobell, Leo, & Cancilla, 1988; Sobell & Sobell, 1992) was used to gauge the positionings of participants (with a focus on the educators and teachers) within the change process regarding the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) at the time of their interviews in mid-2015. Using these timelines and the interview transcripts obtained from participants, a graph was constructed (see **Figure 26**) in correspondence with the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006).

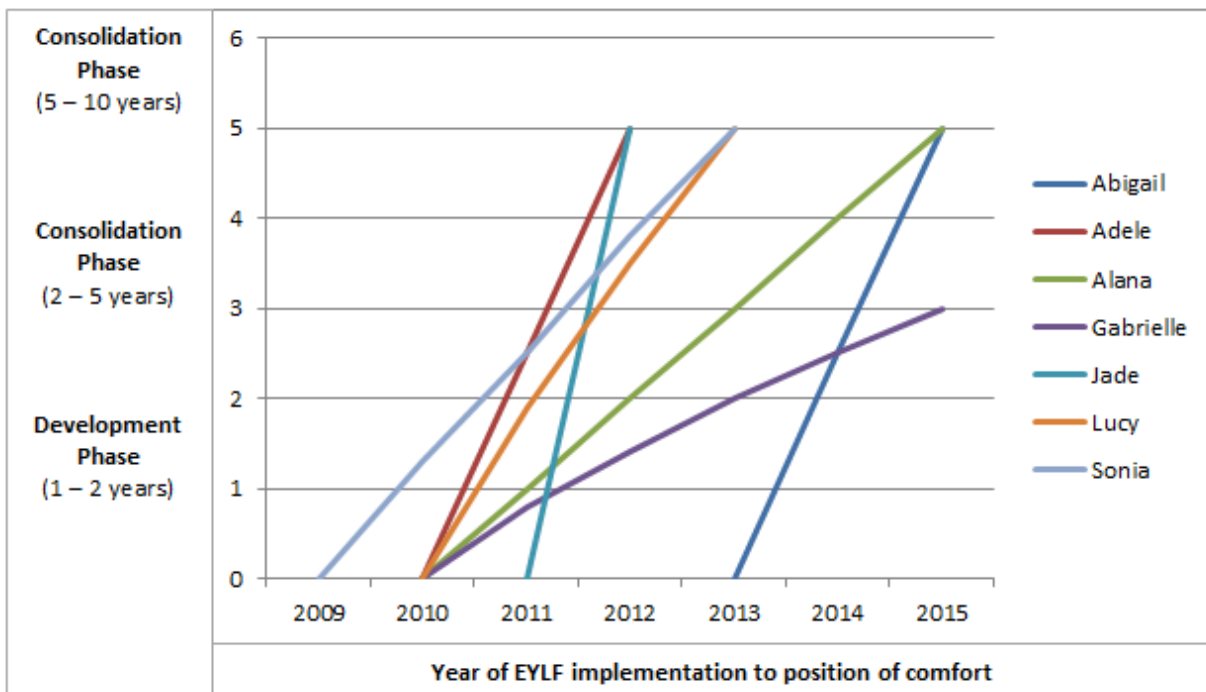


Figure 26: Change graph illustrating the year of EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) implementation and educators' and teachers' positions of comfort, based on their interactive timelines and the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006)

By using FDA to analyse the data, the way in which participants seemed to position themselves in relation to the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) and their own

interactive timelines was made visible. The graph above depicts the positioning of educators and teachers involved in this study regarding their engagement with the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). More specifically, it reflects when participants initially implemented this document, and when they began to feel comfortable applying it to their practice. In keeping with a post-structuralist perspective, it is important to note that these positions are not fixed; rather they are fluid, as the discourses available to participants and the discursive practices in which they engage are constantly in flux.

As illustrated in the graph, some participants did not begin using the framework at the time of its introduction. Several of these professionals suggested that it was due to resistance within their workplace institutions, and workplace leaders who occupied subject positions of being *not responsible* for this process through a discourse of ‘transferable responsibility’. This means that not all of these participants entered the *Initiation Phase* of the Educational Change Model at the same time. Furthermore, the diverse subjective positions and experiences of these participants ultimately impacted their speed and ability to understand and translate this document in a similar timeframe. Meanwhile, other participants seemed to have a speedier uptake of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). This was largely due to the various and competing discourses available to different participants at the time (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017). For example, if the contemporary early childhood discourse and the value for new knowledge were available to educators and teachers within their workplace institutions, they tended to occupy a *revolutionist* subject position, shaped by the discursive practices of self-initiated learning and, in some cases, supportive institutional leadership and prior experiences with similar reforms.

Based on the timelines offered by these participants, it is evident that these professionals occupied different positions within the change process of the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006). The majority of the participants were located within the beginning of the *Consolidation Phase*, but some (such as Sonia) remained at the end of the *Development Phase*. However, Gabrielle was yet to feel comfortable with the document at the time of her interview. It is important to consider the impact of the policy reforms on how these participants responded to and engaged with change. As Ball (2006) has described: “...the effect of policy is primarily discursive, it changes the possibilities we have for thinking ‘otherwise’, thus it limits our response to change...” (p. 49, original emphasis). This indicates that if (or when) further policy reforms occur; it may be difficult for early childhood professionals to think outside of this policy discourse.

Summary

The findings throughout this chapter explored how specific discourses and their associated discursive practices influenced the various and often overlapping subject positions of early childhood professionals in the field, as they attempt to engage in the processes of change. It also acknowledges that not only does the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) signify that professionals have to start at the beginning of the cycle with each new reform, they are all at different stages within this cycle. This chapter has explored how subject positions occupied by individuals are interconnected, overlapping and enmeshed within available discourses, and can be seen as a complex capillary structure (Foucault, 1980; Rivalland, 2010). These subject positions are developed in more depth throughout Chapter Eight. Moreover, the way in which early childhood professionals strategise their practices and ground their truth claims, responsibilities, possibilities and limitations regarding their engagement with these reforms are highly influenced by the way they position themselves within specific discourses available to them at a historic period in time. These findings have effectively addressed the second research question by revealing some key subject positions occupied by participants regarding the processes of change.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore: *How educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals working in Victoria*, with a specific focus on the long day care sector. The study utilised participants' engagement with the different curriculum and quality frameworks as an example for understanding how early childhood professionals engage with the *pace* of reform. The key focus was to examine what discursive practices (or strategies) were utilised by participants and how they were positioned within the change process. In view of this key focus, the following research sub-questions were framed to guide this exploration:

- *What strategies are utilised by early childhood professionals to understand, cope and engage in educational reform?*
- *How does educational reform position early childhood professionals within the process of change?*

This was achieved by examining the strategies utilised by 11 participants and their occupation of various subject positions as they engaged in the early childhood reforms beginning in 2009. The Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FEER) model was constructed as analytical framework, based on Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge (1972, 1980). Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) was not enough to be able to fully understand the different positionings of early childhood professionals from the Victorian long day care sector. Therefore, the data needed to be examined through the lens of the change literature (Hiatt, 2006; Pendergast et al., 2005) to obtain a deeper understanding of what was happening in the field. This framed the study in a way that effectively addressed the research questions. FDA (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) was applied to the data collected from the 11 participants during qualitative, semi-structured interviews. It is essential to acknowledge that the findings from this study are based on the Victorian early childhood context; and therefore, they may not be fully transferrable to national or international contexts. This final chapter identifies the contribution of this study to the areas of knowledge, theory and practice. Key considerations for future policy development are also identified, as well as considerations for reform adoption and translation by pre-service and in-service teacher education and educator training institutions. Lastly, this chapter acknowledges the limitations of this study, and directions for future research, as well as my growth as a researcher.

Summary of key findings

The findings from this research provide insight into the dominant discourses available, the discursive practices (or strategies) utilised, and the subject positions occupied by the early childhood professionals from the long day care sector as they engaged in the 2009–2012 early childhood reforms in Victoria, Australia. According to Ortlipp (2003a):

Some discourses, because of their institutional location and wider circulation, have more social and institutional power, suggesting that subject positions within such discourse may be more desirable, more justifiable, more accessible, and accessed more consistently (p. 33).

This is evident throughout the following sub-section.

Strategies and positions for engaging in early childhood reform

Participants used a range of strategies to cope and engage in the early childhood reforms. Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge were evident when unpacking these strategies (or discursive practices). As explained in Chapter Six, these strategies were perceived as supports (and strategies of power) or stressors (as effects of power) (Foucault, 1980) which enhanced or hindered their engagement with the reforms. The strategies were constructed as discursive practices shaped and reshaped by specific discourses that influenced the engagement and subject positions of professionals within reform processes. These discourses were enmeshed, and encompassed the discourses of learning, teacher education and workplace institutions.

