UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

UTTERING THE UNSPOKEN:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS' CONCEPTIONS

OF THE IMPACT OF REGULATION

ON THEIR PROFESSION

A Thesis submitted by

Michelle Turner, BEdSt *(Qld)*, MLAD *(USQ)*

For the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

2017

**ABSTRACT**

Early childhood education and care contexts have undergone change in light of growing regulatory reform and regimes of accountability. The introduction of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care across Australia on 1 January 2012 was one such significant reform experienced by the early childhood sector. The introduction of the framework heralded broad changes for early childhood educators engaged in this field. A continuing problem that emerges in the face of regulatory alterations is the impact on educators and their profession. The interest of this project is the early childhood educators' lived experience of the impact of regulatory change.

This research project utilises a phenomenographic approach, in an interpretivist paradigm, to investigate the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understand regulation. The starting point for the study is not a hypothesis to be tested, but rather it is an inquiry to understand the early childhood educators' own conceptions of the lived experience under mandated regimes. Given the current climate of government, mandated policy, this study is both relevant and timely.

Twenty-five early childhood educators participated in semi structured interviews. To enhance the data collection a methodological elaboration was designed. The participants were asked to create an arts-inspired plate prior to the interview, reflecting their lived experience of the impact of regulation. The arts-inspired plate was referred to throughout the interview.

The phenomenographic analysis led to the construction of five categories of description. The early childhood educators' experiences of the impact of regulation were expressed as (1) enabling guardianship, (2) complicating administration, (3) interrupting core business, (4) being accountable and (5) scrutiny of performance. The five categories present the critically and qualitatively different ways of experiencing the impact of regulation that were identified among the collective group. The five categories were linked and differentiated from each other by two dimensions of variation: (1) a professional dimension and (2) a personal dimension. The dimensions of variation emerge as a representation wherein the conceptions within the categories of description can be further distinguished. The outcome space

in this thesis portrays the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experience the impact of regulation as a range of categories of description that represent an increasing awareness of aspects of the phenomenon.

The findings of the study suggest that, for the participants, the implementation of regulation was considered significant, rapid and overwhelming. These findings contribute to the ongoing discussion around regulatory regimes and the impact on educators, particularly in relation to the magnitude and timing associated with regulation implementation associated with the National Quality Framework.

**CERTIFICATION PAGE**

This Thesis is entirely the work of Michelle Turner except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Robyn Henderson

Associate Supervisor: Professor Karen Noble

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is my sincerest pleasure to acknowledge the people who assisted me in the development of my thesis.

I sincerely thank Professor Karen Noble and Associate Professor Robyn Henderson for agreeing to be my supervisors. My deepest and sincerest gratitude is owed to Professor Karen Noble, my mentor, colleague and friend. Professor Noble traversed this journey with me with such insightfulness, encouragement, perseverance and patience. Her guidance was limitless and words cannot accurately convey the extent of my appreciation of Karen's unreserved commitment to my successful completion. I have been incredibly fortunate and grateful for the crossing of our paths.

I sincerely thank Associate Professor Robyn Henderson for generously accepting the role as my supervisor. Robyn's critical reading, words of encouragement, respect for my work and overall support is endlessly appreciated. I would also like to thank Marlene Barron for her editing guidance and skills.

I would like to thank the 25 brave and wonderful early childhood educators who agreed to be my participants in this research project. They provided such depth of genuine data, and their honest and heartfelt discussions provided the foundation upon which I was able to develop this thesis.

I would sincerely like to thank my parents who privileged education above all else. They encouraged my venture into tertiary education; an opportunity not available to them despite their obvious abilities. Without the initial sacrifices made by my parents, I would not have been able to undertake this project today. Finally, I sincerely thank my loving and supportive family who encouraged and believed in me throughout my journey. They fed and nurtured me, endured my self-doubts and provided me with the much-needed space to get words onto paper. Their support and interest in my work helped sustain me across the project.

 It took a collective to produce this thesis. My heartfelt thanks to you all.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**LIST OF FIGURES**

# LIST OF TABLES

# CHAPTER 1.   INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 Introduction

Early childhood education and care in global contemporary contexts have experienced significant change in recent times (Brennan & Adamson, 2014; Fenech, Giugni & Bown, 2012; Tayler, 2011). Many governments worldwide have implemented mandated regulatory and accountability frameworks for the provision of early childhood education and care (Burchinal, Vandergift, Pianta, & Mashburn, 2010; Urban, 2008) with the aim of improving the quality of childcare provision (Hotz & Xiao, 2011: Reed, 2012). Implementing regulations has redefined the practices of those tasked with the role of enacting them (Fink, 2003). The interest of this study is to look at the impact that mandated regulatory and accountability frameworks have on the lived experience of early childhood educators working in early childhood settings.

In line with global initiatives, the Australian Government implemented the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (the National Quality Framework) on January 1, 2012 across the early childhood sector (Nuttall, Thomas, & Wood, 2014). Being a mandated framework, early childhood educators in the sector were involved in its implementation. The introduction of the National Quality Framework into the early childhood sector was identified as a "critical juncture" in the sector (Logan, Press, & Sumsion, 2016, p. 64). A critical juncture is a "path-breaking policy development that has lasting impacts" (Logan et al., 2016, p. 64). The impact of the critical juncture, created by the introduction of the National Quality Framework, is central to this study.

This study investigates the impact of regulations on early childhood educators. The study explores the early childhood educators' lived experience of the regulatory environment and reports the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experience the impact of regulation on their profession by eliciting and describing held conceptions. Discussion around regulations in general was sought however, the regulations arising from the implementation of the National Quality Framework was pivotal. .

The government's intention in regulating service provision through the National Quality Framework was to improve the quality of education offered to young children (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2010b). More broadly, it was perceived that changes to the quality of early childhood education and care, through a regulatory environment, would impact positively upon the country's economy by improving human capital, enhancing productivity and overcoming disadvantage (Productivity Commission, 2011; Rudd, 2011). The National Quality Framework pays attention to work reform, increased requirements for teacher qualifications, new quality standards (Green & Nolan, 2011; Productivity Commission, 2011). According to the Productivity Commission (2011), these policy changes would have substantial implications across a number of key areas for the early childhood educators in the workforce. This study endeavours to uncover implications from the early childhood educator perspective.

The research project is considered both timely and necessary to properly ascertain the effects of regulation on the early childhood educators. Whilst the outcomes of the National Quality Framework are articulated in a positive frame, changes resulting from its implementation introduced a "new orthodoxy of educational change" for the early childhood field (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001, p. 1). Change, as a result of education reform, gives rise to "intended and unintended consequences" (Fink, 2003, p. 105). This study reveals intended and unintended consequences of this change as expressed through the voices of real educators in real settings involved with the implementation of regulations.

The study was conceptualised by the researcher in 2011, one year before the implementation of the National Quality Framework (DEEWR, 2009c), but two years after the government announced its impending launch in 2009 (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009a). There had been ongoing discussion around this reform regime from 2009, with a focus on particular aspects of the National Quality Framework, such as, the enactment of the approved learning framework (Fenech et al., 2012; Millei & Sumsion, 2011; Sumsion & Barnes, 2010; Sumsion et al., 2009; Tayler, 2011). At the time of the conception of the study, that is, across the transition period of 2009 to 2011, limited attention had been paid to the impact such reform would have on early childhood educators and their profession. This study addresses

this gap. This thesis outlines the research project undertaken to investigate the early childhood educators' conceptions of the lived experience of the impact of regulation.

The question the researcher considered important to understanding more about the early childhood educators' experience was: what are the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators conceptualise the impact of regulation on their profession? The starting point for the study was not a hypothesis to be tested but rather an inquiry to understand the early childhood educators' own conceptions. Answers to the question were sought across the individuals' stories, providing meaning to be presented at a collective level.

The researcher is familiar with the early childhood education and care sector in the southeast Queensland region and in other regions across Australia, having worked extensively as an educator across a variety of areas and roles for a number of years. As an early childhood educator, the researcher has had numerous experiences of previous government policy implementations across different jurisdictions. In southeast Queensland, following the announcement of the Council of Australian Government's partnership agreement of the National Quality Framework (COAG, 2009b), discussions necessarily occurred within early childhood educator networks in which the researcher was engaged. The researcher was therefore aware of anecdotal understandings of early childhood educators in the sector. The researcher, having an interest in the topic, viewed this significant time of reform, this critical juncture, as a unique opportunity to undertake an authentic empirical investigation into the early childhood educators' lived experiences of the mandated regulatory environment.

This introductory chapter provides a background to the study. Consideration of a variety of the early childhood education and care settings provides a picture of the Australia early childhood landscape. Discussion around the Australian government reform agenda is presented followed by an explanation of the components of the National Quality Framework, as they existed at the time of its mandated implementation in January 2012. The aims, questions and research design developed for this research project are then provided. Finally, the researcher's standpoint is identified, the significance of the research project noted and the thesis structure described.

## 1.2 Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia

The context of this study is the early childhood education and care field in Australia. Early childhood is viewed as being the period of a young child's life from birth to eight years of age (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2016). In Australia, the term also typically refers to children in the birth to eight years age group (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009) and is associated with school and prior to school contexts (Gibson, 2016; Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013). Early childhood education and care on the other hand generally refers to the provision of programs designed to offer education and care for early childhood children in the birth to five years age group (Harrison et al., 2011; Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2010). Early childhood educators predominately implement the programs in the early childhood education and care field.

Across the contemporary early childhood sector in Australia, there are varieties of service offerings (Tayler, Ishimine, Cloney, Cleveland, & Thorpe, 2013). Early childhood education and care settings that provide programs for children, and are regulated by government, are considered formal contexts. The types of early childhood education and care settings in Australia, for the age group birth to five years old, include family day care, long day care, and kindergarten/preschool care. The programs offered across these settings are varied, to cater for the diversity that exists within communities. Families also rely on informal arrangements between family members or friends to provide care for their children. The government does not regulate these informal services. Children may attend only one type of early childhood education and care setting or a combination of types of care throughout their early childhood. In the context of this study, the focus will be on formal early childhood education and care settings catering for children birth to five years in Australia.

The two formal early childhood education and care service types associated with this study are long day care and kindergarten/preschool care. Long day care is a centre-based childcare service (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), 2016b) which provides part-time or full day care for children aged birth to five years (Press & Hayes, 2000). Centres typically operate between 7.30 am and 6.00 pm on regular working days (Australian Government Fair Work, 2016) for 48

weeks per year; however, some centres offer a broader time range (Press & Hayes, 2000). The variety in opening hours is designed to support parents to manage both the care of their children and the demands of their employment (Productivity Commission, 2014). Long day care centres are required to deliver an appropriate accredited early childhood program for children (ACECQA, 2016b). Centres are run by private companies, local councils, community organisations, individuals, non-profit organisations or by employers for their staff (Productivity Commission, 2014).

Kindergarten/preschool is primarily aimed at children in the year immediately prior to fulltime schooling and offers planned sessional educational programs (Elliott, 2006, Gibson, 2016). This service type can be located on government and non-government school grounds, in local community venues or at standalone sites (Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, 2009). Kindergarten/preschool programs are typically play-based educational programs designed and delivered by a four year university degree-qualified early childhood teacher (Elliott, 2006). The federal government provides funding for all eligible children across Australia to access a kindergarten/preschool program in the year prior to school entry (DEEWR, 2011). The terminology relating to these service types is not consistent across state and territories in Australia (Gibson, 2016). For example in Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia, and Queensland, the year prior to school is known as kindergarten whilst preschool is the term used in New South Wales (Elliott, 2006; Gibson, 2016). This study was undertaken in Queensland and therefore this service type will be referred to hereafter as kindergarten.

Early childhood teacher is the title currently used by the Australian Children's Education Care Quality Authority (ACECQA, 2016b) to describe a person who holds approved qualifications under the National Quality Standards (ACECQA, 2011b). Early childhood educator is a title used across the National Quality Framework to refer to all staff working with children in long day care centres and kindergartens (ACECQA, 2011b). In this study the title early childhood educator is used and refers to staff working with children in long day care and kindergarten settings. Early childhood educators from long day care and kindergarten comprised the participants for this study.

## 1.3 Australian Government Reform Agenda

The regulatory environment of early childhood settings in contemporary Australia is a result of government policy development and implementation (Elliot, 2006). Therefore any discussion around the impact of new regulations on the early childhood educators' profession necessitates an overview of policy development in Australia. Policy development is aimed at improving the wellbeing of the population (Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley, & Shepherd, 2012). Global understandings of the importance of the early years, and international reports associated with early childhood education, influenced the Australian Government's approach to associated policy development following the 2007 federal elections (Green & Nolan, 2011; Harrison & Murray, 2012).

Understandings around neuroscience and economics have emerged from research and stand out as having influenced early childhood policy development (Theobald & Busch, 2016). Knowledge emerging from the neuroscience arena has provided important understandings around brain development (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2015; Shonkoff, 2010). Brain research reveals that the first three years of a child's life is a critical time for development (Centre on the Developing Child, 2007, 2011; Currie, 2009; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). This time of a child's life is recognised as a window of opportunity for significant learning to occur (Gibson, 2016; Millei & Joronen, 2015). Economic research has shown that there is financial benefit in investing in early childhood education and care (Heckman, 2011; Theobald & Busch, 2016). Heckman and Masterov (2007) note that young children who engage in early childhood education experience greater success in life and are more able to contribute economically and socially to their community and nation. These contemporary understandings around early childhood education exert pressure on governments to develop policy commiserate with children's needs (Brennan, 2008, Woodhead, 2006).

