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Ways forward for early childhood teacher education in Australia

Authors: Susanne Garvis, Megan Gibson, Wendy Boyd

Presenters: Susanne Garvis & Wendy Boyd

Abstract: Australia is experiencing rapid demand for early childhood teachers as greater numbers of children participate in early childhood education services. Workforce shortages across the teaching profession are seeing an expansion of teacher education programs, including accelerated programs, and different qualification types (i.e., degree, graduate diploma), which are no longer only provided at universities. Previous research has shown that bachelor-qualified teachers can make strong contributions to overall early childhood quality (Manning et al., 2019). Questions are raised about the duration and type of program undertaken in the current context. In our review of 102 early childhood teacher education programs, we found variation across duration, delivery mode, placement days, entry requirements, number of courses studied and age ranges covered. While the diversity of programs is supporting an increased number of program options for pre-service teachers, thereby increasing the pipeline of graduates, questions are raised around what this variation means for the future early childhood teacher workforce. Given that we know that high-quality teachers support the learning and development of young children, it is important that we reflect on how we can do this within and across higher education institutions. Discussion questions • What are your reflections around the current diversity across early childhood teacher education programs in Australia? • What is important for higher education institutions to consider as they develop and implement programs to support an increased pipeline of early childhood teacher graduates to work in the early childhood profession? • In your experience what is the biggest challenge in early childhood workforce teacher preparation courses?

Reference:

Manning, M., Wong, G. T. W., Fleming, C. M., & Garvis, S. (2019). Is teacher qualification associated with the quality of the early childhood education and care environment? A meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(3), 370–415.
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