The discourse of learning

The discourse of learning revealed two types of strategies taken up by participants as they engaged in the reforms. Self-initiated learning [SIL] was utilised by four of the eleven participants as a strategy of power, as well as positive emotive responses such as mindfulness towards change, resilience and adaptability (Arthur et al., 2018), which ultimately supported their ability to cope and engage in the reforms.

However, four of the eleven participants used duty-bound learning [DBL] as an enforced learning practice and as an effect of power, which ultimately led to emotive responses such as resentment and resistance to engaging in the reforms (Arthur et al., 2015; Block, 2000; Fenech et al., 2010; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Gomez, 2012; Pendergast et al., 2005). It was found that SIL practices were utilised by participants who occupied the *revolutionist* subject position which valued contemporary early childhood discourses, new knowledge and learning. Participants who utilised DBL practices occupied *traditionalist* subject positions

which valued traditional knowledge and experience. The subject positions occupied by individuals were shaped and reshaped by specific discourses and their associated discursive practices. These practices were important to acknowledge, because those who engaged in SIL were more likely to feel empowered in engaging in reform processes due to their value of new knowledge and learning. However, those who engaged in DBL may have experienced feelings of disempowerment due to their value of traditional knowledge and experience. This is because traditional knowledge and experience were not emphasised throughout the reforms. This also highlighted tensions between newly qualified professionals and the experience of professionals who were trained prior to the 2009 reforms in the field due to the changing content knowledge of early childhood teacher education and educator training institutions.

The discourse of teacher education

This study uncovered teacher education discourse as an influence when engaging with early childhood reforms. This related to both pre-service and in-service teacher education and educator training institutions. Throughout the initial introduction of reforms, inconsistencies were apparent in content knowledge, and a lack of preparation and understanding from teacher-educators, educator trainers and PD presenters. As such, these professionals could be perceived as occupying a subject position of *inexpert expert* within a discourse of ‘not knowing’. Consequently, the practices within teacher education at the time of the 2009 early childhood reforms were considered by several participants as a stressor and an effect of power for coping with these reforms. Meanwhile, other participants identified the practices of their teacher education as a supportive coping strategy and a strategy of power. This was associated with the preparedness, supportive and informative positions of their teacher-educators and mentors, who had been part of the reform process in some way. Through these practices, these teacher-educators could be seen as occupying *revolutionist* subject positions through their supportive leadership and value for new knowledge and learning. The differences between these practices and positions emphasise the importance of ensuring that the teacher education sector is prepared, informed and unified in its inclusion, content knowledge and dissemination prior to the implementation of reforms.

The discourse of workplace institutions

The discourse of workplace was revealed as a significant influence on how early childhood professionals engaged with the early childhood reforms. The strategies (or discursive practices) utilised among workplaces were perceived as either a stressor or a support for participants involved in this study. Some acknowledged that emotive responses to change, resistance, uncertainty and confusion were present within their workplace institutions (Arthur et al., 2015; Block, 2000; Fenech et al., 2010; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Gomez, 2012; Pendergast et al., 2005). The workplace discourses available to some centre

directors and coordinators provided subject positions which they interpreted as lack of availability and incentive. Therefore the responsibility and knowledge of the processes required for reform implementation were unclear. Furthermore, their subject positions (particularly regarding their value for new knowledge and learning) influenced the discourses available for their staff, and thus, impacted the level of support provided to them. For instance, workplace leaders who occupied a *revolutionist* subject position were more likely to exhibit supportive leadership, a value for new knowledge and learning, engagement in SIL and the reform consultations, and be more receptive to change. However, workplace leaders who occupied *not responsible* and/or *traditionalist* subject positions were likely to be uninformed, demonstrate resistance and engage in DBL practices. This is a significant point, as it acknowledges the way subject positions of workplace leaders can impact their ability to support their staff in the processes of educational reform. As such, this foregrounds the importance of understanding the discursive practices and subject positions within workplace institutions.

Overall, the discursive practices (or strategies) and subject positions (see **Figure 27**) taken up by early childhood professionals are enmeshed within certain discourses. These discourses encompass learning, teacher education and workplace institutions. The diagram below illustrates key subject positions identified among participants. These are situated as interrelated branches of the capillary structure. The discourses enmeshed within these positions are represented by the smaller capillaries.

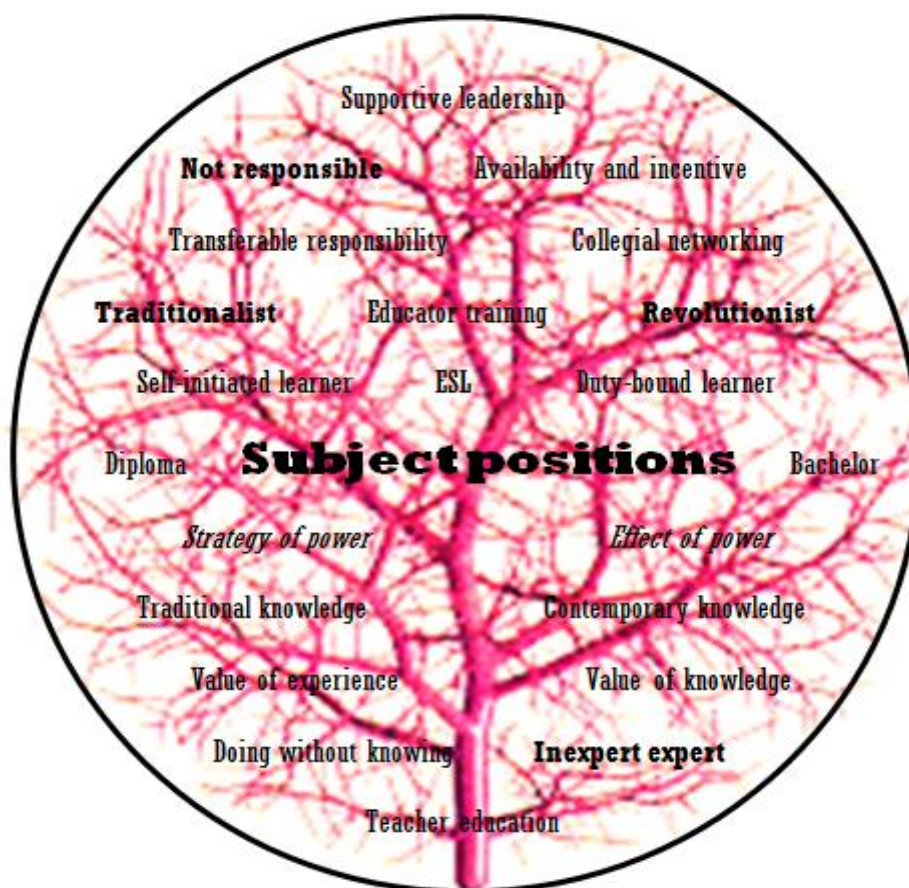


Figure 27: The identification of significant subject positions among participants

The discovery of these subject positions reveal diverse ways in which early childhood professionals position themselves and enact certain discursive practices within specific discourses available to them. As such, understanding these positions is essential in moving forward with policy reform initiatives – for policymakers, for teacher education and workplace institutions, and for early childhood professionals.

Positionings within the processes of change

The findings from this study also revealed the positionings of early childhood professionals within the processes of change (see **Figure 26**). As detailed in Chapter Seven, the participants involved in this study were located within different positionings of the change process, with respect to the three phases of the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006). This referred to the initial introduction, implementation and their eventual level of comfort with the early childhood reforms that began in 2009. It was discovered that participants were mostly located within the Consolidation Phase in regards to the EYLF (DEEWR) and the original VEYLDF (DEECD & VCAA), but still positioned within the Development Phase regarding the initial NQF (ACECQA, 2012). Although this correlates with the

cycle specified in the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006); it is important to acknowledge that with each new reform, early childhood professionals are once again re-positioned at the beginning of the cycle.

Moreover, the findings revealed that these positionings were significantly dependent upon the subject positions occupied by participants at the time of the interviews in 2015. For example, participants who occupied a *traditionalist* subject position took longer to go through the processes of change; whereas, those who occupied a *revolutionist* subject position moved through these phases more quickly and with greater ease. The findings also emphasised that the subject positions of centre directors and coordinators who held significant influence over the experiences of the change process within their settings. For example, if they occupied *not responsible* and/or *traditionalist* subject positions, their staff were more likely to struggle in coping with the processes of change, leading to a discourse of ‘not knowing’, discursive practices of ‘doing without knowing’, and leaving these professionals in a subject position of being *inexpert experts*.

The positionings identified among participants regarding the early childhood reforms reveal that these early childhood professionals occupied different positions within the change process outlined by the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006). These findings illustrate the importance of considering the impact that policy reforms have on early childhood professionals’ ability to engage in change.

Contributions to knowledge and recommendations

The discursive practices (or strategies) identified among participants contribute significantly to knowledge. These strategies relate to how certain learning practices can hinder or encourage engagement in change, how pre-service and in-service teacher education and educator training institutions can impact this engagement, and how workplace institutions respond to tensions that accompany the processes of change. The following sub-sections explore these contributions and potential recommendations for the early childhood field.