An international report of the review of early childhood education and care in participating countries, undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), was released in 2006 (OECD, 2006). This report, Starting Strong 2 was not positive for Australia (Fenech et al., 2012). The report suggested that, in the Australian context, investment in early childhood was low;

working conditions and remuneration for staff was inadequate; there was fragmentation of jurisdiction system and responsible parties and the regulatory systems support for high-quality standards and practices was inconsistent (OECD, 2006).

The Australian federal government elected in 2007 responded to both the contemporary understandings and the international report by announcing a range of reforms as part of an education revolution package. Encapsulated in this package was the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care (COAG, 2009b). The outcome of this agreement was the introduction of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (the National Quality Framework), which was mandated to be applied across the early childhood sector.

## 1.4 National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework was a national regulatory framework through which the government aimed to achieve its vision of raising the quality of early childhood education and care for young children in Australia (Brennan & Adamson, 2014; Grieshaber & Graham, 2017). Previously, no national framework existed which mandated standards services must achieve and maintain to provide ongoing quality education and care for children from birth (DEEWR, 2009c). The government saw the framework as providing guidance for early childhood educators working in settings such as long day care centres and kindergartens (DEEWR, 2009c).

As depicted in Figure 1.1 the National Quality Framework consisted of:
- the Education and Care Services National Law ('National Law');
- the Education and Care Services National Regulations ('National Regulations');
- the approved learning framework;
- the National Quality Standard;
- a national quality rating and assessment process;
- a new national body—the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA);
- Regulatory authorities. (ACECQA, 2013a)
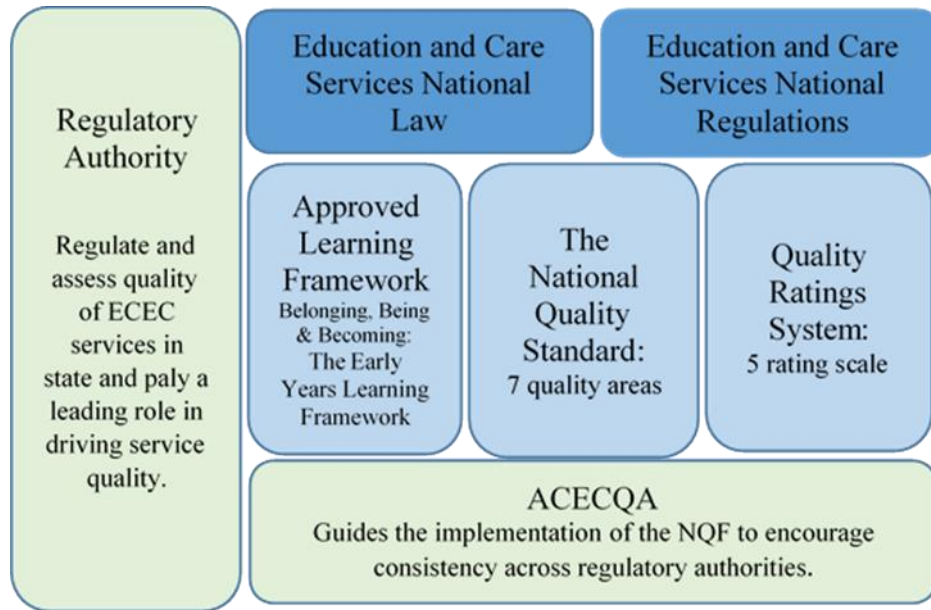
*Figure 1.1.* National Quality Framework overview (adapted from Education Council, 2014, p. 12)

The objectives of the National Quality Framework consisted of creating positive quality environments for children, developing a high quality early childhood workforce, providing service friendly regulatory systems and offering transparency to the community (ACECQA, 2013a). The National Quality Framework was mandated as of 1 January 2012 across the early childhood sector Australia wide.

## 1.5 The Study

As presented above, this study investigated early childhood educators' experiences and conceptions of the impact of regulation on their profession. This study was undertaken following the introduction of the National Quality Framework and therefore at a time of significant change for the early childhood sector. The timing of the study aligned with the immediacy of experiences of the participants. The importance of this study is its dedication to authentically representing the voices of early childhood educators at one point in time.

Early childhood educators were sought from long day care centres and standalone kindergartens in urban, regional, and rural and remote contexts. Both of these types of services were placed under the jurisdiction of the National Quality Framework. The implementation of the framework was notable for early childhood service educators across the selected service types.

### 1.5.1 Aim of the study.

The aim of the study was to investigate the different ways in which early childhood educators conceptualised the impact of regulation on their profession resulting from the implementation of the National Quality Framework. The central position of this study was not to investigate the phenomenon of regulation but rather the conceptions the early childhood educators had of the phenomenon as captured by the relationship inevitably occurring between the two. The study sought the lived experience of the impact of regulation. Of particular interest was hearing educators articulate how their profession had been impacted by the implementation of mandatory accountabilities through the regulation of service provision.

### 1.5.2 Research questions and research design.

Phenomenography was selected as the appropriate method to reveal the early childhood educators' lived experience of the impact of regulation on their profession. Phenomenography is a research methodology that aims to identify and describe the qualitatively different ways a person experiences a phenomenon (Marton, 1986). The approach focuses on the description of the experience as presented by the participant. Experiences have the potential to become the means through which phenomena can be examined and exposed. In the context of the study, this approach offers the best way of obtaining useful data, which can then be interpreted in a meaningful way (Entwistle, 1997). Using the phenomenographic approach, 25 early childhood educators were interviewed. The early childhood educators' descriptions were analysed and grouped into five categories of description.

The main data collection technique of the phenomenographic approach is semi-structured interviews. Following engagement with the literature around the possible shortcomings of semi-structured interviews as a data collection process (Akerlind, Bowden, & Green, 2005; Bahn & Barratt-Pugh, 2011; Leitch, 2006), a methodological elaboration was devised. The elaboration provided an opportunity to enhance authentic data collection by encouraging deeper description of the lived experience. The participants in this study were asked to create an arts-inspired plate prior to the interview and to bring it with them to the interview. Throughout the interview both the participant and the researcher referred to the arts-inspired plate. It assisted the researcher in bracketing her preconceived ideas and retaining a focus on

the participants' experience. The participants used the arts-inspired plate to illustrate a point further or bring a new point into play.

The research question around which this study was developed was:

*What are the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators conceptualise the impact of regulation on their profession?*

To explore the variation in understandings that educators held in relation to the regulations, the participants were asked the following questions:

1. What do you understand regulation to be?

2. How has regulation impacted upon your profession?

Phenomenography aims to describe a second order perspective of the phenomenon under study (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). This means the researcher describes how the participant conceives reality. The researcher was interested in capturing the qualitatively different ways the phenomenon of the impact of regulations was experienced by the early childhood educators.

### 1.5.3    Researcher's standpoint.

In reporting this research project, it is necessary to establish the researcher's stance in relation to the field. As stated previously, the researcher is an experienced early childhood educator who has been involved in the early childhood education and care sector at the prior to school, school, TAFE and university levels.

Phenomenography is a research approach that aims at eliciting the variety of ways individuals experience a phenomenon (Stoodley, 2009). When using this approach it is vital the researcher remains open minded at all stages and brackets any preconceived ideas associated with the research questions. Failure to bracket preconceived ideas on behalf of the researcher may lead to the tainting of the data (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998).

It is also essential that it be noted that phenomenography is not a research approach that requires the development of a hypothesis (Bowden, 2000). It is the view of phenomenographers that the development of a hypothesis will influence the thinking of the phenomenographer throughout the study. The literature also suggests that it

would be very difficult to conduct an interview without directing the dialogue toward this pre-developed hypothesis. The danger is that questions will not eventuate from the dialogue, but rather from the thoughts of the interviewer who has developed the hypothesis and, as such, the utterances will be considered tainted.

The process of bracketing preconceived ideas and maintaining an open mind unencumbered by a pre-determined hypothesis created tensions for the researcher across the development of this study. As with all research projects, it was necessary to develop an understanding of the field and become familiar with existing relevant research associated with the topic to be able to make sense of what the participants were saying. Significant commitment was required on behalf of the researcher to become informed but not influenced by these developing understandings.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

The study has produced three outcomes. Firstly, this study contributes to the understandings of the impact regulatory regimes have on the early childhood profession. The findings relate directly to the Australian early childhood education and care context, following the introduction of the National Quality Framework, but are relevant across a multitude of sectors. Whilst the outcomes of this particular study may be unique to the chosen location, sample and time, it is anticipated that they will stimulate further discussion and investigation into impacts upon educators and their practices during regulatory change. Discussion pertaining to future policy developments and reforms, across a variety of sectors, may be supported through consideration of the experiences offered by the early childhood educators in this study.

Secondly, as part of the research design, a methodological elaboration was devised to enhance the data collection process. The elaboration consisted of an arts-inspired research project being incorporated within the phenomenographic data collection regime. This varied methodological approach provides a comprehensive framework for phenomenographic investigations across a variety of contexts. Thirdly, this research project, being situated in the early childhood context, contributes another phenomenographic study to the early childhood research field.

This study was undertaken at a particular point in time with a particular group of participants. A limitation of this study is that it is restricted to this particular set of early childhood educators. The outcomes of this study cannot therefore be viewed as a complete representation of all early childhood educators across all services. Additionally, because it was associated with a specific event, it cannot be viewed as a representation of all experiences of regulations.

## 1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters. This introductory chapter introduces the aims, context and research questions to be explored. The background for the study in relation to the global early childhood focus and the Australian political focus is provided. The Australian political focus includes a description of the National Quality Framework. The next sections explain the study including the aims, methodology and research question and researcher's standpoint. The significance of the study is discussed.

Chapter 2 examines the literature that has informed this research topic. Literature relating to the implementation of regulation across educational contexts, teachers' experiences of regulation and early childhood educators' experience of regulations was reviewed.

Chapter 3 discusses the research design adopted in this thesis. Phenomenography has been used as the research approach. The data gathering process was conducted in two stages. The participants created an arts-inspired plate prior to the interview session as the first stage. The interview session constituted the second stage. The design of this phenomenographic methodology as a suitable research approach for answering the research question is explored.

Chapter 4 outlines the findings obtained through the enactment of the research design. The findings are expressed as five categories of description and two dimensions of variation presented as an outcome space. This is in keeping with the phenomenographic approach.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and implications associated with the study. The findings are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed.

The study's conclusion is presented in Chapter 6. Contributions of the study to the field are presented and the value of the phenomenographic approach for investigating early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their profession is asserted. Implications and limitations of the study are acknowledged with suggestions for further research.

# CHAPTER 2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, the background of this study was described. The timeliness of research into early childhood educators' experiences of the impact of regulation on their profession at this point in time was presented. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature relevant to this study. It also provides an explanation of the essential process of bracketing in phenomenography in relation to the literature review.

There is a particular focus on literature that has, in different ways, investigated the impact of regulation in the contexts of education in general, and early childhood education specifically. The initial review of the literature was conducted on research literature available prior to the implementation of the National Quality Framework in 2012. This review was undertaken to establish the research gap, support the formulation of the research project, and prepare for the data collection process. Following the data collection process, the literature was revisited to review commentary post the implementation of the National Quality Framework in 2012. This approach led to the organisation of the literature across three key contexts in which early childhood educators conduct their profession. The key areas constitute the regulation context, quality context and educator context within the early childhood education and care field. These contexts are interrelated and contribute to the world in which the early childhood educators undertake their profession. Each context is highly pertinent to understanding and clarifying the world of early childhood educators in the 2012-2014 period.

## 2.2 Researcher Declaration

According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), indicating a research interest or topic is the first step in developing a qualitative research project. The researcher is then to engage in a literature review around the topic to clarify that the interest has not already been investigated. Once the gap in the literature has been identified a discipline or paradigm appropriate for investigating the topic is selected followed by the choice of a research approach. In relation to this study, which had the aim of investigating the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experience the impact of regulation on their profession, phenomenography was selected as the

most suitable research approach for providing new knowledge for the research community. It is necessary to discuss this process of designing research at this point because of the stance phenomenographers take on the issue of bracketing.

Bracketing, which is explained in depth in Chapter 3, is a process that is essential in the phenomenographic approach. When undertaking a phenomenographic research study, it is the researcher's aim to enter the life world of the participant to collect the data for the project. The categories of description that are to be developed as a result of analysing data must represent the participants' very own descriptions of their relevant experiences (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). It is therefore essential that the researcher set aside her own beliefs, values and assumptions to be sure to record the participants' particular points of view (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). Marton and Booth (1997) provide strong warnings to phenomenographers to bracket prior experiences and knowledge gained through the literature. With this in mind, it is vital that it be made clear that from this researcher's perspective the literature review was conducted as if balancing on a tight rope. The researcher declares that, in the context of this study, the information gleaned through the literature review was stored as knowledge for the researcher and consciously sequestered during the data generation and analysis process, so as to achieve the greatest possible success with bracketing.

## 2.3 Regulation Context

Early childhood educators in Australia experienced a regulatory environment as a result of the implementation of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (the National Quality Framework) Australia wide (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009; Fenech, 2011). The National Quality Framework was driven by Commonwealth Government policy approaches to improving the nation's economic prosperity through the development of a capable workforce (Rudd & Macklin, 2007). It was argued that a capable and productive workforce was required for the nation's continued participation in the process of globalisation in these neoliberal times (Rudd & Gillard, 2008).

