

# Are Early Childhood teachers different?



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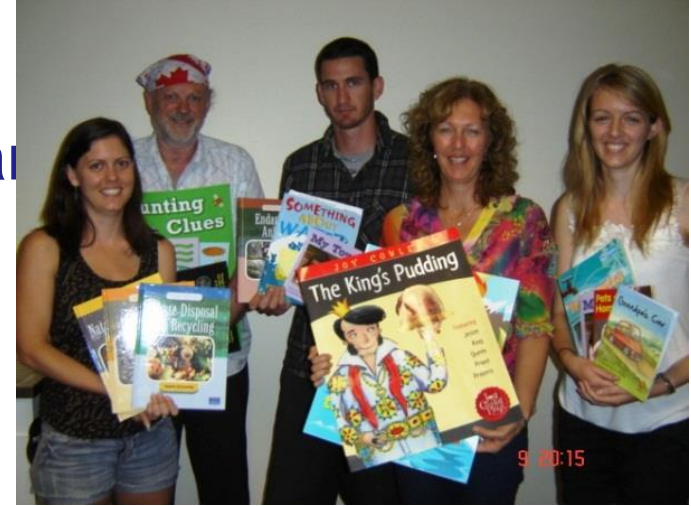
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# Background:

## Why the research?

- Lecturing Early Childhood and Primary pre-service teachers
- Building on Global Education in Early Childhood and prior knowledge research.



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# Research Context:

Research on the perception of the role of an EC educator indicates that it is a mix of mothering and educating.

**Is this the way that early childhood pre-service teachers see themselves?**



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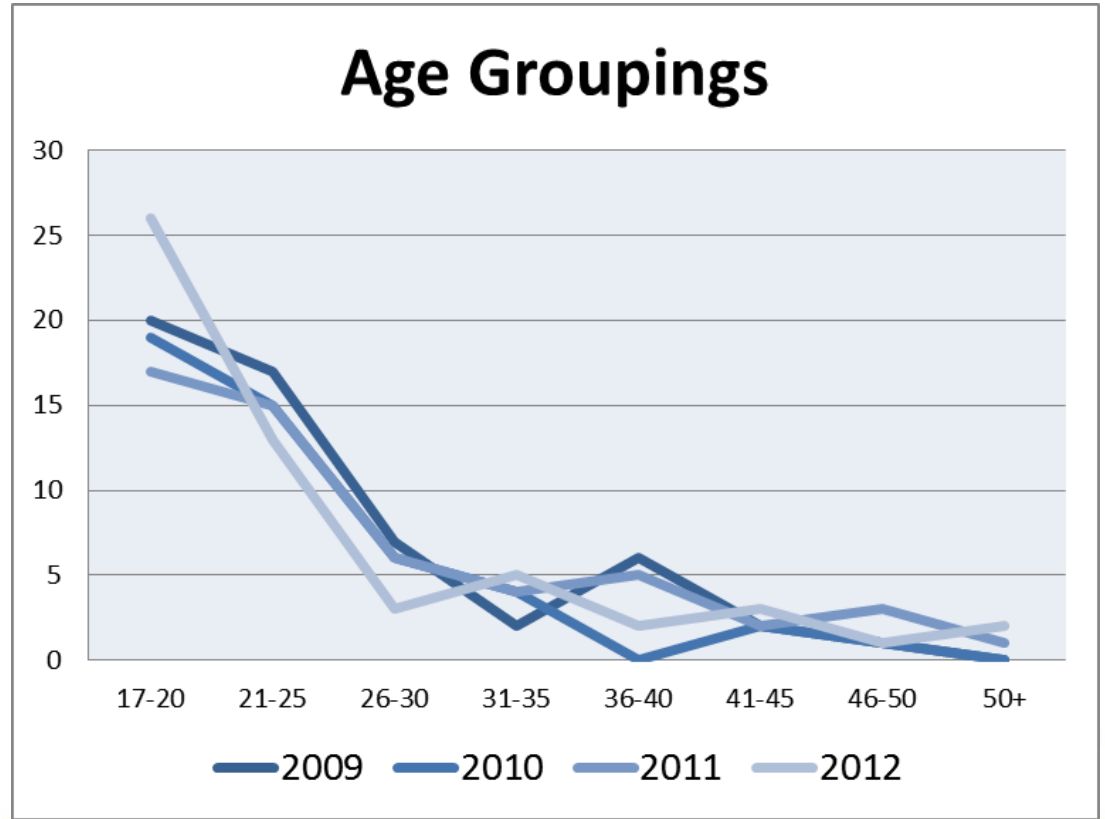
# Who was involved?