Strategies of learning

The learning strategies identified by participants form a valuable contribution to knowledge regarding early childhood professionals’ engagement with reform. It has been found that the learning discourses available and the *revolutionist* subject positions occupied by these participants have led them to engage in specific learning practices as a strategy of power (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017). For instance, the

practice of self-initiated learning [SIL] can empower early childhood professionals through their acquired knowledge, understandings and practices of educational reform discourse. This emphasises how power and knowledge construct and inform each other through a continual cyclic process (O'Farrell, 2005), within the social structures of the field and discursive practices of its professionals (Foucault, 1980). As such, engagement in SIL can enable and sustain certain power relations (Prado, 2000). In light of the change literature, professionals who engage in this practice also possess a *desire* to engage in change (Hiatt, 2006). This highlights the compatibility of the practice of SIL with effective engagement in reform processes.

Duty-bound learning [DBL] was also identified as a learning practice among participants. These participants generally occupy a *traditionalist* subject position and do not present any *desire* for change (Hiatt, 2006). Rather, they exhibit a lack of motivation stemming from a resistance to change (Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd, 2010; Gibson & Brooks, 2012; Gomez, 2012). This appears to have resulted from the deployment of power (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017) and the "collection of enforced relations" experienced throughout the introduction of the reforms beginning in 2009 (Foucault, 1980, pp. 92-93). As such, the uptake of DBL by early childhood professionals can be perceived as an effect of power (Foucault, 1980), and a hindrance to the engagement in the processes of reform.

The learning practices of SIL and DBL form a valuable contribution to knowledge regarding early childhood reform, as experienced and practised by early childhood professionals in long day care settings. An acknowledgement of these learning practices makes it possible to construct a deeper understanding of the positions, practices and attitudes of early childhood professionals towards learning and change. In addition to acknowledging and understanding participants' strategies for learning, the study highlights strategies undertaken by pre-service teacher education and educator training institutions.

Strategies of pre-service teacher education

A range of strategies (or discursive practices) were identified by participants regarding their pre-service teacher education. Certain practices were identified among these institutions which acted as either supports (strategies of power) or stressors (effects of power) for how these participants engaged in the reforms (Foucault, 1980). It was revealed that some institutions engaged in practices which privileged specific content knowledge at the time of the reforms (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gomez, 2012). While although the reforms encompassed shifting early childhood discourses, some institutions were still producing and disseminating traditional developmental content knowledge (Appleyard, 1996; Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gibbons et al., 1994).

This mix of approaches created a situation whereby some participants in this study considered they were entering the field of early childhood education without adequate knowledge of curriculum in general, but more specific to the national and state curriculums, whereas others felt far more confident and knowledgeable. Teacher education and educator training institutions need to ask themselves, does the content that they teach prepare their students with the knowledge to review a curriculum document, understand it, and have the ability to know where to go next to expand their knowledge further in order to engage with the document effectively? Therefore, it is not adequate for institutions to teach only to one curriculum. The institutions need to provide students with the knowledge to sufficiently define what a curriculum is, and teach pre-service educators/teachers how to implement it. Over the course of their professional lifetime, early childhood professionals are likely to encounter more than one curriculum iteration. Thus, if they do not have the basic understanding of how to interpret and implement a curriculum document in general, then they may well experience difficulties when confronted with a new or revised curriculum document.

This study found that several participants perceived that their teacher education and educator training institutions have continued to predominantly teach developmental content knowledge; while other participants mentioned that theories such as ecological, sociocultural and some post-structural theories had also been covered. From the participants' responses, it would appear that more research should be done regarding how quickly teacher education and educator training courses are modified to capture the reforms. However, the degree by which institutions are teaching pre-service educators and teachers how to engage in change and the shifting privilege associated with different content knowledge that underpins curriculum reforms warrants greater attention. If institutions are not up-to-date with reform knowledge, they may actually be limiting the understanding of early childhood professionals as they enter the field. If early childhood professionals entering the field do not feel that their pre-service courses have prepared them to engage with educational reforms, they may be positioned at a disadvantage and be less inclined to engage meaningfully with these changes.

The divide between the privileges attributed to certain discourses within teacher education and educator training institutions constructs yet another layer of confusion for professionals in the field. Consequently this can be perceived as an effect of power (Foucault, 1980), and also a stressor for engaging in reform (Foray & Hargreaves, 2003; Gomez, 2012). The constraint of privileged content knowledge among institutions was a significant finding from this study. Although privileged content knowledge has assisted some early childhood professionals to deal with the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), others are dealing with this

document with a very limited understanding. For instance, some seem to be focusing upon sociocultural and ecological theories as the two main theories that underpin this document. However, if the next document to be introduced encompasses other theories and approaches, then these professionals will be positioned at a disadvantage again, as they have been programmed to look at only those two theories as “claims of truth” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118), and will therefore have difficulty in engaging with change.

It was also discovered that some institutions were not yet teaching the curriculum frameworks to their students during or following the introduction of these documents. Again, this demonstrates the unavailability of the privileged content knowledge related to certain institutions (Hunt & Wickham, 1994). This ultimately led to professionals entering the field without being aware of the need for change (Hiatt, 2006), and also situating them in a discourse of ‘not knowing’, within an *inexpert expert* subject position. Moreover, participants referred to the ‘stigma’ (or the discourse of ‘not knowing’) concerning the broadness of the new frameworks, and the uncertainty surrounding their ability to understand and translate these documents, as “there is no one right way” (Tayler, 2016, p. 30). Indeed, this ‘stigma’ of ‘not knowing’ filtered through the entire study.

In comparison, two participants acknowledged that the practices of their teacher-educators supported their understanding of the reforms during their Bachelor Degrees as a strategy of power (Foucault, 1980). These practices included taking a mentor position for their students and being *aware* of (Hiatt, 2006) and involved in the reform processes. According to Morrissey and Nolan (2015), mentoring “should be regarded as an integral component of a teacher’s role” (p. 46, sic). The presence of such supportive teacher-educators ultimately reshaped the subject positions and practices of these participants – to *revolutionists* who engaged in SIL practices. Therefore, it is essential for teacher education and educator training institutions and their teacher-educators to be aware of (and potentially involved in) the processes of early childhood reforms. Engagement in such supportive strategies of teacher education can assist in shaping and reshaping the positions and practices of early childhood professionals, to better understand the processes of reform.

Strategies of/for RTOs

Negative discourses and emotive responses were found among participants and their workplace institutions regarding their experiences with some Registered Training Organisations [RTOs]. The reason for this may relate to the increased roll out of so many RTO courses in 2011, to counter the raised qualification requirements within the field – particularly in Victorian long day care (MCEECDYA, 2011).

However, it was portrayed by participants that the early childhood courses offered by some of these RTOs were unsatisfactory in content knowledge and duration, and that students and educators (often with English as a Second Language [ESL]) qualified through these RTOs were considered to be incompetent. The participants acknowledged that these issues had become a major stressor when attempting to engage with the reforms, and as a result, many utilised strategies such as ‘blacklisting’ to avoid students and educators from certain RTOs. This emphasises the additional stress and workload that may accompany the employment of RTO students and educators within early childhood institutions. Conversely, it is essential to deliberate how these strategies might impact RTO-qualified students and educators. It is clear that the subject positions of these students and educators are shaped not only by their educator training, but are also reshaped by the negative discourses available to them in the field. According to ASQA’s (2017) report into ‘unduly short courses’:

For learners, the impact of unduly short training can be significant if their qualifications are not deemed credible by employers and they are judged as not holding the skills and competencies specified in their qualification. Not only is there a financial impact for the learner paying (or having expended their individual training entitlement) for poor-quality training, they may also experience forgone income and long-term loss of confidence (p. 104).

Ultimately, as an effect of power (Foucault, 1980), some RTO-qualified students and educators are being forcibly positioned within a discourse of ‘disempowerment’. However, it is apparent that early childhood professionals in the field perceive some of these students and educators from a deficit perspective only. Therefore, the wider discourses which encompass the government agenda which supports RTOs throughout the sector are not being considered. However, some of the courses offered by these RTOs jeopardise the potential of human capital in Australia, community confidence and value for these qualifications, as well as wasted investment for the government (ASQA, 2017). These negative discourses and subsequent positions of disempowerment add another layer of complexity to the early childhood field. They limit and constrain the conditions of possibility for early childhood professionals to effectively engage in reform processes (Hook, 2007; Parker, 1992). These are significant issues that need to be addressed. Somehow, these negative discourses surrounding certain RTOs need to be dissolved within the field, and more supportive coping strategies for RTO-qualified [and ESL] students and educators are required.