A review of the literature relating to understandings around relationships between regulations, policy and reform in general is presented, followed by literature relating to their application to the early childhood education and care sector. A short history

of the development of regulations, associated with early childhood education and care in Australia, is included as part of the literature review. The notion that policy and regulations may detrimentally affect the early childhood educators' profession is captured in the final section of this discussion around the regulation context.

### 2.3.1   Regulation, policy, and reform.

To understand the regulation context, it is necessary to investigate what regulation is. Banks (2001) explained regulations as being laws, government rules or directions that require certain conduct from people and organisations. He went on to state that regulations are "essential to the proper functioning of society" (p. 1). The OECD (2010) supported this idea by noting that a regulatory environment promotes economic, social and environmental welfare. Regulation and policy development are influenced by the demographic, economic and social pressures of individual countries and are designed to support family, employment, education and economic progress (Gibson, McArdle, & Hatcher, 2015; Logan, Press, & Sumsion, 2012; Press & Hayes, 2000).

Regulations are commonly associated with reform and implemented through government policy (Baldock, Fitzgerald, & Kay, 2009). Regulations provide the tools or instruments through which government policy is enacted to implement change (OECD, 2010). According to Kirlin (1996), the role of government is to "constitute effective policies as instruments of collective choice, making political choices that define and protect communities and delivery of services" (p. 161). One way that this is achieved is through regulations. Gormley (2000) noted that regulations ensure that services are meeting particular minimum requirements and adhering to particular rules that will ensure quality for the user.

Globalisation has an important association with regulations. Governments worldwide have engaged with regulatory reform as a means to remain competitive in the face of globalisation (Tatto, 2006). Globalisation, according to Tatto, is experienced by nation states at the economic, social, cultural and political levels as countries aim to shape the values of their societies through "western influenced models of democracy" (p. 232). The process of globalisation places increasing importance on the world interacting in one economic space. Lingard (2006) discussed globalisation as resulting from "an enhanced awareness amongst people across the globe that the

world is one place" (p. 291). Regulations are viewed as an important mechanism in a nation's approach to globalisation (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2005). Associated with globalisation, according to Davies and Bansel (2007), is neo-liberalism. The authors noted that neo-liberalism fitted with the globalisation movement because its discourses and practices act on people to shape them to be "productive economic entrepreneurs in their own lives" (p. 248). Under neo-liberalism, countries associated with globalisation ideals focus on the economy as their primary concern (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Rose (1999) suggested that governments of globalised countries use neo-liberal technologies and practices, through policy, regulations and reform, to shape society.

Ball (2006) wrote that neo-liberalism, as the currently dominant political-economic ideology worldwide, frames many of the education policy approaches that circulate. In discussion around educational policy research, Rizvi (2006) reported that the world is characterised by "increasing levels of interconnectedness and interdependence" (p. 194). In Rizvi's view, neo-liberal education policy grows and disseminates as a result of globalisation. Rizvi also presents the view that it cannot be ignored that neo-liberal education policy is an essential component for consideration in the development of educational reform. Sims and Waniganayake (2015) suggested that a strong connection between education and the employment market, and hence economic prosperity, was created because of neo-liberalist thinking. The outcome of the combination of globalisation and neo-liberalist thinking has seen the development of educational policy designed to drive national economic proficiencies (Millei & Jones, 2014; Stronach, 2010; Tatto, 2006).

### 2.3.2   Regulation of the early childhood education and care sector.

The development of educational policy designed to facilitate economic growth has seen an increase of government regulation in the education sector overflowing into the early childhood education and care space (Britto, Yoshikawa, & Boller, 2011; Moss, 2010; Penn, 2007; Tatto, 2006). Penn (2007) reported that following input from the OECD, governments have acknowledged the benefits of early childhood education and care, and recognised that the benefits extend beyond the child and their family, eventually adding to the country's economy. These current trends in thinking are strongly influenced by the economic need for nations to become

completive in the global market (Fink, 2001; Gibson et al., 2015; Tatto, 2006). Authors, such as Britto et al. (2011), Comber and Nixon (2009), Heckman and Krueger (2003), OECD (2010) and White (2011) reported that education was considered to be vital to a nation's economic growth, particularly through its contribution to the development of human capital. Human capital is the ability of people to be productive in their workplaces, and society, providing a workforce that will move an economy forward (Banks, 2009, 2010; Bennett, 2008; Schmidtchen, 2009). Bates (2013) suggested that governmental human capital policies act as levers for transforming education systems to progress economic growth. Brown (2003) noted that the education context was considered highly relevant in the economic process because those involved could be constructed to become economic and social contributors to society. This greater inclusion of education policy in government productivity agendas has created a "policy epidemic" for the sector according to Ball (2003, p. 215).

Research conducted by Heckman (2011) has shown there is economic and financial benefit in investing in early childhood education and care. Economic growth is vital for the maintenance of current standards of living, which is enabled through a productive work force (Schmidtchen, 2009). Early childhood education and care contributes to a nation's economic prosperity from two perspectives (Carneiro & Heckman, 2003). Firstly, research has shown that the development of young children directly influences their ability to contribute economically to the outcomes of a society (Bennett, 2008; Cunha & Heckman, 2007). Early nurturing, learning experiences and physical health from birth to age five greatly impact upon the ability of an individual to develop the skills necessary to function successfully as a productive member of society (Heckman, 2011). Heckman (2014) analysed the Perry School Program and the Abercedarian/Care program for young children and concluded that children have a greater chance of success in life if they have access to quality early childhood education and care.

Heckman and Masterov (2007), through analysis of programs offered for disadvantaged children, reported that adverse environments could place children at risk of social and economic failure. The researchers noted that empirical studies demonstrated that early intervention could partially remediate the effects of adverse

environments. Reducing the impact of adverse environments could then raise the productivity of society as a whole. Peisner-Feinberg et al. (2001) conducted a study into the cognitive and socioemotional development of children attending community childcare programs. The authors found that young children who engage in early education stay in school longer, are more likely to undertake tertiary study, achieve greater success academically whilst at school, are more socially adjusted and experience a higher level of overall wellbeing. Banks (2010) and the Centre on the Developing Child (2007) reported that people who experience greater success in life are more able to contribute economically and socially to their community and therefore to the human capital of the nation. Constructive early childhood development is widely understood as having a positive effect on a young child's growth, and therefore the nation's future productivity (Banks, 2010; Britto, Cerezo & Ogbunugafor, 2008; Howes et al., 2008; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001; Woodhead, 2006).

From the second perspective, the provision of early childhood education and care contributes to a nation's economic prosperity by enabling women to enter or re-enter the work force (Jaumotte, 2003; OECD, 2006). The work choices of families have altered significantly over recent years (Penn, 2007; Press & Woodrow, 2005) and the entry or return of women to the labour forces is one such significant work choice change. Jaumotte (2003), in examining female labour force participation, noted high levels in most OECD countries. The entry or return of women to the work force has been supported by access to childcare. In countries such as Australia, higher numbers of women are returning to the workforce after childbirth and this has been possible because of the availability of childcare (Phillips, 2014; Productivity Commission, 2014).

High female labour participation rates are desirable because of positive outcomes in such areas as careers, social welfare, education and wealth (Blundell, Costa Dias, Costas & Shaw, 2016; Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011; Jaumotte, 2003). In a study around long-term behavioural effects of welfare programs, Blundell et al. (2016) established that women entering, re-entering or remaining in the workforce lead to improved family and societal outcomes. According to the researchers, participation in the workforce increased opportunities for education and wealth gains for women.

This led to positive influences on gender equity and reduction of family poverty according to Jaumotte (2003). The employment of women is also linked to improved child wellbeing and development (Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011; Jaumotte, 2003).

Ageing populations in OECD countries threaten current living standards and national public finances (Jaumotte, 2003; Productivity Commission, 2014). Jaumotte (2003) reported that concerns over ageing populations has been a stimulus for building female workforce participation. In the past, the care of the young child has generally fallen to the mother extracting her and her skills from the workforce upon a child's birth (Brennan & Adamson, 2014). Grant, Yeandle, and Buckner (2005) reported that women's work skills have been under-utilised in the work-family life cycle, reducing opportunities for overall national economic growth. Maintaining a successful skilled workforce is important for economic progression in the Australian context (Phillips, 2014). Supporting women to enter and remain in the workforce is viewed as being vital to better meet the challenges of sustaining national prosperity into the future (Phillips, 2014). As the number of female workers increases, so does the number of children attending early childhood education and care programs. Regulation of early childhood services becomes increasingly important in the appropriate management of larger numbers of children (Burger, 2012).

### 2.3.3 History of early childhood education and care in Australia.

The Commonwealth Government of Australia has been responsible for the implementation of the regulatory environment relevant to this study. To understand this relationship between the regulatory environment and the Commonwealth Government, a short history of the growth of early childhood education and care in Australia is provided. Of note is the evolution of government involvement that has been evident leading up to this current era.

Childcare in Australia commenced from a philanthropic base. Concern for the care of the children of working mothers, coupled with educational thinking of the time, saw the establishment of kindergartens and day nurseries in the late 19th century (Brennan, 1998, 2007; Elliott, 2006; Kilderry, 2014; Press & Hayes, 2000; Wong, 2006). Prior to this, kindergartens were available mainly for the wealthy and the children of poorer families either attended school with their older siblings or were left unattended at home (Brennan & Adamson, 2014; Press & Hayes, 2000). The

kindergarten movement promoted education and socialisation for young children (Brennan, 1998; Press & Hayes, 2000; Woodrow & Press, 2007). Developing in parallel, the day nursery movement, being staffed by nurses, was concerned with the health and well-being of children and provided care for longer hours, taking into consideration working mothers (Brennan, 1998; Press & Hayes, 2000). This fragmented style of care, being supported by volunteer fund raising, continued across all states of Australia until the 1930s (Towns, 2014).

In the late 1930s the Commonwealth Government turned its attention to the health and education needs of the nation (Kilderry, 2014; Press & Wong, 2015; Towns, 2014), electing to support preschool child development by channelling funding through the then Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development (Press & Wong, 2015). The funding supported the establishment of a model kindergarten in each capital city, offering education and medical support for preschool children (Press & Wong, 2015). Since this time, the early childhood education and care sector has been associated with government through links to funding (Colmer & Cornish, 2010; Wong, 2006).

Following ongoing pressure from lobbying groups through the 1960s and 1970s, state governments moved to more directly provide assistance for the provision of preschool education (Brennan & Adamson, 2014). The state governments of Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland extended their Education Department remit to include preschools to address this pressure (Press & Hayes, 2000). The state governments of New South Wales and Victoria provided funding to support volunteer run preschool organisations. The preschool sector, however, did not meet the needs of working mothers (Press & Hayes, 2000).

The Commonwealth and State Governments experienced lobbying for funded childcare places from several quarters (Towns, 2014). Feminists, advocating from the perspective of women's rights, and industry bodies, because of the lower wage bill associated with employing women, campaigned for childcare availability (Press & Wong, 2015). In response to this pressure, the Commonwealth Government introduced the Child Care Act 1972 (the Act) (Logan, Sumsion, & Press, 2013). The focus of the Act was on providing funding for centre-based day care facilities for children of working mothers (Elliott, 2006; McIntosh & Phillips, 2002). Associated

with the Act was the additional focus of altering societal views on expectations associated with children's care and education (Logan et al., 2013). Quality care for young children, a relatively new idea at the time, was seen as essential and could be achieved through the employment of staff qualified in "early childhood education and/or health" (Logan et al., 2013, p. 85; Logan, Sumsion, & Press, 2015). The Child Care Act 1972 focused on quality in childcare and enforced this by linking it to government funding (Brennan & Adamson, 2014; Logan et al., 2013).

A change of federal government occurred in 1975, bringing with it a focus on reducing Commonwealth expenditure. In an effort to fit in with this approach, campaigning for childcare funding included strong arguments from the economic perspective. During the 1980s, under a different political party, the federal government's focus was on a balance between economic and social justice objectives, with a strong emphasis on increasing employment opportunities. The demands of the labour market substantially influenced childcare provision during this era (Press & Hayes, 2000). In the 1990s, private operators successfully campaigned for subsidies to help fill the void created by mothers wanting to return to work (Sumsion, 2006).

Some private for-profit establishments, however, caused concern in the community (Logan et al., 2013). Issues included the lower number of qualified staff employed, the employment of young staff who were dismissed when they became eligible for adult wages and centres' failure to offer care for babies and toddlers (Logan et al., 2013). In response to these concerns, the Commonwealth Government introduced the Quality Improvement and Assurance System in 1994: an accreditation system for private and community based long day care centres to ensure quality was achieved (Grieshaber, 2000; Kilderry, 2015; Logan et al., 2012). Funding for centres was now tied to their successful participation in the accreditation system (Press & Hayes, 2000; Rowe, Tainton & Taylor, 2006).

