
‘I Want to Educate School-Age Children’: producing early childhood teacher professional identities

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ABSTRACT The Australian government’s current workforce reforms in early childhood education and care (ECEC) include a major shift in qualification requirements. The new requirement is that university four-year degree qualified teachers are employed in before-school contexts, including childcare. Ironically, recent research studies show that, in Australia, the very pre-service teachers who are enrolled in these degree programs have a reluctance to work in childcare. This article reports on part of a larger study which is inquiring into how early childhood teacher professional identities are discursively produced, and provides a partial mapping of the literature. One pre-service teacher’s comment provides the starting point, and the article locates some of the discourses that are accessible to pre-service teachers as they prepare for the early years workforce. An awareness of the discursive field provides a sound background for preparing early childhood teachers. A challenge for the field is to consider which discourses are dominant, and how they potentially work to privilege work in some ECEC contexts over others.

Introduction

In 2007, as part of an election campaign, the opposition government in Australia coined the phrase ‘education revolution’, and reform in early childhood education and care (ECEC) was a key plank of their education initiatives. In a blueprint for future ECEC developments, *New Directions for Early Childhood Education: universal access to early learning for 4 year olds* (Rudd & Macklin, 2007), ‘universal access’ was a key initiative. After a landslide election win, these reforms were actioned and a raft of policy documents worked to reshape ECEC in Australia. The goal was for all children living in Australia to have access to a ‘quality early childhood education’ for 15 hours a week in the year prior to commencing formal schooling. A key component of this ‘quality early childhood education’ was that it is ‘delivered by a university trained early childhood teacher’ (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009, p. 1). This represents a significant shift in staffing requirements for before-school contexts, most notably in childcare. With this universal access initiative comes the necessity to reconfigure the profile of staff in ECEC, with the addition of increased numbers of four-year degree qualified teachers across states and territories in Australia. An exception is in New South Wales, where degree qualified early childhood teachers have been required in centres with an enrolment of over 30 children for some time (New South Wales Government, 2004). The Australian government recognises that providing universal access will require measures that ‘improve recruitment and retention of the early childhood education and childcare workforce; develop pathways that reward and support the best workers; and raise the level of qualifications’ (DEEWR, 2009, p. 1). The implementation of this initiative calls for degree qualified early childhood teachers who are willing to work in childcare.

Some months after the release of the *New Directions in Early Childhood Education* blueprint (Rudd & Macklin, 2007), a pre-service early childhood teacher, Emma, was in the third year of a

four-year early childhood university degree. The preparation to become an early childhood teacher included a practicum in a childcare setting. It was the expressed hope of course designers that the positioning of this practicum would indicate to students the importance and value of childcare. On the contrary, after four weeks working with a group of two to three year old children, Emma declared:

Although I enjoy being with the younger children, this field experience [in childcare] has made me realise that when I am a *qualified* teacher, I want to *educate* school-age children. (Emma, June 2007; emphasis added from Emma's own intonation)

As an early childhood educator, who has experienced immense professional reward working in childcare, and now working in teacher education, this comment was unsettling. I wondered what led to Emma's constructions of being an early childhood teacher – where her four-year degree qualification appeared to be linked to educating school-age children. One way to consider this was to look to the ways in which the professional identities of early childhood teachers are produced by the discourses that are accessible to pre-service teachers.

There are a number of key points explored in this article that emerged from my readings of Emma's comment. Firstly, she appears to be marking her degree qualifications as a distinct identity factor: 'when I am a *qualified* teacher'. Secondly, she appears to suggest that a key part of the professional work of a teacher is to 'educate'. Thirdly, Emma's comment links the work of educating (by a 'qualified' teacher) with a particular age/stage of development: 'school-age children'. This is used to distinguish the work from the population of younger children in before-school settings (or childcare). Finally, given that this comment was made by a pre-service teacher, it raised for me a number of questions around design and teaching in pre-service teacher education programs. For instance, has Emma acquired these beliefs or ideas as a result of her studies, or did she arrive with these views on enrolment? If the latter is the case, why have these ideas remained unaffected by her three years' study? Or, possibly more pertinent, why has Emma enrolled in an early childhood program and not the primary school program which is on offer and equally accessible?