Strategies of in-service teacher education

Various strategies were also recognised by participants concerning accessibility, funding constraints, content knowledge, consistency and delivery of their in-service teacher education from the beginning of the reform period. Of importance here is that similar to the RTOs, negative discourses were detected

among some Professional Development [PD] presenters toward the more experienced educators who were trained prior to the 2009 reforms. These educators generally occupied a *traditionalist* subject position, which is ultimately perceived as less competent in their understanding and engagement of reform initiatives. This perception has been shaped and reshaped by historical tensions between the lowest and highest early childhood qualifications, and the subsequent division between long day care and kindergarten settings and their diverse working conditions (Watson, 2008). The “cultural repertoire” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 118) of this position has also been shaped by tensions between theory and practice (Britzman, 2010), and the shifting status of educators from ‘skilled workers’ to ‘professionals’ (Dyson, 2005). Thus, strategies utilised by some PD presenters have involved the devaluation of prior knowledge and experience of these educators, while pressuring them to conform to change as enforced power relations (Foucault, 1980). The negative discourses and practices ultimately affected the discourses available to them and resulted in a discourse of ‘disempowerment’. However, the discourses and practices (or strategies) of workplace institutions also influence how early childhood professionals engage in change.

Strategies of workplace institutions

This study identified that workplaces responded differently to the implementation of the reforms beginning in 2009, with some only taking them seriously following the realisation that they were a compulsory requirement. This suggests a sluggishness to engage in reforms, as early childhood professionals are waiting for them to become mandatory. Therefore, when reforms are introduced, policymakers need to bring the field with them through consultation. More effort needs to be made so that it is not considered to be an imposition and that professionals do not simply wait for these reforms to become mandatory to start thinking about them. If early childhood professionals only act on mandatory requirements, reforms will always encompass a top-down approach which ultimately leads to many issues, as discussed throughout the previous chapters. It is acknowledged that these recommendations are very difficult to put into practice. However, when changes occur, those accountable for implementing them need to understand where the sector is positioned and actually work collaboratively with early childhood professionals, so they are more involved in the processes of change.

Tensions were discovered within the discourse of workplace institutions regarding the initial introduction of the reforms, and a discourse of ‘not knowing’ amongst educators/teachers and their centre directors/coordinators. These tensions foreground the question of who is responsible for the reform. Is it the role of the educator/teacher or the directors/coordinators? In the case of reform implementation – who is leading

who? Again, somehow this needs to be clarified by policymakers, as this has been illustrated as a major problem throughout this study.

Several strategies were utilised by the workplace institutions of participants which influenced their ability to engage in the reforms. Access to the draft documents prior to their official introduction provided some institutions with additional time to prepare. While other participants implied there was limited direction and support from within their workplace institutions. These limitations may have resulted from institutional discourses available from policymakers and management of some services (Gomez, 2012; Moore & Fink, 2003; Wedell, 2009). Lack of direction was a significant finding that came through strongly from the data. It demonstrates the ‘transfer of responsibility’ present among early childhood professionals within their workplace institutions. More specifically, individuals were not aware of who was in charge of the reform process. This resulted in a discourse of ‘not knowing’, which actually almost paralysed some of the professionals in this study, as they were unsure who was going to lead.

Contributions to theory

Throughout the development of this research study, the Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FECR) model was constructed in correlation with Michel Foucault’s concepts of discourse, knowledge and power (1972, 1980) as an analytical framework for the analysis of early childhood educational reform (see **Figure 10** in Chapter Three). These concepts assisted in unpacking the strategies and positions of participants regarding their engagement with early childhood reform. The different stages of Willig’s (2013) FDA have also made visible the discourses, practices and positions of participants. FDA is recommended as a useful theoretical tool to identify specific discursive practices, and subject positions and to understand how the wider discourses impact what is occurring regarding the positioning of early childhood professionals within their workplace institutions.

The use of two predominant change models within the change literature, namely, the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) and the Organisational Change Model (Hiatt, 2006) provided valuable tools for examining change processes within the early childhood context. These models have fostered the ability to effectively gauge the positioning of participants within the change process (Pendergast et al., 2005) and the elements present during their engagement in this process (Hiatt, 2006). Examining the theory in conjunction with the change literature and models has been significant in the construction and application of the Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FECR) model as an analytical framework for the analysis of early childhood educational reform. Overall, its use has successfully revealed the discursive practices utilised by participants as either effects or strategies of power, the

knowledge privileged within certain discourses, and the subject positions occupied through the available discourses during this process. As a result, utilising the change models as an additional analytical tool, combined with FDA, proved invaluable in understanding the shaping and reshaping of position in the field. As such, the FECR model forms a significant contribution to theory as an innovative analytical framework for analysing the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals within the processes of reform and change.

Contributions to methodology

This study has utilised the timeline [TL] method as a memory recall tool and interactive discussion prompt during qualitative interviews with participants. Although this method was originally applied to clinical studies (Bedi & Redman, 2006; McKenna & Todd, 1997; Sobell, Sobell, Leo, & Cancilla, 1988), it has generally not been used in the field of education. However in this study, it has proven to be an important method, because it has allowed participants to engage in their own thinking and reflect upon their own professional growth over time, which serves as a useful self-reflection tool. It has been used in correlation with the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) to pinpoint the chronological positioning of participants within change processes associated with the reforms. As such, the use of this method in conjunction with the change model in early childhood research has created a clear contribution to methodology.

Contributions to policy

Throughout this study, important literature regarding change has been highlighted, particularly in connection to the consultation, planning and implementation of early childhood reforms and the dissemination of new knowledge for translation to practice. With a clear focus on Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and knowledge, the findings from this study offer policymakers a deeper understanding of the privileged content knowledge within the field, and how this knowledge influences discursive practices, subject positions and discourses available to professionals in the field. It has been acknowledged that the discourses available can prove to be limiting or empowering in relation to individuals. As such, when contemplating reform initiatives, all those involved need to be aware of the kind of discourses present within the field, recognise how these will position individuals, and determine how these discourses can foster empowerment. The knowledge of dominant discourses available, discursive practices used, and the subject positions occupied by professionals can assist policymakers in accommodating these elements within their future reform initiatives. Furthermore, it is essential for policymakers to reconsider the timeframe for future reform implementation, as this can substantially

affect the positionings of individuals within the change process (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006).

Contributions to practice

This study revealed three dominant discourses for coping with change in early childhood education, learning discourses, teacher education discourses and workplace discourses. These discourses have provided contributions to practice through the identification of the discursive practices (or strategies) and subject positions associated with these discourses. The following sections examine these contributions and their impact on the practice of early childhood professionals, as well as on teacher education, educator training, and workplace institutions.

Early childhood professionals

The discourse of learning revealed the presence of self-initiated learning [SIL] and duty-bound learning [DBL] practices. SIL was found to be a supportive coping strategy and sense of empowerment for early childhood professionals as they attempted to enhance their understandings of the reforms that began in 2009. These practices were found in participants who predominantly occupied a *revolutionist* subject position. Comparatively, DBL was perceived as a stressor, as it somewhat hindered engagement in the reform process, and was largely occupied by participants in a *traditionalist* subject position. However, there are some exceptions to this notion. For instance, one participant exhibited some quite assertive self-learning learning [SIL] characteristics, even though she was trained prior to the 2009 reforms. Thus, her value for new knowledge acquisition reshaped her subject position from *traditionalist* to *revolutionist*. From this perspective, it is evident that early childhood professionals can become empowered by repositioning themselves to engage in supportive strategies throughout the processes of reform. The revelation of these practices and positions can become a vital contribution to practice regarding engaging with educational reform. To do this, early childhood professionals would need to be made aware and gain a deeper understanding of their own and their colleagues' positions, practices and attitudes toward learning and change.

Teacher education and educator training institutions

The discourse of teacher education illustrated issues regarding preparation, consistency and learning practices associated with the early childhood reforms. As such, this knowledge can contribute to the future practices of teacher education and educator training institutions, and the way that teacher-educators, educator trainers and PD presenters understand, adopt and translate new reform knowledge to pre-service and in-service early childhood professionals. In particular, these institutions need to be aware

of policy reforms prior to their introduction, and not privilege specific types of content knowledge. Early childhood professionals need to be taught how to interpret new theories and approaches and translate these effectively to their practice. The findings from this research highlighted that participants did not know how to achieve this. Therefore, teacher education, educator training and professional development institutions may benefit from making more tangible links between theory and practice so that early childhood professionals feel empowered to have the ability to implement such changes. Furthermore, teacher-educators, educator trainers and PD presenters need to be aware of the subject positions and learning practices of pre-service and in-service early childhood professionals.