The Commonwealth Governments, who held office across the 1990s and early 2000s, developed policy approaches that encouraged the growth of private childcare provision. These approaches relieved the burden on government expenditure and led to a surge in the growth of private centres and almost no growth in the non-for profit space. The growth in private for-profit childcare centres led to the introduction of

corporate care provision (Logan et al., 2012). Corporate care providers, such as ABC Learning, were listed on the stock exchange, providing them with access to increased capital (Brennan, 2007). According to Brennan and Adamson (2014), the ABC Learning company adopted an aggressive expansion strategy, which led to its eventual demise in 2008. At one point along the journey, the company was noted as being the largest childcare company of its type in the world (Brennan & Adamson, 2014). The demise of the company created significant angst in the industry, because of the uncertainty surrounding the continuance of its more than 1000 centres (Brennan & Adamson, 2014). To relieve some of this worry, a bailout package was provided by the Commonwealth Government of the time (Logan et al., 2012). New owners operating as for-profit organisations, community groups and non-profit organisations assumed control of all except about 80 centres by 2009 (Brennan & Adamson, 2014). According to Brennan & Adamson (2014) this experience with corporate care prompted research, which revealed concerns associated with some private centres in the areas of quality of care and management. This prompted further changes in government policy and funding.

In 2007, the Labor government, led by Kevin Rudd, came into power at the Commonwealth level. Around this time, two significant events relevant to early childhood occurred. Firstly, the demise of ABC Learning was unfolding with its final exit in 2008, bringing early childhood education and care soundly into the community spotlight (Brennan & Adamson, 2014). Press and Woodrow (2009) argued that corporatisation, such as this, had had "far reaching implications" for the early childhood education and care sector because of the way quality care had been understood and enacted under its guise (p. 232). Secondly, the international report relating to early childhood, Starting Strong 2 (OECD, 2006), was released. The report indicated that in the Australian context, the delivery of childcare was fragmented across a number of jurisdictions, creating a barrier for system coherence (OECD, 2006). Additionally, investment in early childhood was low compared to like nations and the working conditions and remuneration for staff was inadequate creating occurrences of high staff turnover according to the OECD (2006) report. The combination of a fragmented system, with a high turnover of staff, deemed the implementation of quality childcare challenging despite the regulatory system (Fenech et al., 2012; Fenech, Sumsion, & Goodfellow, 2008).

In the midst of these events, the Labor government came into power with an agenda to build human capital and boost Australia's economic productivity. Leading up to the election the Labor Party released the policy position paper, *The Australian economy needs an education revolution: New directions paper*, on the critical link between long-term prosperity, productivity growth and human capital investment (Rudd & Smith, 2007). This paper identified education as the most important investment needed for building the vital human capital required to sustain Australia's economic viability (Rudd & Smith, 2007). The authors also noted that a significant barrier in productivity growth, over the recent years, had been under-investment in education. Rudd and Smith reported that the low level of participation in early childhood education in the Australian context was the result of low-level investment in the sector. A commitment was made within the paper to "lift the quantity of Australia's investment in education and the quality of education outcomes" (p. 27).

Upon winning the election, the Labor government was able to act upon these commitments. This saw COAG endorse the National Partnership Agreement on the Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care. Through this agreement, all states and territories approved the development and implementation of a nationally consistent approach to early childhood education and care, which encompassed the implementation of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (Macfarlane & Lakhani, 2015). Logan et al. (2012) note that "a realisation of the far-reaching effects of market failure, and recognition of the importance of nationally consistent standards, saw COAG endorse the National Quality Reform Agenda for early childhood development" (p. 9). It was suggested in the literature that the introduction of the National Quality Framework in 2012 would bring an end to the lack of systematic provision of early childhood education and care in Australia (Tayler, 2016). The regulatory context that emerged as a result of the introduction of the National Quality Framework is presented in the following section.

### *2.3.3.1 Introduction of the National Quality Framework.*

The National Quality Agenda was an Australian Government policy agenda for early childhood education and care. The change in the provision of the early childhood education and care services within Australia had been enacted at a national level

through the development of the National Quality Agenda and this process was overseen by the Productivity Agenda Working Group (2008) of COAG through a National Partnership Agreement (Tayler, 2011). The consequence of this action was that Australia had, for the first time, national early childhood education and provision and a new national body, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) (Grieshaber & Graham, 2017).

The regulations resulting from the National Quality Framework are The Education and Care Services National Regulations and are legislated through The Education and Care Services National Law ('National Law and National Regulations') (ACECQA, 2014). The National Regulations support the National Law by detailing the operational requirements for early childhood education and care services. The operational requirements include obtaining provider approval, service approval and supervisor certificates to be permitted to operate a service, implementing the new early childhood curriculum framework called *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) and meeting minimal operational requirements around seven quality areas as set out in the National Quality Standards. Elements of the quality areas include the provision of qualified educators facilitating quality interactions and positive learning experiences for children (ACECQA, 2016c). Staff-child ratios, staff qualifications and staff requirements were explicitly indicated as part of the seven quality areas.

A main aim of the National Quality Framework is to ensure all children across Australia received quality early childhood education and care that supports their development and enables the fullest achievement possible (Grieshaber & Graham, 2017; Tayler et al., 2013). It was argued, in the rationale behind the development of the National Quality Framework, that mounting evidence had demonstrated that the early years children's lives had a profound impact on their future health, development, learning and wellbeing (DEEWR, 2009b). The argument continued to purport that children who have the opportunity to develop to their fullest have more capacity to engage with opportunities offered by, and to contribute to, society (DEEWR, 2009c). The two mechanisms included as part of the National Quality Framework to ascertain quality are the National Quality Standards (NQS) and the

assessment and ratings scale positioning quality as an essential element in early childhood education and care.

### 2.3.4   Unintended consequences of regulation.

Regulatory reform is designed and implemented to have an impact on society (Banks, 2001), and it is necessary to ensure economic, social and environmental welfare (Meloni, 2010). Fink (2003) reported that despite the aim of regulation to improve society economically and socially, tension exists between the intent of regulations and the experience of regulatory implementation (Fink, 2003). Whilst Banks (2001) suggested that the greatest benefit is achieved when the implementation of regulations causes "minimum burden on those regulated" and "minimum collateral damage to others" (p. 2), this is not always the case. Banks argued that regulations can create unnecessary paperwork, stifle creativity, divert workers from their core business and reduce flexibility. Osgood (2006a) reported that change challenges and unsettles established understandings and cannot but create impact for those involved. Fenech (2006) argued that, through examining the critical discourses associated with regulatory systems, unintended outcomes were revealed that might affect job satisfaction. Fink noted that the stated goals of regulations could lead to intended and unintended consequences.

Research relating to the implementation of education policy, and regulation globally, has revealed unintended consequences (Ball, 2003; Bates, 2013; Fenech, 2006; Webb 2011). According to Fink (2003) regulatory change takes the guise of curriculum direction for children, accountability measures for teachers and defined responsibilities for school leaders in the education sector. Ball (2003) found through his research that "what it means to teach and what it means to be a teacher are subtly but decisively changed in the process of reform" (p. 218). In the United Kingdom, Osgood (2006b) noted that under the guise of providing more freedom, policy reforms were introduced into the early year's sector. In reality, the policy reforms represented much greater prescription for the sector. Osgood (2006b) described this process as an "act of deregulating and then re-regulating" (p. 188). Fenech (2006) noted that unanticipated outcomes of regulation might, in fact, be detrimental to the quality of care offered in the early childhood education and care sector. She also argues that the taken for granted truths of government discourse shape educator

perspectives and practices, therefore excluding other knowledges educators call upon to conduct their profession. Fenech, Robertson, Sumsion and Goodfellow (2007) report that regulation requirements are potential contributors and inhibitors to achieving quality in an early childhood centre. Ranson (2003) explains that unintended results of regulation place players in an "audit society" (Power, 1999, p. 4) under regimes of performativity (Ball, 2003) and public accountability.

Power (2000) argues that auditing processes, and associated inspection practices, have experienced an explosion in contemporary society. Power suggests that this has been because of the rise in public management and increased demands for accountability and transparency. Power describes this as an audit society and notes that it has been inclusive of the education sector. The audit process is a tool for change, driven by political desires to be answerable to quality assurance criteria, placing it within the operational centre of government (Power, 2000). Power suggests that when applied to the education sector the audit process is "fundamentally an ideologically driven system for disciplining and controlling … teachers" (p. 114). The application of the audit process is devoid of any reflection on whether the intended changes had been successful or if any unintended changes occurred.

Ranson (2003) presented accountability as a function of the regulatory regime within an audit society. Lingard (2010) notes that "accountability literally means to give an account" (p. 135), but he also notes that its essence has changed as a result of national moves towards global economies. Policies in education, Lingard argues, have been economised through the role education is directed to take, in assisting with the production of the human capital required, to progress a nation. Education is thus positioned as a key technology of government (Hunter, 1994). The early childhood education and care sector is also part of this process (Grieshaber, 2002). This economising of education creates collections of knowledge, that become taken for granted truths, against which early childhood educators are aligned and made accountable (Duncan, 2004; Grieshaber, 2002; Novinger & O'Brien, 2003).

Ball (2000, 2003) discusses the concept of performativity as a significant impact of regulation. Performativity, according to Ball (2000), "is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of terror … that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change" (p. 1). Additionally, Ball

(2003) observed, "central to the functioning of performativity is the translation of complex social process and events into simple categories of judgement" (p. 217). Ball (2000) stated that the performance of an organisation, or an individual person, is taken as an indication of the level of productivity or quality that is being achieved at any given point in time. What constitutes performativity as an impact is related to who carries out the imposing, and the format of the judgement process. This process of judging the performance of an individual or organisation is a representation of a "new discourse of power" (Ball, 2000, p. 1), arising, not just from the spoken language, but from the practices associated with the regulatory regime. This performance is measured against a standard or rating imposed upon the person or organisation.

In relation to performativity associated with education contexts, the imposer is regulation, administered through top down policy, according to Ball (2000) and Osgood (2006a). Performativity, as a component of education reform, utilises "policies of technologies" to deploy technical and structural changes, and mechanisms that shape teachers in a preferred image (Ball, 2003, p. 217). Kilderry (2015) notes that performativity "constructs and steers" educators through the use of comparison and judgement (p. 635). Ball (2003, 2009), Hall (2004) and Osgood (2004) noted that educators stated that the newer approach of judging performance in the educational sector was in contrast to the preferred way of operating. The authors reported that the educators preferred approaches that engendered professional collaboration, co-operation and mutual support.

## 2.4 Quality Context

Quality has been identified as an essential component of early childhood education and care because of the implications it has for children's ongoing learning and development and its benefits for society (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Maloney & Barblett, 2002; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002; Sylva, 2010). Quality is a term that has been regularly associated with early childhood education and care across the literature (Barblett, 2000; Maloney & Barblett, 2002) and, as such, is included in the literature review for this study. Britto et al. (2011) reported that an international trend to achieve equity for the world's young children drives the quality agenda. Research has shown that

the quality of programs is key to improving health, cognitive and socio-emotional development (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling, 1994; Dahlberg, 2016; La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004).

Urban (2008) noted that the term quality is problematic because of its associations with "notions of universality, technocratic manageability and measurability" (p, 138). Urban went on to say that quality is regularly drawn upon to justify regulation in early childhood education and care, leading to a loss of professional autonomy for educators. Moss and Dahlberg (2008) suggested that quality is not neutral but rather it is a term permeated with meanings, values and assumptions, therefore becoming a powerful "human technology" with a designed and desired purpose (p. 5). They argued that as such the assumption is that quality can be applied to all situations in all places and becomes a "technology of normalisation" (p. 4).

Moss (2005) argued that quality is a technical concept that enables governments to control, from a distance, by constructing children as a "certain kind of educated subject" (p. 408). Through the external application of quality as an aspiration of regulation, early childhood programs and early childhood educators are shaped in specific ways (Moss, 2005, 2016). Biersteker, Dawes, Hendricks, and Tredoux (2016) noted that even though definitions of quality are complex and contested, the indicators commonly used to assess quality influence how settings present themselves. They explained that there is broad agreement around the types of elements considered to provide quality, such as holistic curriculum, positive adult-child interactions and active child play, which settings generally aim to emulate.

Quality is presented as a focus of assessment and ratings regimes for settings therefore linking quality to compliance and funding, according to Arndt and Tesar, (2016). Dickinson (2006) reports that ratings of quality have economic advantages for settings because they may increase the prestige of programs, boost enrolments and attract additional compensation where eligible. Within the National Quality Framework, in the Australian context, the aim of mandated ratings is to provide "greater transparency in the information" available to the community and "greater consistency of the scope and quality" of services (Tayler, 2011, p. 201).

Discussion around quality is generally approached from two perspectives. The first perspective argues that children require a high quality experience when attending early childhood education and care services, to have the greatest opportunity to reach their fullest potential in life and contribute successfully to society. The second perspective in the literature investigates what constitutes this necessary high quality education and care and how it can be achieved in early childhood education and care settings.

### 2.4.1 Quality experiences for children.

Strong arguments for quality in early childhood education and care settings are mounted on socioeconomic grounds (Bennett, 2007; Biersteker et al., 2016; Dickinson, 2006; Penn & Lloyd, 2007). The work of Heckman (2006) points to the impact investment in early childhood education and care has on the development of human capital. This investment was viewed as a means of preventing undesirable social and economic problems later in life, such as low attainment in school, long-term unemployment, instances of crime, family breakdown and mental illness (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Children who experience quality relationships and interactions when young children have a greater propensity to manage life's difficulties and exhibit stronger cognitive and non-cognitive skills such as self-regulation, motivation, far sightedness and resilience (Burchinal et al., 2000; Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006; Tayler, Cloney, Thorpe, & Wilson, 2008). The quality of a setting was found to have a direct impact on the cognitive and social abilities of a child about to enter school (Bennett, 2007; Dickinson, 2006; Gialamas, Mittinty, Sawyer, Zubrick, & Lynch, 2014). Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) reported that the quality of individual preschool settings was a significant factor in the intellectual attainment and social and behavioural development of children at entry to school.