Early childhood teacher education programs generally focus on preparing pre-service teachers to work across a range of early childhood contexts. These contexts include, though are not limited to, childcare, kindergarten or preschool and primary school. Emma's apparent desire to work in primary school is spoken together with the role of educating children. The before-school context that ECEC workforce reform in Australia is centred on is excluded. It seems that her career aspiration does not include kindergarten or preschool or childcare – a sentiment reflected in other emerging research (Thorpe et al, 2011).

The degree in which Emma is enrolled qualifies her to work with children from birth to eight years old, and includes career options in a range of early childhood contexts. However, surveys of graduates of this degree taken over the past five years indicate that Emma's statement is not so surprising, nor unique. In the year after completing their degree, the majority (over 60%) of employed graduates were teaching in primary schools (Queensland University of Technology, 2011). Approximately 5% had attained work in kindergartens (the year prior to formal school), and approximately 13% were working in childcare, predominantly employed as a group leader (a position requiring only a two-year diploma qualification, not a degree). Emma is not alone amongst Australian pre-service teachers with this preference for employment in a primary school setting. Recent studies indicate that this preference is shared by pre-service early childhood teacher education students who are reluctant to work in childcare (Vajda, 2005; Thorpe et al, 2011). Other research has shown that pre-service teachers who enter teaching degrees with a two-year diploma view their university qualification as a 'pathway *out of* childcare' (L. Watson, 2006, p. xv). But if students like Emma are reluctant to work with this age group and in childcare as a possible career pathway, what will this mean for the government's reform in ECEC? With the new education reforms, more employment possibilities for degree-qualified teachers will be available in the childcare sector. Will this change Emma's career aspirations? What shapes Emma's thinking about her career options? Is it about employment possibilities? Are her ideas about professional identities influenced by what is happening around her?

One way of understanding Emma's statement, and others like it, is to use poststructuralist theorising and read talk as 'texts' (McArdle, 2001), and on close examination see these disruptive moments as indicators of discourses meeting, competing, colliding.

Emma has expressed a preference for educating school-age children while in the process of successfully completing a four-year program of study designed to qualify her to work with children from birth to eight years of age, and in a climate where current reforms are calling for degree graduate teachers to work with younger children. In a larger study, it is apparent that these contradictory positions are not confined to Emma or the institution where she studies. This article considers how pre-service teachers' ways of speaking and thinking are shaped by discourses, and draws on Foucault's (1972) notion of discourse as 'the general domain of all statements' that come together as a 'regulated practice' (p. 80). Discourses entail certain 'conditions that enable people, according to the rules of true and false statements', to be produced, or constituted as a 'subject' (Florence, 1994, p. 462). Early childhood professional identities then can be understood as being produced by regulated practices that enable certain ways of speaking, thinking and acting in ECEC.

In this article, three interconnecting nodal points in the literature can be linked through a poststructuralist reading of Emma's comment. The nodes are: identities; professionalism; and pre-service teacher education. A map of the literature around these nodal points enables a possible explanation for how pre-service teachers might produce early childhood professional identities. This article does not claim to identify all of the discourses at play in the constitution of these identities. Rather, the aim of the article is to 'work with the shreds' (McWilliam, 1999, p. 182, original emphasis), where points in the literature offer possibilities for seeing the production of the professional identities of early childhood teachers.

The overview of the literature that follows is not a strictly linear, nor a comprehensive account. The three nodal points around which the review is organised are treated as interconnected, rhizomatic, dynamic and evolving over time (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Such a mapping of the so called 'expert discourses' (Fraser, 1989, p. 174) provides a sound background for further thinking about preparing early childhood teachers, and how professional identities are discursively shaped.

Identities: production and maintenance

When Emma emphasised the qualification – 'when I am a *qualified* teacher' – the suggestion is that the 'other' is an unqualified teacher, and that this is acceptable for the childcare setting in which she has recently completed her practicum. This reading of Emma's comment raises questions about how the identities of a teacher are produced, and the discourses that are in play that work to both enable and constrain particular identities.

There is a growing body of literature on identity and, in particular, teacher identities. The modernist notion of identity is of a person's fixed and stable core 'self' (C. Watson, 2006). By contrast, a postmodern perspective considers identities as fluid, rather than fixed (Foucault, 1981). In this sense, identities are 'constituted and reconstituted through the discursive practices' (Osgood, 2010, p. 25) that are accessible to individuals in particular contexts. The discourses at play produce identities as a performance, undertaken at particular times and in different ways (Butler, 1990). This perspective draws on the possible discourses that come together to produce identities, and resists a 'true' identity, or the 'real you' way of thinking that is consistent with modernist notions of identity.