Workplace institutions

Meanwhile, the profound influence that workplace discourse has on reform engagement revealed the need for centre directors and coordinators to recognise the importance of being knowledgeable about reforms, engaging in supportive leadership roles, and actively participating in reform processes and SIL practices. Although early childhood professionals may possess limited power regarding the support available from within the workplace, the understanding of change actually begins and ends with individuals (Hall and Hord, 2011). This means that professionals can influence the support gained from these institutions through their engagement in SIL practices, and by sharing their newfound knowledge and understandings with their colleagues and leaders. In turn, this can influence the discourses available, and reshape subject positions and prompt engagement in supportive practices such as *collegial networking* and *SIL* to construct a *collective understanding* of reforms (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2011; Hiatt, 2006). These contributions provide useful knowledge and strategies for diversely positioned early childhood professionals in the field, the significance of institutional discourses, and preparedness for future reform engagement.

Recommendations for future policy consideration

The findings from this study have informed specific recommendations for future policy directions. Based on the findings of this research study, several important considerations can be made for future policy development initiatives in the context of Australian early childhood education. All those involved in attempting to implement reform need to be aware of the processes involved in change. The change literature illustrates that involvement in the consultation processes of reform initiatives can result in better positioning within the change process through preparedness, motivation and engagement (Fenech et al., 2010; Hall, 2013; Hiatt, 2006). Throughout this research, the ADKAR Organisational Change Model (Hiatt, 2006) has been a useful model for understanding these processes. As such, it is recommended that

this model should be examined and considered as a starting point for policymakers when developing and implementing policy reform initiatives.

It is important to acknowledge that the shifting discourses and new reforms in the early childhood field warrant the need for continuous professional development (PD) opportunities. Albeit, it needs to be recognised that consistency in content knowledge should be an essential consideration. However, funding and financial strain remains a significant issue for workplace institutions – particularly for independent settings. At a policy level, additional funding could be made available for more professionals to attend PD opportunities. Therefore, one recommendation for policy (and also teacher education and educator training institutions) is early childhood professionals need to possess more control over the PDs that they can attend, with adequate funding available for this to occur.

The interconnections between the discourses of learning, teacher education and workplace institutions need to be considered. More specifically, policymakers need to recognise issues of accessibility to and consistency of the new knowledge associated with reform initiatives. Policymakers also need to encourage incentive and engagement for teacher-educators, educator trainers, PD presenters, workplace directors and coordinators, and educators and teachers throughout the consultation processes of upcoming reforms. This can assist in avoiding the presence of subject positions among these professionals that hinder the reform process such as *not responsible* and *inexpert expert*, and encourage the uptake of more engaging positions. These considerations can provide more adequate opportunities for questions, comments and feedback about potential reforms, and how they are to be understood, translated and applied in practice. In turn, early childhood professionals can better understand the *how* and *why* of specific reforms (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009).

To accommodate the cycle within the Educational Change Model (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006), longer transition periods (greater than one year) should be earmarked for the implementation of future reforms. Furthermore, early childhood professionals (educators/teachers and their workplace institutions) should be better equipped with ongoing and consistent knowledge, support and resources throughout the implementation process of reforms. In addition, policymakers need to acknowledge how learning, teacher education and workplace discourses shape and reshape the positions and engagement of early childhood professionals within the reform process. When it comes to change, it needs to be recognised that these discourses influence the discursive practices and subject positions of individuals. For instance, policymakers need to accommodate learning practices, such as self-initiated learning [SIL] and duty-bound learning [DBL], as well as *traditionalist* and *revolutionist* subject positions of early

childhood professionals appointed to implement these reforms. These factors also need to be acknowledged by teacher education and educator training institutions when updating content knowledge of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. By taking these measures, relevant stakeholders such as policymakers and teacher education and educator training institutions can influence the success of future reforms in the sector by offering more accessibility, incentive, consistency, support, time and resources to develop a smoother transition.

Limitations

A limitation of this study relates to issues of generalisability. The small-scale nature of this study and the use of purposeful sampling mean that the results of this study cannot be transferred to other contexts or wider population samples within early childhood education (Bryman, 2012). Hence, because this study involved participants from metropolitan areas within the State of Victoria, means that the findings from this study cannot be generalised to include rural areas, or other states and territories of Australia. As such, further research is required to examine these areas.

The use of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis [FDA] (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) also has its limitations. As discussed in Chapter Four, it has been acknowledged that this method of analysis is limited in its sole emphasis on discourse, and also in its inability to illustrate non-verbal discourses (Willig, 2013). This means that the findings from this study were restricted to what was said, and therefore made it impossible to include unspoken discourses that may have influenced the responses of participants. In line with Foucault's theories, this method avoids the use of a prescriptive and linear approach to analysis. The reason for this has been explained by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017):

...Foucault's ideas are challenging to understand and apply, partly because his elliptical style of writing often avoids explicit formulation, and because his view of discourse is more diffuse than linguistic approaches (p. 110).

As a result, the analysis of each participant's dialogue was different, meaning that no two analyses were comparable.

Directions for further research

The directions for future research are substantial. It is anticipated that the current study paves the way for broader research opportunities for early childhood reform. In light of the amended scope of this study and reduced dataset included within this thesis, analysis could be conducted on the data originally collected from kindergarten and school-based early learning centres [ELCs] groups. Following this analysis, a

cross-examination could be conducted between all three groups (LDC, kindergarten and school-based ELCs). It is anticipated that the findings from this cross-examination may reveal both similarities and disparities between these groups regarding their positioning and engagement in the reforms.

Research into pre-service and in-service teacher education and educator training institutions could be conducted to explore how they receive, prepare for and adopt new reform knowledge, and how they then disseminate this new knowledge to pre-service and in-service early childhood professionals. Additionally, research could be conducted with early childhood policymakers to explore their approaches to policy development, consultation and implementation, and accommodate early childhood professionals and teacher education and educator training institutions throughout this process.

A shifting position of self as a researcher

Throughout the implementation of this study, I have experienced significant growth as a researcher. As discussed in Chapter One, my journey originally began with the influence of my personal motives and professional experiences which held a strong connection to my topic. As I reflect upon this journey, I have come to recognise that these motives and professional experiences have constructed my own subject position and discursive practices within the discourses that have been available to me over time. Similar to the findings from this study, these discourses have encompassed both traditional and contemporary early childhood discourses, and at times, a discourse of ‘not knowing’. As I progressed, my subject position was shaped and reshaped from *traditionalist* to *revolutionist*. This has been evident through my engagement in *self-initiated learning* [SIL] practices and my *desire* to initiate change in the early childhood field (Hiatt, 2006). My adoption of a post-structuralist paradigm has also influenced my own subject position as a researcher, as its lens allowed me to perceive the subjectivity of language, knowledge and meaning and their ever-changing representations at historical periods in time (Mac Naughton et al., 2010).

My engagement with Foucault’s concepts of discourse, power and knowledge (1972, 1980) and the analytical concepts of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Willig, 2013) have compelled me to re-question the way I was looking at the field. In particular, these concepts and ideas allowed me to see broader and enmeshed discourses at play, and how they continue to shape and reshape the diverse and often overlapping subject positions of early childhood professionals throughout the field. As an early career researcher, I will continue to learn and grow in my understanding and application of these concepts and ideas, and hope that in turn, these understandings will influence my

subjective position and discursive practices as a meaningful and more experienced researcher in the field of early childhood education.

Conclusion

From a post-structuralist perspective, early childhood reform can be understood as a complex and fluid structure enmeshed with shifting discourses, discursive practices, subject positions and power relations. This research has provided an insight into the complex nature of early childhood reform and the way in which early childhood professionals are coping with these changes in the Victorian long day care sector. It has been recognised that early childhood professionals need to understand their positions within the ever-changing context of the early childhood field; and in particular, the shifting discourses, and the influences that research, politics and society have on its evolution. It is also acknowledged that subjective experiences, theoretical and pedagogical content knowledge and discourses underpinning pre-service and in-service teacher education continuously shape and reshape the positions (and positionings) of early childhood professionals in the field. Moreover, there is a necessity for all those involved to understand the key concepts of educational change, and the presence of available discourses, their associated discursive practices and subject positions, and emotive responses and tensions which these discourses can generate. It is anticipated that the findings from this study will offer valuable contributions to the understanding of qualitative research on reform development, as well as significant knowledge and practices for reform implementation in the field of early childhood education.

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Appendix A: Monash University ethics approval



Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: CF15/2312 - 2015000933

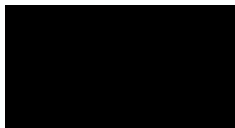
Project Title: Exploring how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood educators in the field

Chief Investigator: Dr Corine Rivalland

Approved: **From:** 22 June 2015 **To:** 22 June 2020

Terms of approval - Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Dr Hilary Monk, Ms Lauren Armstrong

Monash University, Room 111, Chancellery Building E
24 Sports Walk, Clayton Campus, Wellington Rd
Clayton VIC 3800, Australia
Telephone: +61 3 9905 5490 Facsimile: +61 3 9905 3831
Email: muhrec@monash.edu <http://intranet.monash.edu.au/researchadmin/human/index.php>
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

Appendix B: Department of Education and Training ethics approval



Department of
Education & Training

Strategy & Review Group

2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
Telephone: +61 3 9637 2000
DX 210083
GPO Box 4367
Melbourne, Victoria 3001

2015_002780

Ms Lauren Armstrong
Monash University
Building A, Office A1.06
McMahons Road
FRANKSTON 3199

Dear Ms Armstrong

Thank you for your application of 18 June 2015 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian early childhood settings titled *Exploring how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood educators in the field*.