Empirical findings from neuroscience research have identified early childhood as a highly sensitive period in a child's overall development (Centre on the Developing Child, 2010; Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron, & Shonkoff, 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Winter, 2010). In discussing the research Shonkoff (2011) noted that it is shown that the "foundations of educational achievement, life-long health, economic productivity and responsible citizenship are formed in early life" (p. 982). Shonkoff

and Phillips (2000), following a review of a body of research around brain development and activity, reported that a child's brain is almost fully developed by the time they reach five years old, with the first three years of life being a time of critical development. During this time of rapid brain development, significant learning occurs (Mustard, 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Social, emotional and cognitive capacities are recognised as indicators of healthy brain development and as predictors of academic achievement (Halfon, Schulman, & Hochstein, 2001). Neuroscience research has provided a growing understanding of how significant adversity damages brain circuits and undermines life-long learning, behaviour, and physical and mental health (Shonkoff, 2011; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Shore, 2001). The research has also provided substantial evidence of the role positive early childhood experiences can play in strengthening the brain (Shonkoff, 2010). The quality of program has been identified as being the most significant factor in assisting children to achieve positive development (McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007). Early childhood environments matter, and nurturing relationships are essential. Early childhood education and care can play a crucial role in supporting children and families during this vital developmental period (Britto et al., 2008).

Leading international bodies acknowledge the importance of policy and regulatory development around families and communities because of the impact such policies have on the social, emotional and educational needs of young children (Davies & Trinidad, 2013). Regulation of early childhood services has been seen to be crucial in ensuring minimum quality standards are met across services to safeguard children (Britto & Ulkuer, 2012; Burger, 2012; Productivity Commission, 2014). Hodgkin and Newell (2007) reported that governments worldwide have initiated national social policies influenced by international tools such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been the most powerful tool for the promotion of human rights in early childhood (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, n.d.), prompting governments to regulate early childhood services so as to provide a basic level of protection for children in settings outside their family (Britto & Ulkuer, 2012; Hodgkin & Newell, 2007). An effective regulatory system helps ensure that children are in environments that are safe and secure, and protected from harm whilst being provided with care and education to advance their health, learning and development (Britto & Ulkuer, 2012;

Press, 2006). Phillips, Howes, and Whitebook (1991) undertook research into the effects of regulations on the quality of care provided in early childhood services. The study revealed that sites with more effective regulatory structures have been shown to supply higher quality early childhood services. Britto et al. (2011) were also able to show that regulations clearly defining and enforcing standards ensure some degree of equity for children and families across diverse neighbourhoods. Regulations allow for national coordination of the implementation of those program features that research and practice demonstrate as supporting child learning and development.

Quality of care as a vital aspect in the provision of children's rights is argued on social justice grounds (Woodhead, 2006). Early childhood education care is viewed as a starting point for establishing human rights and attracts advocacy from international organisations campaigning for rights (Burger, 2010). Being responsive to children's rights is commensurate with attaining equity for children and advocacy for equity is articulated through the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Britto et al., 2011; Sheridan & Samuelsson, 2001). Children's rights are enabled more appropriately in centres demonstrating high quality (Burger, 2012).

In Australia, early childhood education and care settings, regulated under the National Quality Framework, are meant to provide safe spaces for children of working and non-working parents to engage socially, emotionally and cognitively in developmentally appropriate programs (Fordham, 2015). The regulatory aim is for young children to be provided with the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential in high quality early childhood education and care settings so as to be able to contribute to the society of their future (Moore, 2008).

### 2.4.2   Quality of services.

Quality early experiences have been identified as being essential for the positive growth of children and high quality centres are best placed to provide these quality experiences. Lower-quality centres have been associated with compromised development of children (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000). It is important to understand those mechanisms through which quality of care affects children. Mechanisms developed to ascertain quality have been discussed across the literature (Burchinal et al., 2000; Howes et al., 2008).

### *2.4.2.1 Process and structural dimension of quality.*

Quality has been conceptualised and measured from different perspectives. Arndt and Tesar (2016) report that accreditation practices considered quality from two dimensions. The first dimension looks at process-orientated aspects of the service environment as experienced by children. For example, children's interactions with teachers and peers, and availability of materials and activities are noted. The second looks at the various structural dimensions of childcare (Fenech, 2011; Myers, 2000; Phillips et al., 2000; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997). The structural dimensions cover the more easily measureable aspects of care that are responsive to inclusion in regulations and other forms of policy intervention (Fenech, 2011; Myers, 2000; Phillips et al., 2000; Phillipsen et al., 1997). This includes aspects such as the staff-child ratios, staff qualifications and training and staff wages and benefits (Fenech, 2011, Myers, 2000; Phillips et al., 2000; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

High quality educator-child interactions have been identified across the literature as being of substantial importance in the process dimension (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003; Phillipsen et al., 1997). Burchinal et al. (2010) offered significant insights into what quality educator-child interactions would entail. During interactions, an educator used a "positive emotional tone and deliberate engaging instruction" in a quality setting (p. 175). Quality interactions were evident when educators actively monitored children's behaviour watching out for indications of distress or confusion readily, responding in appropriate ways that would support the children's learning (Burchinal et al., 2010). Alternatively, children also take cues from the educator's predictable behaviour (Burchinal et al., 2010). Educators consistently offer children engaging activities of interest to them and take advantage of opportunities to extend the child's thinking through more complex feedback and responses (Burchinal et al., 2010). Undertaking engaging conversations with children demonstrating high level listening skills was another component identified by Burchinal et al. (2010). Seeking children's "expressions, thoughts and ideas" along with "shaping their language and vocabulary" was an essential activity in high quality educator-child interactions (Burchinal et al., 2010, p. 174). To achieve quality educator-child interactions, educators required the time to actively and positively engage with the children. Conversely, research by Ackerman (2006) demonstrated that low quality centres have been characterised by a small number of

interactions between educators and children and interactions are generally insensitive. The types of positive interactions presented above required a "specialized knowledge base" according to Ackerman (p. 88).

According to Phillips et al. (2000) structural dimensions are important because they provide specific information about mechanism that support quality care. Staff-child ratios has been highlighted across the literature as being an essential aspect (Dearing, McCartney, & Taylor, 2009; Fenech, 2011; Lee & Walsh, 2005). Results from a study by Howes (1997) demonstrated that children who experienced staff-child ratios within recommended guidelines tended to have better language skills and somewhat higher receptive and overall communication scores at all ages. This association is consistent with the belief that lower staff-child ratios create conditions that support quality by enabling positive and responsive educator-child interactions to occur on a more regular basis (Burchinal et al., 2000, 2010; Phillips et al., 2000; Shonkoff, 2010). Educators caring for large groups of children reported experiencing stress at having to manage them all and lower staff-child ratio was viewed as a way to offer some relief (Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell, & Wang, 2009; Shonkoff, 2010). Lower staff-child ratios may also provide educators with more time to spend individually with the children in their immediate care. More time spent with individual children enable quality educator-child interactions, leading to quality early childhood experiences.

Research has shown that in correlation with staff-child ratios that enable quality educator-child interactions is the training of the educator (Barnett, 2003; Burchinal et al., 2002). As noted above, the ability to undertake suitable interactions that support children's learning requires specialised knowledge (Ackerman, 2006). The qualification level of the early childhood educator was identified as being a significant factor in the quality of young children's early childhood experiences (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002) because the qualified early childhood educator possessed specialised knowledge and was more likely to create quality environments and engage in quality interactions with the children (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). An essential component of high quality early childhood education and care is teacher education and training in the appropriate field (Ackerman, 2006; Barnett, 2003; Howes et al., 2003; Press & Hayes, 2000;

Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2003). The educators' specialised knowledge of children's development and learning, linked with their understanding of the curriculum, were vital aspects in the contribution to the children's experiences (Barnett, 2003; Elliott, 2006).

Research conducted by Burchinal et al. (2000) sought to investigate the link between the teacher's level of education and child outcomes. The authors noted that results from their study showed significantly better cognitive and language development among children who interacted with degree-qualified staff on a regular basis. In preparing the review for the Children's Services Sub-Committee of the Community Services Minister's Advisory Council, Tayler, Wills, Hayden and Wilson (2006) note that "there is a wealth of empirical evidence supporting the association between quality care and qualified staff" (p. 59). Elliott (2006) noted that empirical evidence presented in research strongly indicated the ability of the educator was a significant factor in the improvement of outcomes for young children. Professional formal qualifications in early childhood that informed educators about understandings around child development and child learning were identified as enabling educators to develop these necessary abilities (Elliott, 2006; Gibson, 2013). Bowman, Donovan and Burns (2001) recommended that "each group of children in an early childhood education and care program should be assigned a teacher who has a bachelor's degree with specialized education related to early childhood" (p. 13).

A further structural dimension investigated as part of ascertaining quality was staff stability. A significant issue impacting upon the ability of services to meet this structural dimension is the high turnover of staff. Staff turnover affects a setting's ability to achieve continuity of practice, which in turn influences the quality of the early childhood program. Turnover of staff in childcare settings exceeds that of other education settings (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003), therefore reducing the ability of a service to attain and maintain desired levels of quality. Whitebook and Sakai (2003) suggest three main types of turnover can be identified. They are (a) job turnover which occurs when a staff member leaves a site but not the field; (b) position turnover occurring when a staff member is relocated to another area on a site or to a different site within the same organisation; and (c) occupational turnover which occurs when a staff member departs from the early child field altogether thus adding

to the existing shortage of skilled staff. In recent studies, higher rates of turnover are associated with lower quality provision (Phillips et al., 2000; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

All types of turnover create disruption to varying degrees within services therefore challenging the ability of the centre to offer stable quality experiences. High turnover rates among childcare staff have been identified as one of the major threats to quality (Manlove & Guzell, 1997, Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Strong relationships established over time between children and educators have been associated with quality early experiences for young children (Shonkoff, 2010; Tayler et al., 2008). The loss of an educator with whom a child has established a trusting relationship can affect the child's feelings of security, leading to impacts on the development of their cognitive, language and social skills (Hale-Jinks, Knopf, & Kemple, 2006; Howes, Hamilton, & Phillipsen, 1998). Centre management are placed under pressure to replace the educator from a field that is recognised as experiencing a shortage of suitable staff. Fellow educators remaining at the centre may feel the effects of losing a colleague, which in turn may impact upon their relationships with the children. Industries regularly face staff turnover; however, the impact of dealing with loss of staff in a human service business where children's development can be compromised is problematic (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992, Phillips et al., 2000; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Factors identified as causing high staff turnover will be discussed later in the chapter.

### 2.4.2.2 Alternate views of quality.

It is suggested that multiple indices are required to understand the many variations of early childhood education and care services and their associated quality (Sosinsky, Lord, & Zigler, 2007; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000). Sosinsky et al. (2007) suggest investigating quality by dividing the two dimensions of process and structure into four characteristics of childcare quality. The first characteristic looks at basic health and safety indicators and the second reviews staff indicators such as wages and turnover rates. Structural features such as staff-child ratios and educators' formal and specialised education constitutes the third characteristic. The fourth indicator looks at the experiences of the child in the early childhood setting characterised by the nature of the interactions of the child with caregivers and peers, children's participation in

activities, and experiences such as language stimulation (Sosinsky et al., 2007). Sosinsky et al. (2007) and Vandell and Wolf (2000) argue that staff in childcare centres are vital to the quality of a centre. They note that positive, supportive and stimulating educator interactions are noted to support positive child development. These interactions, however, may be affected by staffing and classroom environments, hence the need to consider the suggested staff and structural characteristics (Sosinsky et al., 2007; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000).

Fenech (2011) suggested that by accepting either of the classifications above, that is, the four categories or the two dimensions, as elements of quality any ascertainment of quality may be limited or confined. She noted that "the capacity of these elements to support quality is a blind spot in the research literature" (p. 110). Taking the view of quality as prescribed by these categories and dimensions impacts on what is known to be quality and how quality is judged confining thinking to the belief that this is what constitutes quality. Fenech notes that the majority of the research is "discursively constructed in and through positivist approaches to research" privileging some views whilst silencing others (p. 108). By viewing quality in this way, pertinent aspects of early childhood education and care that may indicate quality provision may be missed.

Fenech (2011) noted that the findings revealed six prevailing truths and highlighted issues associated with each truth. Firstly, quality was presented as a quantifiable measure despite the fact that by using this approach significant aspects were not captured. Aspects noted as not captured included leadership and motivation provided by and with the staff (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003), reflective decision-making (Goodfellow, 2003), practices supporting intellectual and cultural diversity (Sylva et al., 2006) and educators' facilitation of children's thinking (Mathers, Eisenstadt, Sylva, Soukakou, & Ereky-Stevens, 2014). Secondly, quality was said to enhance children's development. The process and structural dimensions of quality failed to note all types of children's development, possibly driving centres to focus on only school type aspects such as language and cognitive development. Thirdly, by positioning children's developmental outcomes as a measure of quality, the view of early childhood education and care is taken from a psychological perspective, rather than an educational perspective, thus serving to create a barrier to the growth of the

status of early childhood professionals as educators. The fourth prevailing truth that emerged was the position attributed to the researcher as expert in the field. This placed other stakeholders in diminished positions, despite their immediate and current knowledge of their associated services. The fifth prevailing truth noted children's developmental outcomes as a measure of quality viewed from a limited ecological framework of family, child and early childhood education and care settings. This view ignored the many broader experiences that may influence the child. Lastly, the approach to ascertain quality had originally been developed for use with children in the 3-5 year age group and then imposed upon younger groups.

