Teachers in Early Education Project (TEE)

Newsletter

Issue 1 – August 2024

Introduction

Welcome to our first newsletter of the Teachers in Early Education (TEE) study. The TEE project is a four-year longitudinal study (2024-2027) funded by the Australian Research Council (DP240100249) to address the chronic shortage of early childhood teachers (ECTs) in Australia.

This newsletter will come to you twice a year, providing you with insights and updates about the study.

About TEE

The TEE project has been developed to generate new knowledge about, and innovative approaches to address, longstanding ECT supply and quality issues in early childhood education.

Our project is guided by the overarching research question:

How can the supply of a quality ECT workforce in Australia be developed and maintained?

The project will ascertain the career intentions and lived trajectories of ECTs from degree commencement to early career. It will also produce new knowledge about the personal and contextual factors that individually and interactionally support or constrain the recruitment, preparation, retention, and wellbeing of quality ECTs.

The centerpiece of the TEE study is the co-design an innovative tool — the TEE tool — to assess ECT quality in context, thereby advancing current understandings about ECT quality and providing a world-first measure of teaching quality in early education. We look forward to generating new insights into ECT supply and quality to progress national workforce, early years, initial teacher education, and teacher registration policy initiatives.

TEE includes four components
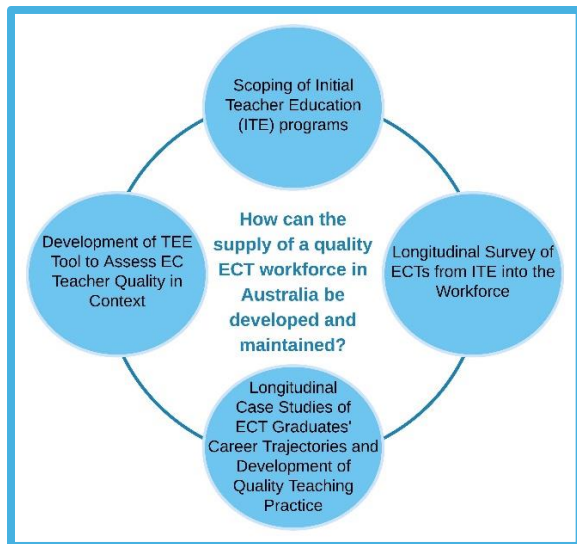
Our team

The TEE team includes researchers from seven universities. Associate Professor Marianne Fenech, Professor Sandie Wong, Associate Professor Megan Gibson, Professor Susanne Garvis, Associate Professor Wendy Boyd, Dr Tracy Durksen, and Professor Magdalena Janus.

Our TEE Project Manager is Katie Wright. Our Research Assistants are Dr. Li Kan, Ranni Merli Safitri and Kyle Smith.

Ashley Zhou is our TEE Project Doctoral student, with her PhD project f: **From diplomas to degrees: Investigating the efficacy of upskilling to build the supply and quality of Australia's early childhood teacher workforce.**

In this first newsletter we put a spotlight on our TEE Lead Investigator:

Associate Professor Marianne Fenech

I am interested in the governing of early childhood services, ITE   and teachers, and the impact this governance has on quality, accessible, and inclusive early childhood education (ECE). I utilise systems approaches, critical policy sociology, and social justice theory to analyse the effects government architectures (e.g., regulation, marketisation, workforce development and teacher registration) and service approaches to leadership and management have on quality ECE, particularly for families experiencing adversity. My teaching and research focus on ECE policy; leadership and management in early childhood contexts; partnering with families on the margins; and professional communication. I have strong established links with the early childhood sector and am a strong advocate for children and the early childhood teaching profession. I have led submissions to federal government departments on early childhood policy and am Co-Chair of the Australian Early Childhood Teacher Education Network and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association 'Professionalism in ECEC' special interest group. In my spare time you'll find me cooking up a storm; trying to improve my photography skills; reading 19th century novels; taking my cheeky Welsh Terrier on outings; enjoying the beach; or watching my Wests Tigers football team trying to win

a game. watching my Wests Tigers football team trying to win a game.