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.



Appendix C: Explanatory statement



EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

(Early Childhood Professionals)

Project: 'Exploring how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in the field'

Dr. Corine Rivalland
Department of Education
Phone: [REDACTED]
email: [REDACTED]

Lauren Armstrong
Higher Degrees Research Student
Phone: [REDACTED]
email: [REDACTED]

This information sheet is for you to keep.

My name is Lauren Armstrong and I am conducting a research project with Dr. Corine Rivalland and Dr. Hilary Monk, early childhood lecturers and course advisors in the Department of Education (Early Childhood) at Monash University. I am currently working towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, which means that I will be writing a thesis, which is the equivalent of several journal articles.

I have worked collaboratively with early childhood professionals within a variety of contexts such as early learning centres and kindergartens and am aware of the recent reforms and reviews currently impacting the early childhood field. It has now been several years since the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework, Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, National Quality Framework and subsequent reviews which highlight the application of diverse perspectives regarding recent changes in the field of early childhood education. Prior research indicates that sufficient support, time, training and resources are required to implement meaningful and sustained change. However, more research is needed to explore how early childhood professionals are impacted by educational change such as those involved in the recent early childhood reforms.

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researcher via the phone numbers or email address listed above.

Why were you chosen for this research?

I am inviting those who are currently working as early childhood professionals at various settings in the southeast region of Victoria to participate in this research. As such, I am locating early childhood settings from this region via public domain/internet and then contacting these early childhood settings via telephone and/or in person to identify professionals who may be interesting in participating in this study. Specifically, I am seeking a variety of Diploma and Bachelor qualified educators who are currently working in Long Day Care settings. I am particularly interested in educators who have obtained their qualifications either prior to, or following 2009 – at the time of the first recent reforms.

The aim/purpose of the research

The purpose of this research study is to examine the engagement and positioning of early childhood professionals within the processes of educational change, and how their pre-service training and professional development opportunities have influenced these processes.

The research questions will focus on the perceptions and experiences of early childhood professionals regarding the recent early childhood reforms. These questions will relate to the timing of reform transitions, and professionals' emotive responses and individual processes of understanding these reforms.

Possible benefits

It is anticipated that this research will benefit early childhood professionals who are involved in this study. This study will provide an opportunity for professionals to engage in meaningful dialogue, reflection and critical analysis regarding their own perceptions and experiences of change throughout the recent early childhood reforms. The research will encourage educators to examine how their pre-service education and subsequent professional development opportunities have impacted on their own preparedness to engage in processes of change and reform. It is hoped that this study will also assist providers of pre-service and professional development programs in facilitating adequate compatibility measures with recent reforms. Furthermore, it is predicted that this research will provide insight for early childhood policy-makers regarding the effectiveness of reform development and implementation.

What does the research involve?

If you choose to participate in this research, you will be invited to partake in a single semi-structured, 90-minute, audio-recorded interview with me at a time and location that is convenient for you. At the time of the interview, you will be invited to provide a list of your previous professional development opportunities that you have engaged in since the 2009 reforms. These lists will facilitate dialogue regarding the content, timing, duration, delivery methods and perceived effectiveness of these professional development opportunities. Furthermore, the timing of these professional development opportunities will be recorded on an interactive timeline which will be constructed during the interview using a large sheet of paper and coloured markers. The questions posed will relate to the timing of reform transitions, as well as your emotive responses, level of engagement and understanding of these reforms.

The focus interview question

"Since the early childhood reforms beginning in 2009, how have educational reform discourses shaped and reshaped your positioning and engagement in the field?" Participants will be invited to elaborate on their perceptions and experiences regarding this question.

Inconvenience/discomfort

There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects involved in this research study; however, minimal levels of inconvenience or discomfort are expected for participants. Feelings of discomfort may arise throughout the interview process, particularly regarding participants' emotive responses to recent reforms. Consequently, participants may choose to avoid answering particular questions or withdraw from the interview at any time.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

Although this digital copy of the Consent Form has been sent to participants via email upon acceptance to participate in this study, a hard copy will also be provided prior to the commencement of the interview for

participants to sign. This process encompasses the participants' right to withdraw from further participation at any stage. Implications of withdrawal may include either verbal or written methods. Opportunity will also be provided for participants to withdraw data within a specific timeframe. This refers to the *member checking* procedure, whereby a copy of the interview transcription and documentation are sent to participants to check the accuracy of data. If participants are not content with data obtained during the interview stage of this study, they may choose to withdraw specific data via verbal or written request. If you choose to volunteer for this study, please return the attached informed Consent Form according to its instructions and I will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient interview time and location.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of participants will be protected throughout this study by using pseudonyms for participants and their early childhood settings, as well as their pre-service and professional development providers. The use of pseudonyms will also be utilised in further publications which utilise this data, which may include the final thesis, journal articles, conference presentations, books and chapters.

Storage and use of data

Data obtained from participants involved in this study will be stored at the private residence of the researcher. Digital data will be password-protected and will only be accessible by the researcher and Monash supervisors. This data will remain the Intellectual Property of the researcher and will be preserved for a minimum period of 5 years following the publication of the final thesis. The transcriptions of the interviews will be included in the appendix of the final thesis. As outlined above, the findings from this research will be published within the final thesis, as well as possible journal articles, books, chapters and conference presentations. If the data pertaining to this research is no longer required, careful disposal will be conducted. Digital data will be permanently deleted from the researcher and supervisor's hard-drives and email attachments, while physical data will be shredded or incinerated.

Results

The results of this study will be available following the final thesis publication through Monash University in 2017. If participants wish to obtain a digital copy of this research, they can contact the researcher via the details listed above.

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Lauren Armstrong

Appendix D: Consent form



MONASH University

CONSENT FORM

(Early Childhood Professionals)

Project: 'Exploring how educational reform discourses shape and reshape the positioning and engagement of early childhood professionals in the field'

Dr. Corine Rivalland
Department of Education
Phone: [REDACTED]
email: [REDACTED]

Lauren Armstrong
Higher Degrees Research Student
Phone: [REDACTED]
email: [REDACTED]

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
Taking part in an individual interview with the chief investigator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audio recording during the interview process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provision of a list regarding previous professional development opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in a timeline construction during the interview process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The data that I provide during this research may be used by Lauren Armstrong in future research projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

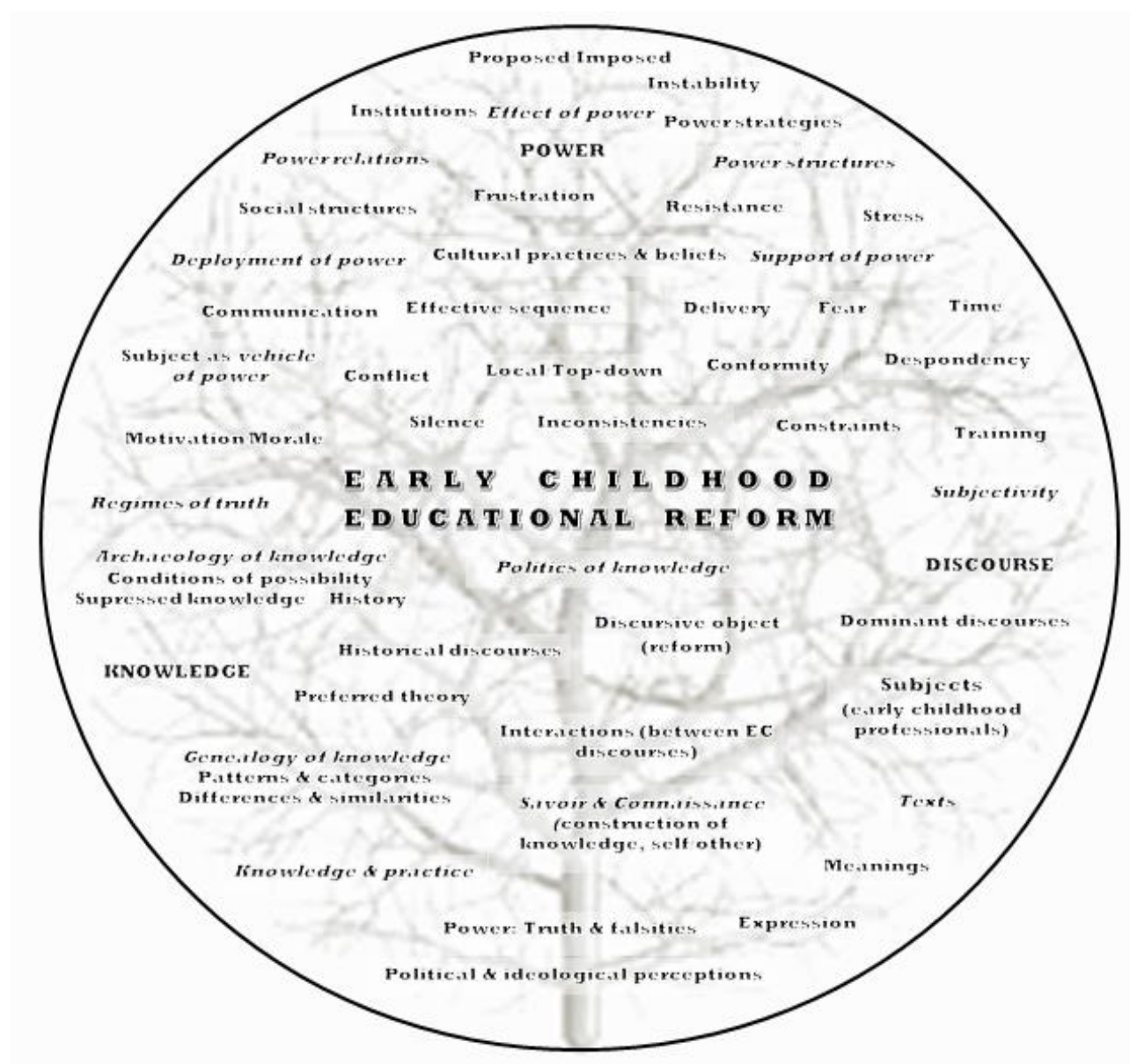
Name of Participant _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Qualitative, semi-structured interview schedule