Fenech (2011) suggested that the one size fits all approach serves to marginalise children in the pre-3 year old age group. Britto et al. (2011) also noted that a one-size fits all approach is not appropriate as a measurement of quality. Considerations around local perspectives are not evident in this type of evaluation. Britto et al. suggested that what is required is a "grounding in country and community contexts, values, and needs" (p. 9). The authors also noted that much of the investigation into quality is conducted for "policy advocacy purposes" rather than out of genuine evaluation of the quality of the program service or systems (p. 10).

Quality investigation in high-income countries generally looks at safety and adequacy of physical environments, teacher-child interactions, pedagogical and content knowledge of staff and staff education and training (Howes et al., 2008; Love et al., 2003). Countries identified as having low income look at characteristics including cultural feeding, caregiving practices and survival issues, training of health service providers, physical growth and psychosocial interventions (Richter, 2004). To counter this, Britto et al. (2011) suggest an ecological perspective of quality by considering five sets of dimensions across settings and systems. The first dimension looks at the way in which the early childhood provision aligns with the community in which it functions. Communities worldwide are impacted by variations in policy and culture, (e.g., investment in early childhood), views on parental employment and support for children's health. The many differences that exist make considerations of context vital. Secondly, the scope of resources, both material and human capital, must be acknowledged. A service can only provide what it has available to it. For example, the expectation to have trained staff is only possible if training is available

for the staff in that context. Thirdly, different physical and spatial components are needed depending upon the contexts. The fourth dimension also promotes the investigation of leadership and management as suggested above by Fenech (2011). Finally, the authors suggest a dimension that investigates interactions and communications, which is in line with the process and structural view of quality discussed above. Their point of departure is to seek evidence of communication undertaken to reach marginalised and less involved families such as immigrants or ethnic groups. The authors posit that a uniform definition of quality may not be possible across the variety of global communities and that adherence to context is paramount.

When the focus of accreditation is on structure and process, as opposed to alternate views of quality, services are at risk of privileging attributes that detract from sound curriculum decision-making (Novinger & O'Brien, 2003). Attributes that promote relevant and contextual practices may not be promoted through policy driven quality measures. Services may become risk averse, selecting activities and materials viewed as being safe and in keeping with requirements (Fenech, Sumsion, & Goodfellow, 2008) rather than focusing on meeting the needs of the children. The pressure to achieve quality, in the eyes of the measurement tool, may dictate the programming of the educator. Understandings around the needs of the children are further eroded as the use of child observation changes in the pursuit of quality (Hatch, Grieshaber, Halliwell, & Walsh, 2001). The intent of child observations changing from revealing children's needs, to that of assessment tools, negates possibilities of instigating developmental learning (Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002). Dickinson (2006) adds further discussion to the field, by noting that the tools employed need to be able to identify appropriate aspects of quality. Tools that fail to be attuned to this purpose are at risk of providing misinformation therefore altering what constitutes quality programs (Dickinson, 2006). Arndt and Tesar (2016) suggest that quality when viewed from the current global perspective marginalises many possibilities of alternate energies and forces that might "liberate the quality debate", moving it out from its "current position of existing to satisfy the need for human capital" (p. 22). Duhn (2015) also urges a view of quality that engages with the dynamism of the world to provide alternate understandings of quality more suited to current and future early childhood education.

## 2.5 Educator Context

The regulation of the early childhood education and care sector has contributed to the construction of the early childhood educator according to Woodrow and Press (2007). Osgood (2009) noted that the early childhood education and care workforce has been constructed to assist governments to achieve their aim of developing national economic prosperity. Osgood argued that the early childhood educator is constructed as the "guardian of the nation's children" and is presented as the means by which the government's vision for young children can be achieved (p. 735). Policy discourse positions the early childhood educator as in need of greater professionalisation through such things as improved qualifications.

In discussion around the importance of early childhood educators to the experience of young children, quality and professionalism have been viewed as synonymous (Urban, 2008). Urban noted that an aim of policy implementation globally has been to improve the quality of services through professionalising the workforce. The literature reflecting the educators' context is grouped into discussion around professionalisation, qualification expectations and the resulting working conditions and experiences for educators.

### 2.5.1 Professionalisation of educators.

To enable educators to more successfully facilitate government visions, a greater professionalisation of the early childhood education and care workforce is expressed in policy discourse (Osgood, 2009). A definition of professionalism is contested in the literature and is considered a slippery term because of the many changes it has undergone (Hargreaves et al., 2001; Moore & Clarke, 2016; Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, & Warne, 2002). In the early childhood field, one reason posited for this is the historical divide that has existed between care and education (Manning-Morton, 2006). The divide has enabled the development of some concepts of professionalism to the detriment of others (Gibbons 2007; Manning-Morton, 2006). Taggart (2011) noted that the early childhood educators are viewed as being kindly and caring and having a passion for their work. Taggart suggested that, when early childhood educators demonstrate a caring attitude in their work, it is thought that they are merely reacting to biological instincts to protect a young child. As such, early childhood educators are subjected to age-old perceptions that they are doing

what comes naturally, particularly for females, and therefore no knowledge is deemed necessary for the action. Manning-Morton (2006) noted that this association with maternal caring might potentially undermine professionalism because, in order to gain recognition, some educators may elect to value educative practices over emotional care.

This is problematic because care is also deemed an essential part of the educators' role (Gibbons, 2007; Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin, & Vanderlee, 2013; Moyles, 2001). Noddings (2001) posited a view of the importance of care. She argued that, for educational institutions to achieve success with their students a tradition of care was required. Noddings saw caring as a universal characteristic possible in all and needed by many, particularly young children. Harwood et al. (2013) noted that the notion that caring did not cease with the commencement of education challenges the technical-rational reasoning that underpins the field of education. Dalli (2008) reported that in a move considered to be a world first, responsibility for childcare and preschool services was placed within the Department of Education in New Zealand, leading to the professionalisation of the workforce. Bennett (2003, 2008) suggested this move eroded the education versus care divide that had existed and the growth of the professionalisation of the workforce emerged.

Woodrow (2008) noted that, in this era of ongoing policy development worldwide, a context for discussing professionalism of early childhood educators had emerged, despite the lack of clarification around a definition. Policy development had led to increased regulation, standardisation and accountability across the early childhood sector, according to Grieshaber (2000), and this development has prompted discussion around the expanding and constraining possibilities of professionalism. National differences relating to understandings of professionalism emerged, as did discussions around different perspectives (Dalli, 2008; Karila, 2008; Osgood, 2006a; Oberhuemer, 2005).

Oberhuemer (2005) offered insights to changes in government policy that have altered the professional view of early childhood educators. One such insight related to the introduction of national frameworks. Oberhuemer (2005) described the introduction of a national framework as having an effect on professionalism. Oberhuemer reported that educators saw a framework as offering an improved status

in that they may appear more like a school context with curricula. Ortlipp, Arthur and Woodrow (2011) posited that the introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework nationally in Australia was perceived as an opportunity to raise the standing of the early childhood profession by positioning those who work in the field as educators. The documentation of their approaches and activities, in this fashion, provided confirmation of the appropriateness of their practices. Sims (2013) suggested that the Early Years Learning Framework helped create a shared image of an educator, which is considered essential for professionalisation. The Early Years Learning Framework enabled opportunities for shared language and shared understandings promoting professional discourse (Edwards & Nuttall, 2009). In discussing the introduction of a national framework into the New Zealand early childhood education and care context, Alvestad, Duncan, Berge (2009) noted that a shared language made the work of early childhood educators more visible to others.

Karila (2008) presented the view that, because professionalism is a construction of the interaction between elements of professionalism in a local context and the ongoing development of professionalism at a national level, the process of professionalism across countries would differ. In New Zealand responsibility for childcare, preschool and school services was placed within the Department of Education (Dalli, 2008). Dalli stated that, through this move, a number of factors supporting professionalism emerged. One such factor was that a benchmark for educators' qualifications in New Zealand licensed early childhood services was established. In addition, changes in discourse, viewed as assisting the professionalisation of the early childhood education and care workforce, became available. Dalli reported that the terminologies of childcare workers, minders and childcare centres gradually disappeared, to be replaced with teachers and education and care centres respectively. The provision of parity of pay with schoolteachers was another important factor in the process of professionalising these educators. Dalli reported that, when asked what it was to be a professional, early childhood educators included receiving equity of pay among their responses. In pursuing a definition of professionalism from the educators' perspective, Dalli identified that expressed expectations, as imposed through the literature, were vitalised by the professional reality.

In describing the United Kingdom context, Osgood (2006b) took the position that professionalism is created, and promoted, through government policy and is therefore "socially constructed" (p. 11). Osgood pointed to the model of social engineering in play that uses a standards approach to implement regulations that control and shape the behaviours of educators. This approach had been justified through the presentation of education as being in crisis and failing to meet the needs of families (Osgood, 2006a). The policy developers in this context, as described by Osgood, promoted professionalism by arguing that the process of policy reform would lead to a strengthening of the early childhood educator status. Osgood (2006a) argued that the process also "opened the door for increased means of control and domination" (p. 5).

A different perspective of what constitutes professionalism is offered from Finland and Sweden. Karila (2008), when discussing professionalism in early childhood education in Finland, stated that professionalism was associated with a macro level of national regulation and policy decision-making, and an everyday level of work, communities, environments and individuals. Karila suggested that understandings about professionalism are constructed by the interaction of the educators' personal domain, domain specific knowledge and working environment. Kuisma and Sandberg (2008) noted that possession of knowledge and practical experience underpins conceptions of professionalism in the Swedish context. What was important was the recognition of the educator's ability to gain and articulate the knowledge of the field on one hand, and the ability to demonstrate this knowledge in practice when interacting with children, parents and community on the other.

Fenech, Sumsion, and Shepherd (2010) took the view that professionalism, in the early childhood sector in the Australian context, was imposed on the workforce by external bodies through standards that provide knowledge and dictate technical applications, to meet accountability measures. Accountability measures were imposed on early childhood services via policy and regulations that the Australian government had introduced to further professionalise the early childhood workforce. These measures included increasing the number of university early childhood education places, and reducing fees for diploma and advanced diploma studies in childcare (Fenech et al., 2010). Irvine and Price (2014) noted that professionalism is

bolstered in the Australian context by raising the quality expectation of the early childhood educator. This has been achieved through the increase in qualification requirements, improvement of the adult-child ratios and focus of early learning through the Early Years Learning Framework (Irvine & Price, 2014). Professionalism has also been facilitated through ongoing professional learning and reflective practice; an expectation imposed by an external regime (Irvine & Price, 2014).

Registration of member professionals has been identified as a step toward professionalisation (Mayer, Mitchell, Macdonald, & Bell, 2005). In the era prior to the introduction of the National Quality Framework, Woodrow (2008) noted that strategies around professionalism for school-based teachers were being progressed through the process of teacher registration. Several states in Australia elected to include mandatory registration for early childhood educators. Early childhood educators working in states that have not introduced regulation for their sector have been positioned as being marginalised and isolated, according to Woodrow (2007).

### 2.5.2 Qualifications of educators.

The professionalisation of educators included engagement with tertiary level education and the associated acquisition of relevant qualifications (Bown & Sumsion, 2007; Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008; Woodrow & Press, 2007). Barnett and Ackerman (2006) and Heckman et al. (2006) report that young children require high quality early childhood education and care experiences to achieve effective outcomes. Sylva et al. (2006), in a study of process quality characteristics in England preschool centres, found a clear relationship between early childhood education participation and later learning outcomes. Peisner-Feinberg et al. (1999) looked at the influence of centre-based care on children's development during their preschool year. The researchers' found that high quality care was an important element in children developing school readiness and sustaining positive learning and development traits into their primary school years. Peisner-Feinberg et al. also found that high quality classrooms were related to children's cognitive and social development.

Sylva et al. (2006) investigated indicators of quality in high quality classrooms. The level of staff qualifications emerged as one of the quality indicators identified. Pascal

and Bertram (2013) also identified higher levels of staff qualifications and training as important for high quality care through analysis of quality indicators. Peisner-Feinberg et al. (1999) found that educators' formal qualifications were positively linked to the provision of high quality early childhood education and care. Staff, with qualifications at a university degree level, provided activities that better supported learning outcomes for children (Sylva et al., 2006). The research indicated that degree qualified staff provide children with greater support across literacy and numeracy development through the use of a wider vocabulary, and more complex language structures, when conversing with young children. Qualified staff working with whole class, one-to-one or small groups facilitated play that was more challenging for young children. Peisner-Freinberg et al. (1999) noted that children, in classrooms facilitated by qualified educators, were offered a wide variety of age appropriate activities, which were responsive to their individual interests, abilities and cultures.