- 4 cohorts of pre-service teachers 2009-2012
- 210 participants
- Cohort – 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, midyear intakes both EC and Primary.
- Survey at the beginning of EC courses each year **prior** to discussion of course content.



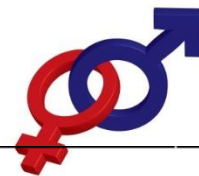
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Pre-service teacher ages comprised of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and midyear uni intakes.



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# University class composition:



Student Enrolment								
	2009 (55 Students)		2010 (47 Students)		2011 (53 Students)		2012 (55 Students)	
	EC Students	Primary	EC Students	Primary	EC Students	Primary	EC Students	Primary
Total Students Surveyed	91%	9%	94%	6%	98%	2%	53%	47%
Female	96%	96%	98%	91%	100%	100%	100%	91%

Predominately female pre-service teachers

2009 - 2 males;

2010 - 5 males;

2011 - 0 males

2012 - 5 males



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# Previous experience with children:

1. No experience with children
2. Babysitting
3. Own children
4. Childcare educator



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## Prior experience comment:

“I'm not sure I would have considered this career if I had not had children. My experience as a mother has given me confidence and skills in dealing with young children, empathy for families and an interest and some knowledge already about children's learning, development and the structure of daycare and schooling in QLD.”



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# Pre-service teacher's learning contexts – a whole new world:

- In university classes, experiences, peers, faculty  
– ***TEPworld*** (Teacher Education Program world)
- In fieldwork in schools, centres with teachers, students, classes and school professional communities of practice  
– ***Fieldworld*** (practical experience in the field)

*Nolen, Ward, Horn, Campbell, Mahna & Childers (2007)*



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# Reconciling the worlds:

- Learning from teacher education often involves learning to **reconcile different approaches** adopted in TEPworld and Fieldworld.

“I can easily relate to and understand the coursework as I observe many children participating in the topics we covered [at Uni].”

20 year old EC pre-service teacher –  
worked in Childcare and as a Nanny.



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# Filters:

- **‘Motivational filters’** reflect ‘active choices’ about what to learn at Uni.
- These are filters used by pre-service teachers to question promoted pedagogy and relies on them reflecting on prior knowledge to develop their own teacher identity.



# Filters:



- **‘Utility filters’** involves making a judgement. What is in and out of teacher identity based on pre-service teacher interests, experiences, relationships with staff and student peers, memories and histories.



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## Filters to form identity, comments:

“Prior experiences with children and having younger siblings has given me a positive attitude towards placements. It also helps me to see the relevance of the coursework as I can relate and reflect on my own experiences.”

“Yes I find what you learn during the course work helps the placements immensely and gives me more confidence with my knowledge.”



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# TEPworld and Fieldworld connection:

- Pre-service teachers 'borrow' understandings, attitudes and behaviours from each 'world'.
- This contributes to professional identity of the EC pre-service teacher.



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# Early childhood pre-service teachers and primary pre-service teachers:

A. TEPworld  Fieldworld

B. Fieldworld  TEPworld  Fieldworld

EC pre-service teachers use a common language, understandings, attitudes and may have common backgrounds and work history.



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# Research design:

## 2 Phase design:

1. Surveys with 210 students

2. Focus groups – 15 students x 4

Focus group submitted comments



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# Findings:

Students use filters to reconcile differences between TEPworld and Fieldworld.

Example: Play based learning

- TEPworld and Fieldworld misalignment
- Issues to be reconciled
- Interaction with filters
- Student agency to develop own professional identity.



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# Implications:

A. TEPworld  Fieldworld

B. Fieldworld  TEPworld  Fieldworld

- Similar attitudes in the community of practice.
- Cohort B are more discerning and have a stronger professional identity sooner.
- Less reconciliation required.



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# Comments:

“EC educators provide an environment in which children learn through play.”

“I strongly believe in the importance of play for young children and I think most educators work from this philosophy more so than in later primary school. However there are great educators at every level who probably also integrate many similar principles.”

31 year old pre-service teacher with 3 children.



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# Reconciliation of structured prior knowledge to TEPworld:

“My primary placements have been very regimented, as well as my experience in childcare centres (‘eating time now’, ‘sleep time now’, ‘don’t make a mess’) which made me forget that children need to be children, until I did my EC subject – then I realized how beneficial ‘play’ is.”

22 year old pre-service teacher.



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# To finish - a pre-service teacher comment aligning TEPworld and Fieldworld:

“I believe EC educators are more nurturing, they comprehend the benefits of play and possess the patience required to build the most important fundamentals a student requires.”

22 year old pre-service teacher.



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# Questions?



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