To consider identities as discursively produced enables thinking about multiple ways of being, of knowing and of performing the role of early childhood practitioner. This is not simply a matter of replacing one discourse with another. A modernist account, for instance, would have that where once the kindergarten teacher was seen as carer or nurturer, these new government reforms might work to change the status to a degree qualified early childhood teacher. A deliberate untidying of this modernist thinking enables a way of considering identities as becoming and re-becoming according to the discursive practices that are in circulation. Neither of these discourses, carer or nurturer nor degree-qualified teacher, exclude the other. It is possible that seemingly 'incompatible things' are held together in tension, where each is 'necessary and true' (Haraway, 1991, p. 149). Professional identities of pre-service teachers produced through 'care' and 'degree-qualified'

discourses, are examples of the many discourses that are at play and held together, at times incompatibly, in ECEC.

A number of possible identities available to pre-service teachers feature in the literature. Of these, three are outlined here. Each creates possibilities for professional identities, and each might play a part in the shaping and reshaping of pre-service early childhood teachers at particular points in time.

The 'Good' Early Childhood Teacher

One prominent early childhood teacher identity is that of the 'good' early childhood teacher. The identity of a 'good' early childhood practitioner has been shaped in part by practices that are read in key early childhood texts (Langford, 2005). For example, the discourse of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), purported as the way to interact and teach young children, is outlined in a text of the same name, which is now in its third edition (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). With a stated aim of providing children with 'optimal learning and development' the text outlines examples of developmentally appropriate practices. One example of an appropriate practice is to 'create a caring community of learners' (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009, p. 17) where 'teachers listen to and acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations'. Not included in the DAP text, but possibly a viable alternative, might be to encourage children's resilience and monitoring of their feelings. Is an early childhood teacher 'inappropriate', or even 'bad', if they do not adhere to the example from the text? Lists of 'do's and don'ts' produce a regime of truth, a set of regulated practices underpinned by a prescribed framework that draws predominantly on child development theory. The DAP guidelines have enjoyed wide ranging success and have been taken up across a wide range of settings and contexts, and are acknowledged as hegemonic in ECEC programs internationally (Cannella, 1997; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). This is not to suggest that a 'bad' teacher is the antithesis of the 'appropriate' practice. Rather, the point here is the power of the discourse of DAP to produce a 'good' and 'acceptable' early childhood teacher.

An 'acceptable' early childhood teacher represents an ideal, which might present a goal to strive for, or might constitute what Walkerdine refers to as an 'impossible fiction' (1992, p. 19). In the process of normalising the early childhood professional, discourses create a truth where 'something real is produced out of fiction' (Walkerdine, 1993, p. 454). The 'impossible fiction' is the good, acceptable, early childhood teacher, whose practices are developmentally appropriate, and who makes decisions informed by child development knowledge. One reading of Emma's comment is that for her a 'good' teacher is one who holds knowledge through a degree qualification and 'educates' school-aged children (in Australia generally from five years of age). To rethink teacher identities beyond a good teacher reflecting the DAP 'rules' of good practice, provides possibilities for multiple ways of being an early childhood practitioner.

The Advocate-Activist Early Childhood Teacher: beyond being 'good'

Another possible identity available to pre-service teachers that is featured in the literature is the advocate-activist early childhood teacher. A shift from the 'good' early childhood teacher identity, and attached DAP child development discourse, enables other possibilities of being an early childhood practitioner. By contrast to a 'good' and developmentally appropriate teacher with an emphasis on compliance, the advocacy discourse calls for teachers to 'speak on behalf of others' and become active in bringing about change in the field. These changes are often about rights, and may focus on children, families or teachers themselves. An advocate focuses on a goal of what 'needs fixing' and sets about to make this happen. In comparison, an activist requires practitioners to resist and challenge frames of reference and 'underpinning assumptions' (Sumsion, 2006, p. 3). For example, an advocate for quality in childcare may focus on the National Quality Standards and the associated measures to ensure quality. An activist for quality in childcare may look further at issues of equity, access, and ethics, and in doing so focus on the power that works to shape the quality measurement tools.