The research by Burchinal et al. (2002) revealed further important points relating to qualifications. They found that staff who were bachelor degree qualified, with a specialisation in early childhood or related field, tended to have higher quality classrooms. Early childhood educators who received specialist training in early childhood displayed more interactions with young children, which facilitated cognitive, language and social development according to Honig and Hirallal (1998). McMullen (1998) reported that educators who had undertaken coursework concentrated in early childhood held stronger beliefs about early childhood education and care, and demonstrated a greater ability to conduct more appropriate classroom practices for the young children in their care. Vartuli (1999) stated that, "more knowledge in early childhood education does appear to influence beliefs, attitudes and practices of teachers" (p. 510) which translates into higher quality care for young children.

Barnett (2002) noted that when working with qualified educators, less qualified staff also provide better learning support for young children. Howes et al. (2003) noted, in their research into alternate pathways to gaining qualifications, that where low qualified staff were mentored by a bachelor degree qualified staff with an early

childhood specialisation in the early days of their working the more likely it was that they would become effective teachers.

Ackerman (2004) reported that it had been established by a significant research base that appropriately qualified staff were central to quality experiences for children. Because of this recognition of the role qualified educators play in providing quality experiences for young children, there have been increasing demands for policies to be developed that require early childhood educators to have some level of training (Barnett, 2003; Early et al., 2007). The importance of early childhood educators gaining qualifications has therefore been reflected in policy reform to varying degrees worldwide (Barnett, 2003; Saracho & Spodek, 2007; Sylva, 2010; Sylva et al., 2006). Irvine and Farrell (2013) reported that the early childhood education and care sector in Australia, through the implementation of the National Quality Framework, has stipulated minimum qualification levels for staff. This move reflects the current view that to be an effective educator of young children a high level of training associated with formal education in early childhood is suggested (Howes et al., 2003; Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal, & Thornburg, 2009).

Ackerman (2005) notes that the stated expectation to attain qualifications has created uncertainty and insecurity for educators. Ackerman goes on to say that it cannot be assumed that the adoption of new policy around qualification expectations will be smoothly implemented. A number of variables come into play that may impact on the successful uptake of such policy. Ackerman notes that it may be difficult for educators to comply with these policy requirements because of contextual challenges such as personal and institutional. Educators may experience constraints at a personal level with being adult learners, undertaking academic work, facing language barriers and financing course work (Ackerman, 2005). At the institutional level, educators may experience challenges when seeking appropriate articulation and access to suitable courses.

An additional point Ackerman (2005) noted was that the low pay attributed to staff in early childhood settings may hinder the successful implementation of policy relating to minimum qualifications. Cleveland and Hyatt (2002) reported that it has been established through a number of studies that childcare workers' wages are considered low, particularly in relation to occupations that require similar levels of education.

For example, the pay rate offered to a bachelor degree qualified staff in an early childhood setting is considered low in comparison to the rate offered to staff with the same qualification in the school system. This is viewed as a disincentive and reduces the likelihood of degree qualified educators entering the early childhood education field initially or remaining in the field once they have become degree qualified (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002). This disparity in pay rates may impact on the successful uptake of policy relating to qualifications.

### 2.5.3    Working conditions of educators.

It has been established that the quality of early childhood experiences is closely linked to the quality of the staff and in particular their level of education (Burchinal et al., 2002; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999; Sylva et al., 2006). The industry, however, has been faced with issues relating to staffing, according to Sims, Hutchins, and Dimovich (2002). The authors have reported that, a shortage of suitable experienced qualified educators to take up positions in early childhood education and care settings is evident, and early childhood education services face high rates of staff turnover.

Moss (2006) posited that the foundation of these issues is based in the image of the contemporary early childhood worker. The image includes that of the early childhood education and care worker carrying out mothers' or women's work, receiving low pay, working long hours, experiencing poor working conditions, being subjected to high stress and being lowly valued in the eyes of society (Watson, 2006). These images of early childhood education and care workers fail to attract large numbers of candidates to the profession, creating an industry that relies on those with low level qualifications and resulting in a workforce that is "highly gendered" (Moss, 2006, p. 34). When discussing sustainability of the workforce, Moss noted that the demand for childcare is increasing, therefore, the demand for workers is increasing as services expand. Coupled with this is the increasing level of education of women opening alternate professional opportunities for them, therefore reducing the number of candidates available to fill early childhood education and care positions. Moss and Cameron (2002) noted that much of the early childhood education and care sector relied on women with low levels of education. Because women now experience greater opportunities to improve their education levels, they

also have greater opportunities for other types of work. The numbers of women with low level education is on the decline (Burger, 2012).

Osgood (2009) added to the discussion around the image of the early childhood education and care worker by noting that, in some policy literature, early childhood education and care work is not viewed as real work, but rather as the work of a "servant for the middle class mother" (p. 737). The educator is seen to be providing childcare so that the mother can return to a career that affords status, prestige and relative wealth. Osgood noted that the discourse of the policy documents she examined promoted work in services as being appropriate for mainly working class women who could use the opportunity as a stepping off point for other possible higher paid careers. Noble (2009) indicated that in many cases these images reflect the reality of the work experience, and were reported as reasons why educators experience burnout and leave the work force in high numbers.

Job satisfaction has significant links to high turnover rates of early childhood education and care workers (Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson, & Goodfellow, 2008; Jackson, 1996). Facets of job satisfaction are said to include levels of pay, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, working conditions, stress levels (Lambert et al., 2009; Watson, 2006) and recognition for work done (Productivity Commission, 2014). The lowering of professional autonomy was also reported as impacting upon job satisfaction. Whilst these are identified as different facets, they are interrelated and impact to varying degrees upon each other.

Staff reported entering the workforce because of a desire to work with children but cited the "poor pay, stressful working conditions, minimal career pathways and unpaid working hours" as being problematic for the sector (Productivity Commission, 2014, p. 322). Specifically, in relation to the introduction of the National Quality Framework, the Productivity Commission (2014) reported that the early childhood education and care workforce raised concerns about the lack of paid non-contact hours available to complete requirements such as curriculum, program and observations development. Bown and Sumsion (2016) reported that the introduction of the National Quality Framework had manifested the need for additional reporting and paperwork increasing the administrative workload of the staff.

High work stress among early childhood educators has been found to lead to lower job satisfaction, worker burnout and staff turnover (Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Jackson, 1996; Lambert et al., 2009; Sumsion, 2002). According to Hale-Jinks et al. (2006) reasons for stress among early childhood education and care workers result from poor working conditions such as long hours, low pay and benefits, and the physical demands of the job. Working conditions are changing and becoming progressively more demanding due to the increasing diversity among children and families, and the complexity of the work in the institutions set up to serve them (OECD, 2001, 2006; Woodhead, 2006). Working with children with high needs, and difficult and aggressive children requiring particular management styles, add significantly to the stress of the job (Shonkoff, 2010; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Educators did not always have a stable group of children within a service, making planning and programming difficult, adding to the stress of the workday. Maintaining relationships with the variety of early childhood education and care stakeholders, such as partners, colleagues and children, have also added to the burden. Hawkins (2016) and Tayler (2011) noted that the pressure to be responsive to the different stakeholders at a centre can raise staff anxiety adding to the stress of the job.

Low levels of pay have had a significant impact on the stability of the early childhood education and care workforce (Barnett, 2003). It is reported that low wages have been identified as the main reason for staff departure (Phillips et al., 2000). Highly trained educators were more likely to leave their jobs if they earned low wages (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Centres positioned to pay higher wages were more able to attract educators who were better trained, and retain them for longer periods. However, despite some centres offering higher wages, educators still sought the higher status, shorter work year and greater professional recognition of the school setting (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Some research suggests that wages may correlate with the quality of a service (Burchinal et al., 2002; Phillips et al., 2000). In one study by Phillips et al. (2000), good classroom quality was strongly associated with high educator wages where the teacher possessed a formal education qualification. Educator wages contribute to the longevity of staff at services, therefore enabling relationship building between staff and children (Phillips et al., 2000).

Poorer working conditions were highlighted as an influence on staff retention (Bullough, Hall-Kenyon, MacKay, & Marshall, 2014; Stoddard & Kuhn, 2008). According to Bullough et al. (2014) and Stoddard and Kuhn (2008), educators were spending more time at work, as well as more time at home, working on education related activities. This appeared to lead to high levels of stress and a negative work life balance, which is interpreted as unfavourable work conditions (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Lambert et al., 2009). In research conducted by Hale-Jinks et al. (2006), early childhood educators talked about the long hours expected by services, and the regular occurrence of having to stay longer in order to cover a shift, due to the lack of availability of relief staff. Hours were regularly rostered with timetables changing monthly, sometimes weekly. This made it more difficult to establish home life routines, particularly if the early childhood educator had children of their own. Whitebook and Sakai (2003) noted that shorter holiday periods, compared to those offered in the school sector, were also raised as examples of poorer working conditions. Thorpe, Millear, and Petriwskyj (2012) noted there were "structural inequities" that added to the problem of retaining staff in the early childhood education and care sector (p. 318). Early childhood educators were viewed as being technicists, and holidays, work hours, pay and entitlements were perceived as being of a low standard (Thorpe et al., 2012). These views positioned early childhood educators as low status workers with poor working conditions.

Emotion has been identified as a component underpinning early childhood educators' work with young children (Colley, 2006; Lee & Brotheridge, 2011). Teaching is essentially underpinned by the intrinsic motivation and emotional commitment teachers have to provide the best service for their students, and is based upon both "intellectual curiosity and emotional investment", according to Day and Gu (2007, p. 428). Day and Gu liken early childhood education and care to other human services professions where emotional commitment is associated with an ethic of care for the well-being of the clients. The authors go on to say that, as in other human service professions, teachers cannot avoid investing emotional energy in the workplace. They cannot, as those in most other professions, 'take a break', or 'reschedule' their work. They are faced each day with 30 or more students; some will be eager to learn; some will have different learning needs; some will not wish to learn; and not all will have stable, secure lives outside school (Day & Gu, 2007, p. 428). According to Hall

(2004) this profession is therefore viewed as a complex, caring, moral, cultural, intellectual and emotional endeavour, which requires teachers to be "not only pedagogically competent and knowledgeable about what they teach, but who are able to enthuse, motivate and engage the learners" (Day & Smethem, 2009, p. 149).

In these current contemporary times, early childhood educators have experienced greater demands on their emotional commitment, according to Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006). In reporting on research conducted into the disruptive impacts of toxic stress, Shonkoff (2011) noted that, within the current changing contemporary society, lives of children are more stressful and toxic. As a result of this, a greater number of children present with behavioural and mental health problems (Shonkoff, 2011). The management and facilitation of these students requires significant emotional energy. Day and Gu (2007) noted that, as teachers experience greater demand on their emotions, their reserves become depleted rendering them less able to cope and be effective. Day et al. (2006) reported that this demand for additional emotional investment may cause teachers to experience a range of negative emotions. The negative emotions arise "when control of long held principles and practices are challenged or when trust and respect from parents, public and their students is eroded" (Day et al., 2006, p. 612). Emotional exhaustion, and raised negative emotions are cited as reasons for departing from the profession (Hargreaves, 1998, Kelchtermans, 2005).

In a study undertaken by Whitebook and Sakai (2003) to identify workplace characteristics that encourage workers to remain in their job, it was found that relationships within a service were reported as being a strong reason for workers remaining at a centre. The stability of the staff was a factor that encouraged educators to remain. Additionally, despite the fact that director turnover was high, greater staff stability occurred in centres where directors remained for extended periods of time, according to Whitebook and Sakai. In a different study, it was found that highly qualified educators tended to remain in centres that employed similarly qualified staff, whereas educators did not remain at centres where a high percentage of educators held less than a bachelor's degree (Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1998).

Working conditions that create high staff turnover is problematic for any workplace, but more so in the early childhood space (Howes et al., 1992). Helburn (1995) noted that poor working conditions in early childhood education and care settings, that do not attract and retain suitably qualified staff, may jeopardise the quality of a centre and therefore its impact on children. Many issues, as discussed above, go to making up the working conditions for educators in the early childhood education sector.

### 2.5.4   Experiences of educators.

A variety of themes, relating to how early childhood educators reported experiencing the accountability and performativity regimes within the audit process of regulatory environments, have emerged from a reading of the literature. Bown and Sumsion (2007), in an investigation into early childhood educators' experiences of regulations resulting from the implementation of the Quality Improvement Accreditation System in Australia, found "tension, mistrust, surveillance, sacrifice, resistance, compliance, relationships, interpretation and ambiguity, and the stifling of an educational focus" emerged as themes (p. 30). Such themes suggested disruption and dislocation had occurred for the educators. Bown and Sumsion identified these themes as possible unintended adverse consequences for teachers (p. 30).

Grieshaber (2000), in also considering the impacts of the Quality Improvement Accreditation System, noted that early childhood educators experienced disempowerment under the burden of increased regulatory accountabilities. This led her to describe the educators as "docile yet productive … being subjected to the laws of normalisation" (p. 162). Grieshaber argued that the accreditation document was used as a technique for normalisation to facilitate greater expediency of accreditation. The aim of the regulations, Grieshaber reported, was to establish norms of conduct, behaviours and practices for centres to observe and procedures to redirect nonconforming players and practices back to the norm. This process of normalisation was achieved through "educational techniques of discipline", including observation, surveillance, recording, classification, regulation and training (p. 162).