Interview Schedule
<p>Questions relating to pre-service training:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did you obtain your pre-service training? 2. What year did you complete your pre-service training? 3. What theories and practices did your pre-service training include? 4. How do these theories and practices still apply to, or differ from your current context? 5. Do you think this training has prepared you for engaging with the recent reforms? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please elaborate.
<p>Questions relating to transitions and changes to recent reforms (EYLF, VEYLDF, NQF and Reviews):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When did you first become aware of the EYLF? 2. When did your workplace first introduce the EYLF? 3. What preparation did you have for this transition? Was this adequate? 4. How did the EYLF's theories and practices apply to / differ from your pre-service training and previous practice? 5. When did you first feel comfortable applying this framework to your practice? <p>*****</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. When did you first become aware of the VEYLDF? 7. When did your workplace first introduce the VEYLDF? 8. What preparation did you have for this transition? Was this adequate? 9. How did the VEYLDF's theories and practices apply to / differ from your pre-service training and previous practice? 10. When did you first feel comfortable applying this framework to your practice? <p>*****</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. When did you first become aware of the NQF? 12. When did your workplace first introduce the NQF? 13. What preparation did you have for this transition? Was this adequate? 14. How did the NQF's theories and practices apply to / differ from your pre-service training and previous practice? 15. When did you first feel comfortable applying this framework to your practice? 16. How do you feel about the recent NQF and early childhood reviews, and changes to ratios? 17. What are your thoughts about the new VIT registration requirements? 18. How do you feel about the additional roles of educational leader and nominated supervisor?
<p>Questions relating to professional development opportunities (for each item on PD List):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. What PD opportunities have you engaged in to support your transition to recent reforms? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss topic, year of completion, duration, and delivery methods. 20. Who from your workplace participated in this PD? – Was this compulsory? 21. Who recommended participation in this particular PD? – Why? 22. What theories and practices did this PD include? 23. How do these theories and practices apply to, or differ from your current context? 24. Do you think this PD enhanced your ability to engage with the recent reforms? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please elaborate.

Appendix F: The Foucauldian Early Childhood Reform (FECR) model, constructed as an analytical framework for the analysis of early childhood educational reform

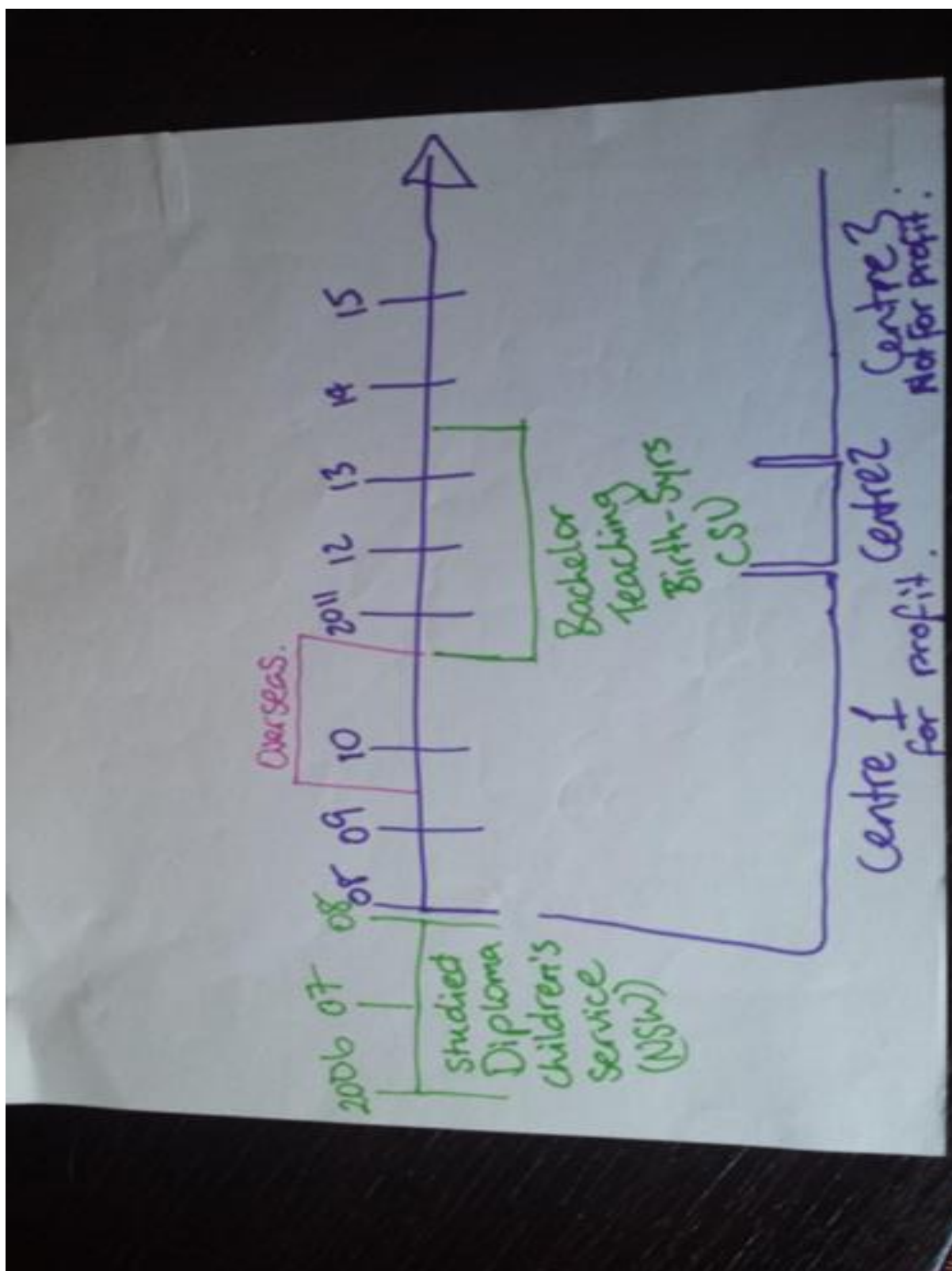


Appendix G: Sample from Professional Development (PD) list data

Attention Participants:
Please list your professional development opportunities that were associated with the recent early childhood reforms. The names of organisations will be replaced with pseudonyms for the purpose of the research study. Please bring this list with you to your scheduled interview. Thank you.