The advocate-activist identity sits uncomfortably with the ways in which DAP positions early childhood practitioners (Grieshaber, 2001). Within the advocacy-activism discourse, early

childhood practitioners are positioned as risk-takers, willing to engage in conflict and critique of the DAP construction of 'good' teacher. Sumsion (2006) draws on this discourse as she encourages early childhood teachers to become ethically and politically aware and take up the baton of activism. The activist identity opens different possibilities for the future and, in doing so, paves the way to challenge the power that resides with some individual groups (Sachs, 2003). For example, in Australia the domination in ECEC by private, for profit and corporate childcare has seen power located through the influence in policy documents, quality standards, and notably a review of industrial awards in a pay equity case (see for example, Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, 2000). A resistance to this power has seen community-based childcare vocal in lobbying for higher salaries and better conditions to be reflected in industrial awards (see for example, Independent Education Union NSW, 2011).

The Entrepreneurial Early Childhood Teacher

A third possible identity that is read in the literature, and available to pre-service teachers, is the 'entrepreneurial' identity (Sachs, 2003). This identity positions teachers within a framework of accountability and practices derived from the corporate world. This notion of 'corporatising the teacher' (McWilliam et al, 1999, p. 7) is underpinned by marketisation and provides the 'corporate professional' with all of the regalia of an enterprising culture. An entrepreneurial identity positions teachers as efficient, responsible and accountable (Sachs, 2003), and this works to produce compliance, underpinned by working in a technocratic way (MacNaughton, 2005). Emma's desire to work with school-age children suggests that her identity is shaped by a desire to work in a primary school, a context where a national curriculum is imminent, and along with it, compliance and accountability are called for.

The identities that have been included here are three of many possible identities available to pre-service teachers that feature in the literature. Each creates possibilities for pre-service early childhood teacher identities, and each might play a part in the shaping and reshaping of early childhood teachers at particular points in time.

'Professionalisation' of the Early Childhood Practitioner

Emma's comment suggests that the work of a teacher is to 'educate'. To educate brings status and position, akin to 'professional work', where knowledge, and in Emma's case a qualification, is required to perform the role. But what makes a professional? A walk to my local shops brought into question the notion of being a professional: the tennis coach wearing a shirt emblazoned 'tennis professional'; the beautician claiming that she was an 'eyebrow specialist and skin professional'; the hairdresser purporting to be an 'expert'. How do expertise and the work that is performed constitute a professional? Moreover, what makes an early childhood teacher a professional? Within this nodal point of professionalism, two points are worthy of discussion. Firstly, a look at the emergence of professionalism and its infusion into ECEC, and secondly, the unfolding discourses of the professional, including the early childhood professional.

An Emergence of Professionalism

The language of profession and professionalism emerged from the range of occupations in the course of the early eighteenth century, and thereby distinguished an initially small number of occupations, including religion, law and medicine (Sutherland, 2001). Training, professional development and policies, as examples, point towards professionalism being aligned with technical skills, specialist knowledge and qualifications, meeting high standards and regulations (Oberhuemer, 2004; Moss, 2006; Osgood, 2006). A teacher in a primary school is required to hold a university degree qualification that brings with it skills, knowledge and a capacity to meet the regulatory requirements. At the same time, under the new ECEC reform, a teacher in childcare is now required to hold the same degree. For Emma, it appears that her desire is to enact her knowledge and technical skills through educating children in a school, and in doing so constitute her identity as professional.

A focus on technical skills and specialist knowledge and qualifications enhances working conditions and status of the 'professional worker'. In ECEC there has been a significant difference in the working conditions and status of staff who work in the early years of primary schools, staff who work in kindergarten, and staff who work in childcare. The patchwork of awards that govern the pay and conditions across each of these contexts work to produce the identities of pre-service early childhood teachers. For example, teachers working in kindergartens are paid under different awards to teachers working in childcare, yet they arguably carry out the same teaching work. Teachers employed in state or public schools are paid differently again. The difference in these awards is vast, equating to a salary differential of approximately \$15,000 less per annum for a teacher working in childcare. In addition, childcare teachers are entitled to four weeks of annual leave, by contrast to ten weeks of school holidays in kindergarten and school settings. These discrepancies highlight the division between the discourses of education/school and care/childcare, and the complexities around professional identities that the ECEC field continues to grapple with.