TEE in 2024

Scoping ITE

Over the past months we have been examining ACECQA-approved EC ITE programs in Australia. It has been fascinating to see the variations in course length, titles, and different

components. Later this year we will interview program or course coordinators to gain their perspectives on program features that support or constrain ECT graduate quality and supply.

Survey

So far students in their first or final year from 45 initial teacher education programs across Australia have been invited to participate in our project. We received survey responses from 587 participants in 2023 - with 77 choosing to complete a follow-up survey this year. An additional 765 new participants joined the project by completing our survey in 2024.

One of the top reasons for enrolling in their program was: I have a passion for teaching. One of the top reasons for choosing their university was that they "Offered the program I wanted" (e.g., birth to five, birth to eight, or birth to twelve focus), with almost half of all participants currently enrolled in a birth to five focused program. Most of our participants (over 85%) intend to teach children aged birth to five. Want to know more? Stay tuned for our data summaries!

Some of the TEE Team enjoyed lunch during a research planning day at UNSW (June, 2024).

TEE tool

Building on preliminary work undertaken last year with a group of early childhood expert stakeholders, this year we are developing a beta prototype of the TEE tool. We plan to discuss and refine the prototype with input from our expert

stakeholders and advisory group, so that it will be ready for piloting with ECT students and graduates next year. To inform this work we are undertaking a systematic review of over 1200 publications to ensure that our conceptualisation of early childhood teacher/teaching quality is empirically rigorous. As the first tool world-wide designed to assess ECT quality with respect to the context in which they

are working, we are excited by the possibilities the Tool will afford.

Meetings and presentations

Marianne presented an overview of the project background, aims, and methodology to the Victorian Early Childhood Research Consortium in May.

Susie, Wendy and Megan will present findings from their scoping work, with Tracy reporting on preliminary survey findings, at the September **Early Childhood Workforce Strategy Reference Group** and the **Australian Early Childhood Teacher Education Network** meetings.

Marianne will promote the TEE project and share work undertaken to date at the **2024 European Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference** Brighton, September 3-6, 2024.

Marianne, Tracy, Sandie and Ranni will present TEE Project survey data at the **Australian Association for Research in Education Conference** at Macquarie University, December 1-5, 2024.

Our publications to date

Fenech, M., Wong, S., Boyd, W., Gibson, M., Watt, H., & Richardson, P.
(2022). Attracting, retaining, and sustaining early childhood teachers: an ecological conceptualisation of workforce issues and future research directions. T*he Australian Educational Researcher 49,* 1–19.
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13384-020-00424-6

2023 and 2024 TEE Project Survey gift card winners

Congratulations to the TEE Project survey participants who won the $100 Gift Cards. Sunita Rani Jarewal, Shammi Akter, Sanju Bajracharya, Shani De Paoli, Carla Young, Vanessa Svagna, Wenyu Zhang, Bridie Dive, Renee Fitzell, Hoosena Harianawala, Michele Chan, Xiu Yang (Sue), and Ika Suparmiyati.

International Advisory group

The project's International Advisory Group comprises experts from around the world who will provide feedback and reflect on the TEE project and support the international dissemination of high-quality research. The group consists of a wide range of international experts with expertise in early childhood initial teacher education, early childhood teacher quality, and early childhood teacher workforce expertise. Members of the International Advisory Group are: Professor Magdalena Janus (Canada) (PI), Professor Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (Sweden), Professor Heidi Harju Luukkainen (Finland), Professor Marcy Whitebook (United States), Professor Carmen Dalli (New Zealand), Professor

Robert Klassen (UK), Dr Mary Moloney (Ireland), A/Professor Laura Doan (Canada), Professor Iram Siraj (UK), and Dr. Alfredo Bautista (Hong Kong).

Email the TEE Project team with any feedback, comments, or questions, or if you would like to receive project updates:

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