

Teachers in Early
Education Project (TEE)

Newsletter

Issue 2 – March 2025

[https://teachers-in-early-
education.org.au](https://teachers-in-early-education.org.au)



Introduction

Welcome to our second 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 support the supply of a quality early childhood teacher (ECT) workforce in Australia. This newsletter will come to you twice a year, providing you with insights and updates about the study.

We are profiling two TEE members.

First up is:

Doctoral student Ms Ashley Zhou

Ashley's PhD is titled, ***'From diplomas to degrees: Investigating the efficacy of upskilling to build the supply and quality of Australia's early childhood teacher workforce'***. She is a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student at The University of Sydney, supervised by Professor Marianne Fenech (TEE Project Lead Investigator) and Dr Tina Stratigos. Ashley is a passionate early childhood teacher and educational leader, having worked across various service types in

the birth to five years sector since 2018. Throughout her leadership journey, she has found joy out of inspiring and mentoring educators and teachers to grow in all areas of their practice. She believes that to nurture lifelong learners, we too must embody this commitment to continuous growth and therefore, professional learning and development is a valued element of my leadership. After working with many diploma-qualified educators who intend or have upskilled to an early childhood teacher qualification, her doctoral work is focused on the upskilling of diploma-qualified educators.

Preliminary national survey findings

459 diploma-qualified educators who completed the Wave 1 TEE survey in 2023 and 2024. These respondents are:

- highly experienced - 41.4% of respondents have more than 10 years' professional experience;
- working/worked in a variety of leadership roles such as centre director (20.5%), room leader (64.7%), nominated supervisor (29%), educational leader (35.1%), and 25.9% have indicated that they are already working as an early childhood teacher;
- mostly enrolled in an undergraduate early childhood only program – 73.5% of respondents are either enrolled in Bachelor of



Ms Ashley Zhou

- predominantly studying external, online – 71.9% external, 11.1% internal, 17% combination
- planning to work as a teacher (90.8%). Of these,

Education (Early Childhood) or Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood);	92.1% indicated teaching as their first career choice, and of these 82% indicated teaching birth-5 years as their first career choice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> majority domestic students – 95.4% are enrolled as domestic students; mostly enrolled in Birth-5 years program – 68.8% in Birth-5 years, 16.8% in Birth-8 years, 14.4% in Birth-12 years; and 	More information on the extracted survey data for diploma-qualified educators will be available in an upcoming publication.

Calling diploma survey respondents to participate in case studies

Recruitment for case studies

This phase of the study aims to recruit 10 case study participants to investigate what influences diploma-qualified educators to pursue an ECT degree qualification; barriers and facilitators to the completion of an ECT degree or career as an ECT; and outcomes of upskilling in terms of educators' practice quality, career plans, and professionalism. If you are a diploma-qualified educator who completed a Wave 1 survey in 2023 or 2024 and are interested in participating, contact us at: teachers-in-early-education@sydney.edu.au

Key informants

The distinction between degree-qualified early childhood teachers and diploma-qualified educators is a significant gap in research and practice. To further understand what the differences are between what early childhood teachers and diploma-qualified educators do, and how they do it we will be conducting a qualitative content analysis of modern awards, enterprise agreements, and job descriptions to contextualise the roles, responsibilities and working conditions

of diploma-qualified educators compared to early childhood teachers. To supplement the content analysis, interviews with key informants who hold high

status and expertise within the sector (such as the chief executive officer of a large early childhood service provider; union representative; peak body CEO) will be invited to participate in interviews to explore their perceptions of the differences between these two roles.

Second TEE profile:

CI Associate Professor Megan Gibson

An Associate Professor in the School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education at Queensland University of Technology, [Megan Gibson](#) a highly experienced educator and respected researcher on early childhood workforce matters. Megan's award-winning doctoral research examined the professional identities of early childhood educators, providing strong foundations for her ongoing program of research into attracting, preparing and sustaining early childhood educators. As Chief Investigator on a five-year ARC-LP *Early Childhood Educations a Work: a multi-level investigation* (2027-2023) Megan led Phase 2 Focus groups and was lead author on the final project report for stakeholders. Megan leads industry co-designed Continuing Program Education (CPE), each including research and evaluation to measure program impact and success (e.g., From the Ground Up leadership program with Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) and Victorian Educational Leadership Program (VELP) with the Department of Education, Victoria). Megan is proudly a Non-Executive Director on the Board of the Creche and Kindergarten Association Qld and is currently Deputy Chair.



Megan at [Abba the Museum](#) (with
'the' cat dress)

On the TEE research project Megan works closely with Professor Susie Garvis and Professor Wendy Boyd on Component 1: Scoping of early childhood initial teacher education (ITE) programs and Component 4: Longitudinal case studies of ECT graduates' career trajectories and development of quality teaching practice.

Megan is proudly a mum to two gorgeous young people, and passionate (obsessed) with dogs! In retirement she plans to study political science and expand her love of black labradors, whilst playing ABBA on repeat 😊

TEE team CI News – Promotions to Professor

The TEE team are thrilled to share that two of our chief investigators (CIs) have been promoted to Professor. Our trusty Lead CI Marianne Fenech, University of Sydney, was deservedly promoted to Professor, acknowledged for her stellar profile, nationally and internationally, as an expert in early childhood governance and quality in early childhood teacher education. Congratulations Professor Marianne Fenech 😊

CI Wendy Boyd was promoted to Professor at Southern Cross University, testament to her standing in the profession and immense work in higher education, especially early childhood teacher education - nationally and internationally.