Discourses of Professionalism

Discourses work to both enable and constrain the professional (McWilliam, 1994; Lather, 2006). The fluid nature of discourses allows them to work together at different points in time to produce and maintain multiple early childhood teacher identities. Two distinct discourses, 'managerial professionalism' and 'democratic professionalism' (Sachs, 2001, 2003), dominate Australian government policy documents. These discourses shape the work of teachers and teaching, setting 'the limits of what can be said, thought and done with respect to debates and initiatives designed to enhance the political project of teacher professionalism' (Sachs, 2001, p. 151).

Firstly, Sachs (2001) examines 'managerial professionalism', where accountability, devolution and decentralisation are highlighted. Here, teacher professionalism 'gains its legitimacy through the promulgation of policies and the allocation of funds associated with those policies' (p. 152). Sachs links this discussion with schools, teachers, principals, regional office and central office. There are resonances of childcare moving towards a corporatised model (Sumsion, 2006; Wannan, 2005). For example, the management model of the corporate childcare provider, ABC Learning Centres, included centrally administered policies and systems (ABC Learning Centres Limited, 2006).

Secondly, Sachs describes *democratic professionalism*, which demystifies professional work and strengthens relationships between teachers and other people associated with the school community. A key focus here is on participative decision making, collaboration and cooperative action. In not-for profit, community-based childcare (Wannan, 2005), the focus is on developing a sense of community, where democracy and shared decisions are paramount. Oberhuemer (2004) takes up the concept of democratic professionalism specifically within ECEC noting the focus on interactions with children, working with families, centre management and leadership styles, and the underlying knowledge base. A collaborative approach which listens to different voices of people within that community opens possibilities for considering professionalism and the 'professional early childhood practitioner'.

A third professional discourse, of particular note to female-dominated professions, is maternalism. This discourse dominates the career trajectories and professional identities of people working in occupations such as childcare (McBride, 2000; Rabe-Kleberg, 2006). The maternalism discourse is drawn on by Moss as he describes one construction of the early childhood worker as a 'substitute mother' (2006, p. 34). Here, work in childcare is envisioned within care and domestic labour paradigms. This discourse is further traced by Walkerdine (1992) as a 'quasi-maternal nurturance' where women could watch over children through the performance of being a good teacher. The interdependency of professionalism and maternalism is highlighted by Rabe-Kleberg as she unpacks the complexities of these 'two social phenomena' (2006, p. 2). How 'motherliness (and female qualities in general) can contribute to the formation of a profession' (Rabe-Kleberg, 2006, p. 2) is an important site for examination. The notion that to care for children is 'perceived to be "maternal instinct"' (McBride & Grieshaber, 2001, p. 171) is imperative to discursive constructions 'about women carers' ways of understanding and acting on experiences' (p. 172). The care and maternalism discourses are brought together by Page (2011) who explored whether mothers want educators to 'love' their children, and offers a new discourse: 'professional love'.

Pre-service Teacher Education

Finally, this reading of the literature, prompted by Emma's comment, warrants attention to pre-service teacher education. How does course content and the associated underlying discourses shape pre-service teacher identities? What approaches to teaching and learning underpin pre-service teacher education courses?

A study by Flores and Day found the role of pre-service education, alongside school culture and leadership, was a strong influence in determining 'the kinds and relative stability and instability of professional identities' (2006, p. 219). The students in this study saw their preparation as inadequate to deal with the 'complex and demanding nature of their daily job in schools and classrooms' (p. 224). This tension suggests that the course structure, unit content and the positioning of pre-service teachers as technicians is worthy of consideration.

The Nature of Pre-service Teacher Education

Pre-service teacher education is 'embedded in global economies, new technologies and marketisation' (Farrell, 2005, p. 9). Amidst these there is a challenge for teacher educators to find ways to make connections with students, shifting the discourses that shape and reshape the landscape of teaching. In a globalised world there can be a heightened risk of personal alienation and a sense of loss of community. Sumsion and Patterson (2004) point to the unexpected emergence of community in a pre-service teacher education unit, 'Teachers as Researchers'. This research project enabled pre-service teachers to see their work in new and different ways and, in doing so, opened possibilities for multiple ways of being and performing as a teacher, whilst linked with others in a community of learners and thinkers. Similarly, the course designers for Emma's degree have included a focus on engaging students as reflective thinkers and learners. The intention is for students to critically reflect on the early childhood profession. Whilst there is no claim that the unit will convert her to childcare and result in a change to career aspirations, the unit coordinator and students together talk about a range of career possibilities, including childcare. In doing so, there has been a deliberate breaking down of the 'teacher-expert' and 'preservice teacher-non expert' (Viruru, 2005) binary. This has opened possibilities for reconceptualising identities and the performance of being professional.