Professional Development Opportunities (associated with recent early childhood reforms)			
Organisation (Who ran the PD?)	Content (What was the topic?)	Delivery Method (Online/workshop/seminar?)	Date/Year & Duration (Hours/weeks?)
- An assessment & rating officer	- Documentation planning	Meeting with all staff members & centre	3 Feb 2015 - 2 hrs.
Anthony Seaman	'More than just a job'	Seminar	26/2/2015 2-3 hrs
Gowrie	Managing Challenging Behaviours	Seminar	10/9/2007 2 hrs.
Gowrie	Implementation of Forensic	Seminar	22/4/2010
Childcare centres association of vic.	EYLF	Seminar	19/13/7/2010
Anthony Seaman	'Educational leader'	Seminar	March 2013
Anthony Seaman	- Introducing EYLF	Seminar	2010
Emergent curriculum Chisholm	- test to Emergent curriculum communicating the curriculum.	Seminar	2009
Communicating the Gowrie		Seminar	14/5/14

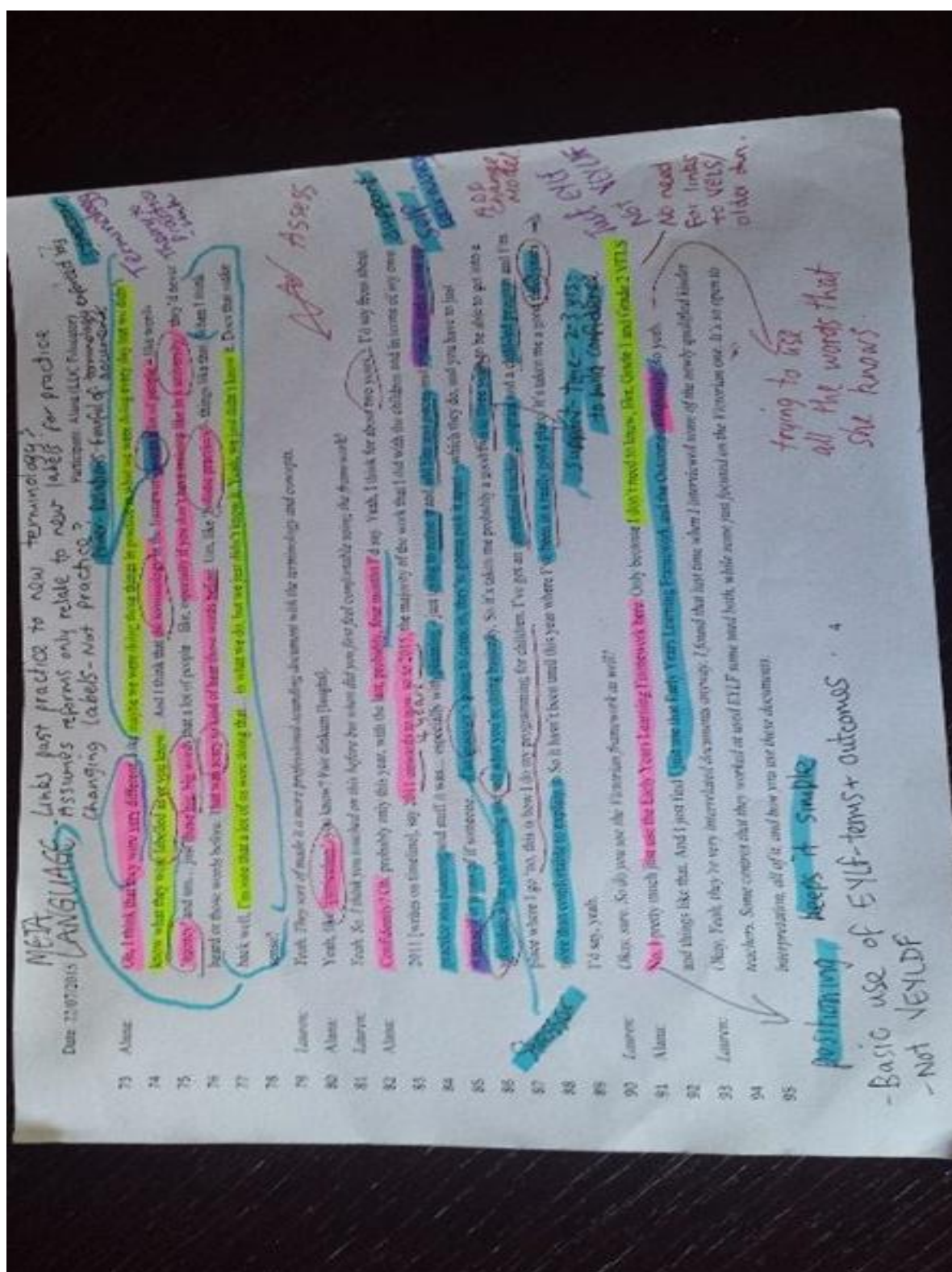
Appendix H: Sample from interactive timeline data



Appendix I: Sample from interview transcript data

Date: 08/09/2015	Participant: Aileen (Director – LDC)
1 Lauren:	Analytically framed interview questions: Utilising Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
2	<i>Just appreciate your time [laughs]. Um so would you be able to just, um for the record just say what your current role is here?</i>
3 Aileen:	Yep, so I'm the coordinator of [Monash Children Centre].
4 Lauren:	<i>Yep lovely and how long have you been in that role for?</i>
5 Aileen:	I have been here since January 2008. So seven years, seven and a half years here.
6 Lauren:	<i>Yeah, that's great. Um so what's your sort of professional um background in regards to how long have you been in early childhood?</i>
7 Aileen:	So I started as an untrained assistant and then I did my Certificate Three.... followed by my Diploma, my Advanced Diploma and then my
8	Bachelor. So I've gone through all the rigmarole of all the courses... um, and in the same way worked through as an untrained assistant to a
9	trained assistant, to a leader of a room. I then was occupational health and safety rep for the centre, second in charge and a coordinator... to
10	the private centre and then I've come here as a coordinator.
11 Lauren:	<i>Okay. Fantastic. Um so with your teacher education, do you remember roughly what year you started?</i>
12 Aileen:	Well, I finished my Diploma in 2001 and that was a two and a half year course. Oh no, it was three and a half year course, part time.
13 Lauren:	<i>Okay yep, yep. I did the same thing for that one, yeah.</i>
14 Aileen:	Yeah, it was the first year that they kind of cut it back six months so it was a three and a half year. And my Bachelor I finished in 2011.
15 Lauren:	<i>Yep okay, fantastic. So with the Diploma, do you recall what sort of theories they were teaching at the time?</i>
16 Aileen:	Just really basic like, your Piaget, your Erikson, did a bit of Vygotsky um, we talked a little bit about Howard Gardner's multiple
17	intelligences. And that was probably about all that stuck to me. There might have been more... but that's all that really I remember. And we
18	also talked about the philosophy styles as well, so like your Reggio, your Steiner, your Montessori... they were touched on as well.
19 Lauren:	<i>Yep. Fantastic and what sorts of theories were being taught at that level?</i>
20 Aileen:	Well it depended on each different subject, so Foucault was looked at a lot, within the leadership component, um and again it was still pretty
21	much – the Piaget and Erikson weren't really there but it was your Howard Gardner, your Vygotsky. Yeah I think it was more – it wasn't
22	really taught it was more that there were lots of options and you used what fitted with the assignments that you use and I guess I probably
23	stuck to what I felt comfortable with, knowing Vygotsky and Gardner quite well, I tended to use them more.

Appendix J: Sample from discourse analysis data



Appendix K: Sample from Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) data

TRANSCRIPT QUOTATIONS	What stands out?	Emerging Discursive Constructions	Question One
"...it was a lot about Piaget-type theories" (line 32-33); "very structured planning..." (line 34); "...you planned based on children's deficits basically - not on their strengths and interest" (line 35-36)	Piaget-type theories?	Privileged content knowledge of institution at the time	Sees prior developmental deficit-based planning as stressor - positioned by past institution
"Just those big words that a lot of people - like, especially if you don't have training like in a university - they'd never heard or those words before. That was scary to kind of hear those words before" (line 75-76).	Links new terminology to university-level training	Refers to "big words" within document, often refers to the perspectives of others	Positions self above Diploma educators; Links understanding discourse/content knowledge of document to university-level training
<i>Was training adequate?</i> "No. No [laughs]" (line 62).	Bhute, instantaneous response	So for this person, the PD has not helped her because it's been confusing.	Seems that supportive coping strategies from the intentions of the service's position become stressors
"...in terms of if someone... if an assessor's going to come in, they're gonna pick it apart - which they do, and you have to just articulate what you're doing and sell what you're doing basically" (line 85-87).	Links importance of understanding to assessment	Power: Discourse of threat; Discourse of seeing that the assessors are not there to help them, but coming to pick their work apart, and to make it an unpleasant experience	Identifies assessment process as stressor - views assessor as being in position of power; position of defence
"And I just find I just use that Early Years Learning Framework and the Outcomes religiously, so yeah" (line 92).	Expresses dominant use of EYLF only	Can see that this person's trajectory is not smooth. Although now she says that she is comfortable - but what is making her comfortable is that she is not trying to understand the curriculum. She is just trying to "religiously" keep to the Outcomes.	Supportive coping strategy - finds support in following the EYLF Outcomes in a prescriptive manner - position of confidence as an 'in-expert expert'
"I just pretty much use the outcomes and, you know, some big words from in there [the EYLF] when I'm writing my observations or learning stories. I always go to that, yeah" (line 96-97).	Refers to use of terminology in documentation	Using the Curriculum as a book. And using the words in the curriculum to make sense of what she is doing.	Supportive coping strategy - uses terminology as an add-on in documentation - position of 'doing without knowing'