Congratulations to Professor Wendy Boyd 😊

TEE Project updates: Survey

Our longitudinal TEE surveys are tracking first and final year students over time, with data about respondents' career trajectories and indicators of teacher quality being collected.

Given ongoing changes in early childhood initial teacher education program offerings around the country, we will be administering our third Wave 1 survey in March. We will also be following up with our continuing 2023 and 2024 respondents in March with respective Wave 3 and Wave 2 surveys. These surveys are tracking students through their degree (including degree changes), and graduates' career paths.

Analysis of survey data is focusing on:

- who enrolls in early childhood (birth-5), or dual early childhood/primary (birth-8, or b-12) programs;
- the upskilling of diploma-qualified educators as a strategy to support the supply of a quality ECT workforce;
- whether supply and teacher quality indicators are associated with particular program features; and
- the job resources of final year students.

Our results will be shared with politicians and policy makers to inform the development of Australia's ten-year national [Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy](#) and implementation of recommendations from the Productivity Commission's [A Path to Universal Early Childhood Education and Care Inquiry](#).

Thank you to all students and graduates who have completed a Wave 1 TEE survey. We will be contacting those who expressed interest in participating further in our study with an invitation to complete a follow up survey. All respondents who do will receive a \$25 gift card.

TEE tool update

Work on the development of a tool intended to assess early childhood teacher quality relative to the context in which they are working is continuing. To ensure that the conceptualisation of teacher quality from which the tool will be developed is robust, we have undertaken a systematic review of 1149 papers that discussed aspects of early childhood teacher quality, such as the attributes, knowledge, and understanding required for quality teaching; pedagogical and professional practices that exemplify quality; external factors that impact on teacher quality; and ways that teaching quality has been assessed. Thirty one of these papers explicitly conceptualised early childhood teacher quality, and were thematically analysed. This work has refined the emerging conceptual model developed in 2024, following consultation with our TEE tool expert stakeholder research participants.



(Left to right) CI Professor Sandie Wong, Partner Investigator Professor Magdalena Janus visiting

Sandie, Tracy, and Marianne recently had a planning day with the project's international partner investigator, Professor Magdalena Janus, to commence work on the operationalisation of our refined model into an alpha TEE tool prototype, to be developed and piloted later this year.

*from McMaster University, Canada, CI Dr Tracy
Durksen and CI Professor Marianne Fenech*

Scoping update

TEE CIs Susie, Wendy and Megan have been working collaboratively to progress the Component 1, Scoping of early childhood initial teacher education (ITE) programs. To date we have undertaken a web-based content analysis of all EC ITE programs in Australia and valued meeting with colleagues at ACECQA. With ethics approval in place, in coming weeks we will be sending surveys and then conducting interviews with course co-ordinators of each ITE program, to gather confirmatory and further in-depth data about: contextual influences on their institution's program design and delivery; enrolment numbers and student demographics; and what knowledge and skills these specialist EC academics consider fundamental to a quality ECT.

Case studies update

We are excited to commence the longitudinal case studies later in 2025, with the first wave of data collection from September. Megan and Wendy will work closely on this component of the TEE study which will see 25 ECTs (preservice and graduate teachers) participate, drawn on from the longitudinal survey participants. The case studies will use an innovative research approach, life history narrative (Goodson, 2012), to examine the trajectories of preservice and graduate teachers. Significantly, the TEE tool prototype (Component 2) will be tested with case study participants.

International Advisory Group

The International Advisory Group group has been established, are are meeting in March. See the group's bios and photos on the [TEE website](#).

International TEE presentations 2024: Susie (Norway, Sweden) and Megan (Denmark, Sweden)

In December, CI Professor Susie Garvis visited Nord University in Bodø as a visiting scholar (Northern Norway) and also had a day visit to Stockholm University (Sweden). During this time, she presented on the “Conditions that support children’s learning” drawing on her program of research from the TEE study. In Norway, Susie visited a local kindergarten and school and talked to many researchers around early childhood teacher education. She also had many in-depth discussions with PhD students and other researchers across the university.



*Susie in Bodø, Norway in December
2024*



TEE CI Associate Professor Megan Gibson loving the snow at Stockholm University (especially as there was a heatwave back in Brisbane at the time)

In Nov-December 2024, CI Associate Professor Megan Gibson visited Denmark and Sweden, presenting seminars on “Quality in the early childhood workforce”, where she drew on her program of research and profiled the TEE research project. Megan met over 40 researchers and was warmly welcomed at University College Copenhagen, Stockholm University, Borås University, and Göteborg University. At Stockholm University Megan was thrilled to meet with [Prof Hillevi Lenz Taguchi](#), who is on the TEE International Advisory Group.

TEE meetings and presentations 2024



Marianne promoting the TEE study at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Conference, Brighton, United Kingdom, September 2024



TEE lunch at UNSW. (Left to right) Katie (Project Manager), Ashley (TEE Doctoral student), Tracy (CI), Jade (Doctoral student), Li (TEE RA) and Ranni (TEE RA), September 2024



Marianne and Tracy presenting at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Macquarie University, December 2024

Contact Us

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