Teacher preparation that equips teachers for 'new times' calls for the consideration of the 'knowledges, skills, values and attributes' that are required of 'good teachers' who will make a difference in children's lives (McArdle, 2010). Hatch maintains it is integral to the preparation for teaching that pre-service teacher education courses and unit materials are constructed to reflect the complex and multiple nature of teachers' work. For example, it is suggested that along with the technicalities of the work of teachers, teacher educators 'explore with their students the day-to-day realities of working in schools' (Hatch, 1999, p. 239).

From Technician to 'Reflexive'

It is argued (see for example, Hatch, 1999; MacNaughton, 2005; Sumsion, 2005; Moss, 2006) that professional development and training in ECEC needs to move beyond a technicist approach in which practitioners are taught the tricks of the trade, possessing a box of tools at the completion of their course. The idea of reflexivity in pre-service teacher education is not new, though Sumsion (2005) suggests it evades much of core teaching content. The importance for practitioners to become reflexive and develop the 'professional self' is further highlighted by Osgood (2006). To be reflexive encourages critique, reflection and questioning of dominant discourses, and in doing so the development of an awareness of how discursive practice might shape ways of being an ECEC practitioner.

For pre-service teachers to have opportunities to engage in reflection aligns with Moss's conception of 'teacher as researcher' in which there is a continual seeking of 'deeper understanding and new knowledge' (2006, p. 36). This positions pre-service teachers as competent and co-meaning makers who shape, and are shaped by, discourses available to them. Emma was in her third year of her degree, and during that time had encountered pedagogical approaches in her course that encouraged shared meanings, and co-construction of knowledge. As she came across discourses,

she was acted on by them, and at the same time was active in choosing which of these discourses she would take up. In doing so her identities as an early childhood teacher are discursively constituted. That Emma's identities are clearly positioned by discourses of qualification and education of school-age children opens a possibility that these may have been constituted, at least partially, through her degree course. This highlights an area worthy of further consideration: how childcare and work in childcare is 'spoken into existence' (Sondergaard, 2002, p. 191) in teacher education programs.

Conclusion

Reform in ECEC in Australia has called for significant shifts in the requirement for degree-qualified teachers to work in before-school contexts, including childcare. In this article a comment made by a pre-service early childhood teacher, Emma, worked as a provocation to consider the discursive production of professional identities in ECEC. One possibility to consider this juncture was through mapping some of the discourses from the literature. Some of the discourses available to pre-service teachers have been located through interconnected nodal points in the literature: identities; professionalism; and pre-service teacher education. Discursive practices have emerged as 'current episodes in a series of subjugations' (Foucault, 1984, p. 83) that shape the ECEC field. The discursive practices that have been mapped illuminate some of the complexities that shape and inform pre-service early childhood teachers' professional identities, and in turn their choices about their future work.

The four-year degree that Emma was enrolled in enabled her to seek work across a range of early childhood contexts, including childcare, kindergarten or preschool and primary school. Her desire to attain work in a primary school where she would 'educate school-age children' presents a potential research problem worthy of further investigation. This article has gone some way to problematizing this comment. Given the ECEC workforce reform in Australia that calls for degree-qualified teachers to work in before-school contexts, consideration of choices about which context to seek employment is warranted. Further investigation into the discourses that are in circulation in ECEC will provide new and important insights into how professional identities are discursively shaped. A challenge for the field is to consider how discourses compete and collide to produce professional identities, and potentially work to privilege work in some ECEC contexts over others.

By considering some of the possible discourses that work to shape and reshape Emma's identities possibilities are opened to rethink what it is to be a 'qualified' early childhood teacher whose work it is to 'educate' children. This in turn poses questions about the other possible discourses that are in circulation that work to constitute the identities of the 'early childhood professional'.

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