In reporting on a study looking into educators' relationships with regulation, Fenech et al. (2007) wrote that whilst the regulatory environment was accepted as being necessary, it was viewed as being constraining. Constraint was expressed in terms of interrupting professional practice, lessening autonomy and disrupting use of time

(Fenech et al., 2007). The regulatory requirements were viewed as being too prescriptive, meaning agency could only be exercised as resistance. There was doubt about whether quality could actually be measured and practices were at risk of being lowered to minimum standards. The authors reported the contradictory views that indicate the disparity between the intent of the regulatory environment and the unintended consequences. Bown and Sumsion (2007) also revealed that early childhood educators experienced constraint as they operated in ways in which they felt were safe, but experienced resentment at the loss of their "professional freedom, integrity and passion for teaching" (p. 30). Continuing with the theme of being constrained, Duncan (2004) reported that educators expressed feelings of being "smothered", "overtaken" and "misplaced" (p. 160) leading to feelings powerlessness, resignation and submission. Robert-Holmes (2015) found in a recent study in the United Kingdom that early years educators' pedagogy had been constrained to facilitate a stronger focus on literacy and numeracy development.

Osgood (2006a) undertook extensive research following the introduction of significant policy documents into the early years sector in the United Kingdom. According to Osgood, the intent of the policies was to make changes to the early childhood education and care sector "to better meet the economic and social needs of society" (p. 6). Framing her discussion by the work of Foucault, Osgood reported that regulation of early childhood services was justified because it was deemed that services were not meeting acceptable standards and were therefore failing society. It was presented that a "crisis in education" had occurred (p. 6). This rationale of regulation made way for the introduction of normalising technologies that early childhood educators experienced as disempowerment and a "regulatory gaze" (Osgood, 2006a, p. 6). The notion of the regulatory gaze stems from the idea of the "gaze" (Foucault, 1977, p. 155), and is understood to describe the way in which broader society is impacted by the presence of an outside power, who conducts surveillance at a time that is unknown to those being observed (Edwards, 2003). Under the panoptic gaze people enact the compliance, expected or regulated, and are therefore being socially constructed (Holligan, 1999). Ortlipp, Arthur, and Woodrow (2011) suggested that the existence of the regulatory gaze prompted some educators to be uncertain about the concept of professionalism.

Ball (2003), Bradbury (2012) and Osgood (2006b) have argued that contemporary early childhood education policy has manifested as greater prescription of curriculum and standards, and reduction of educator autonomy. Frostenson (2015) defines autonomy as the freedom that educators have to "define the nature of the professional work with regard to its formal contents, quality criteria, entry barriers, formal education, control mechanisms and ethics" (p. 20). Castle and Ethridge (2003) define autonomy as "the ability to make intellectual and moral decisions by considering various perspectives" (p. 113). When educators within the profession lose the ability to influence and define these professional aspects, they experience loss of professional autonomy (Day, 2004; Day & Smethem, 2009; Frostenson, 2015; Hill, 2005; Rodd, 1999).

Loss of professional autonomy is viewed as de-professionalisation (Beck, 2008; Duhn, 2010; Frostenson, 2015). De-professionalisation can arise from challenges such as increased administration, greater pressure from parents and staff, a preoccupation with academic achievement and lessening of opportunities for enactment of professional judgement according to Frostenson (2015), and Hatch and Grieshaber (2002). Educators "lose the power to influence their work" through "opposing management ideologies, political reforms, pedagogical experiments and private education organisers" (Frostenson, 2015, p. 21). According to Milner (2013), de-professionalisation emerges from policy pressuring teachers to "mechanically teach" devaluing the essential elements of teaching (p. í). Prescriptive curriculum moves educators away from professionalisation by preventing them from turning to their professional judgements to make decisions about child learning according to Milner (2013). Enacting a curriculum that is predetermined by others reduces the educators' role to that of a technician (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Grieshaber, 2010; Sims, Forrest, Semann, & Slattery, 2015). This role sees educators carrying out work that does not require them to use their cognitive ability to be responsive to learners (Moss, 2006).

Hatch and Grieshaber (2002) discuss further educator de-professionalisation experiences that lead to job dissatisfaction. They argue that when educators are expected to implement child observations to collect data around academic achievement rather than engage in complex thinking and professional judgement,

they are being subjected to de-professionalisation. The authors note that the use of child observations has changed. Rather than using observations to get to know and understand the child, educators are pressured to document the children's academic progress against "prescribed hierarchies of instructional outcomes" (p. 230). This approach, in turn, places children under duress, as educators feel pressured to enact programs that they do not view as being appropriate for the children. Hatch and Grieshaber report that educators are feeling "less professional and more stressed" (p. 231).

Intensification is identified as another outcome of an imposed regulatory regime and is considered another step in de-professionalisation (Rodd, 1999; Valli & Buese, 2007). Oberhuemer (2005) noted that the early childhood education sector has experienced change in policy demands and instruction justified mainly by the need to improve educational quality. The education field is increasingly subjected to "economic and management orientated perspectives" that are linked to greater external control (Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006, p. 210). As a result, teachers are progressively subjected to external pressures which, according to the authors, increase the number of tasks educators are expected to complete without the addition of sufficient resources or time. The authors report that "the teaching job is intensified: more has to be achieved, in less time and with fewer facilities. Teachers become the executors of other people's decisions" (Ballet et al., 2006, p. 48). Characteristics of intensification include reduction of child free time resulting in less time for long-term planning, continuing sense of work overload, compromise on quality as only essential tasks are attempted, less time for collaboration with colleagues and greater dependence on easy fix solutions, such as commercial programs (Ballet et al., 2006).

Additionally, the pressure of intensification reduces the time educators have for critical reflection on practice (Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002). Educators reported engaging in technical practices with minimal opportunities for collegial discussion and/or reflective practice (Fenech et al., 2007; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Novinger & O'Brien, 2003). Critical reflection offers the opportunity for educators to engage in metacognitive thinking around multiple ways of being, knowing and doing (Gee, 1996; Noble & McIlveen, 2012) within the early childhood education field (Noble &

Henderson, 2008, 2011). Bullough et al. (2014) report that the lack of critical reflection leads to teacher frustration because they feel unable to provide the best educational experience for the children.

Further intensification in the early childhood field arises from the increased pace and complexity of educators' work; increase in work hours; increase in documentation requirements and inspections; and centre ranking through accountability measures (Bullough et al., 2014). The cause of intensification is viewed as arising from top down pressure (Ball, 1997; Bullough et al., 2014; Kilderry, 2015). A significant outcome of intensification results in educators having less time to spend with children, planning and programming. Bullough et al. (2014) also noted that educators exert internal pressure on themselves adding to the presence of intensification. Educators' passion and concern for children, plus their desire to do a good job (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008), drives them to continue to work longer hours, work harder, faster and more intensely (Stoddard &Kuhn, 2008). This sense of concern for the children places educators in a position morally where they feel they cannot refuse to implement mandated changes (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008).

Educators reported experiencing a lack of clarity around whom they should be accountable to and where they should focus their priorities according to Kilderry (2015). This lack of resolution in the industry created multi foci for the educators, forcing them to continually balance the needs of children, parents and government. It was noted that the lack of clarity left early childhood educators feeling torn and vulnerable (Apple & McMullen, 2007).

Workload stresses and time constraints were raised as issues in relation to both enacting and providing evidence of implementing the approved learning framework (Early Years Learning Framework). Barber, Cohrssen, and Church (2014) reported kindergarten educators feeling challenged in their attempts to meet the needs of children's interests and agency, whilst enacting the Early Years Learning Framework. The task of mapping the children's learning across the learning outcomes as prescribed by the learning framework proved time consuming, creating tensions for the educators as they also aimed to retain open-ended and child led experiences (Barber et al., p. 25).

Ball (2003), Bradbury (2012) and Osgood (2006b) have argued that contemporary early childhood education policy has manifested as greater prescription of curriculum and standards, and reduction of teacher autonomy. Government regulatory tools such as accreditation, inspection and enforcement, intended to ensure high quality standards in education settings, have become burdens and are damaging for some educators (Ball, 2006; Robinson, 2015).

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the contexts in which the field of early childhood education and care operates are explored. The contexts were reviewed from the perspective of investigating the impact of regulation on educators. Emerging from the literature, the contexts relevant to the study were regulation, quality and educator contexts. The literature about these contexts was complex, and a detailed discussion relating to the impact of regulation on educators' professions was included. Intended and unintended consequences of regulation were highlighted.

The selected research design and theoretical framework is explained in Chapter 3. The design of this study allowed the researcher to identify and characterise the different ways that early childhood educators understood the impact of regulation on their profession.

# CHAPTER 3.   RESEARCH DESIGN

## 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to discover the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experience, conceptualise, and understand (Richardson, 1999) the impact of regulation on their profession. Phenomenography, as a qualitative research approach situated within the interpretivist paradigm, was selected for this inquiry.

In the previous chapter the literature review conducted in relation to this study was provided. This chapter describes the methodology and design of the selected research approach. The first sections of the chapter comprise a discussion around the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research, followed by an explanation of phenomenography as the selected research approach. It was decided that the phenomenographic data collection process associated with this study would be enhanced with the inclusion of the creation of arts-inspired plates, and this methodological elaboration is explained. The reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the study is discussed, followed by a detailed explanation of the data generation and data analysis processes undertaken in this study. Finally, the relevant ethical considerations adhered to in conducting this research are presented.

## 3.2 Interpretivist Paradigm

A necessary element of successful research is a relevant paradigm. A paradigm provides the conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and is defined as the worldview, or set of basic beliefs, held by a researcher (Cousin, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The paradigm provides a foundation for the choice of methodology, methods, literature and research design (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Paradigms have been discussed and described in various ways across the literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) identify positivism and interpretivism as two paradigms associated with education research within the social sciences. According to Mack (2010), positivism is regarded as a scientific approach involved with researching behaviours in the natural world and is associated with quantitative

research. Alternatively, interpretivism seeks to understand the lived experience of the participant (Cohen et al., 2007) and is associated with qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The interpretivist paradigm presents the view that people interpret or give meaning to their world and themselves. This interpretation is shaped by their culture and ways of life, and in turn influences the institutions in which they participate. Researchers in this paradigm seek to understand a phenomenon by looking through the eyes of the participant as opposed to explaining the phenomenon (Mack, 2010). They also "generate or inductively develop a theory of meanings" (Creswell, 2005, p. 9) throughout the research process, rather than present a theory at the beginning of the study. According to Cohen et al. (2007), theory is considered to emerge from the data as the researcher presents the participants' understandings of the world. This study is seeking to understand the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation on their profession, placing the project in the interpretivist paradigm of the education research space within the social sciences.

## 3.3 Qualitative Research

Following consideration of the research paradigm, that is, the belief system that guides the study, it is necessary to consider the research methodology (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008). Two broad research categories are identified in educational research: quantitative and qualitative research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies arise from different philosophical assumptions and therefore different paradigms. Quantitative research is utilised when there is a need to gather data to answer a question or test a predetermined hypotheses (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). Quantitative research is considered to be associated with the positivist paradigm and involves systematic objective data collection designed to test a stated theory and the process is able to be replicated by other researchers (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, deals with questions concerned with matters of meaning and endeavours to make phenomena visible. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to

them " (p. 3). Van Maanen (1979) discusses qualitative research as being "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (p. 520). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world, that is, the meaning people have constructed about their world as they feel it or live it (Sherman & Webb, 1988). Qualitative research is grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly 'interpretivist' in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood or experienced (Hughes, 2003). A further characteristic of qualitative research is that the theoretical framework is not predetermined but derives directly from the data. Qualitative research therefore lies in the interpretivist paradigm identified for this study. Within this qualitative research approach and interpretivist paradigm, phenomenography has been selected as the empirical research method.

## 3.4 Phenomenography

Phenomenography is an empirical research approach used to discover the qualitatively different ways that particular phenomena of the world are experienced by people (Marton, 1994; Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002) and it sits within the interpretivist paradigm (Bowden, 2000). Phenomenographic researchers aim to investigate how people experience, conceptualise and understand a given phenomenon whilst having no interest in investigating the phenomenon itself (Ornek, 2008; Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002). Marton and Booth (1997) explain it this way: "the unit of phenomenographic research is a way of experience something … and the object of the research is the variation in ways of experiencing phenomena" (p. 111). Therefore, the aim of phenomenography is to describe phenomena in the world as others experience them and reveal the variation of peoples' understandings that may exist (Marton & Booth, 1997) rather than noting human behaviour or mental description of the lifeworld.

The term phenomenography was first introduced in Sweden in the 1970s and the research approach was initially used to investigate concepts of learning (Marton & Svensson, 1979; Saljo, 1988). Marton (1986) described phenomenography as an

"empirically based approach that aims to identify the qualitatively different ways in which different people experience, conceptualise, perceive and understand various kinds of phenomena" (p. 53). The phenomenographic approach is designed to map variations in understandings as the researcher seeks to identify the understandings that a particular group of people have for a given phenomenon. The focus of phenomenographic research is not the individual or the phenomenon, but the variation in the ways of experiencing something and this is presented as a collective meaning. Marton (1986) suggests that, by revealing the different ways people experience a phenomenon, conditions may be uncovered that "facilitate the transition from one way of thinking … to another" (p. 33).

In a phenomenographic study, the phenomenon is not the object of the study, rather the relation between the participants and the phenomenon (Bowden, 2005). As illustrated in Figure 3.1 the phenomenon cannot be viewed in isolation as the purpose within the study is the way the phenomenon is understood and experienced by the participants (Stamouli & Huggard, 2007).
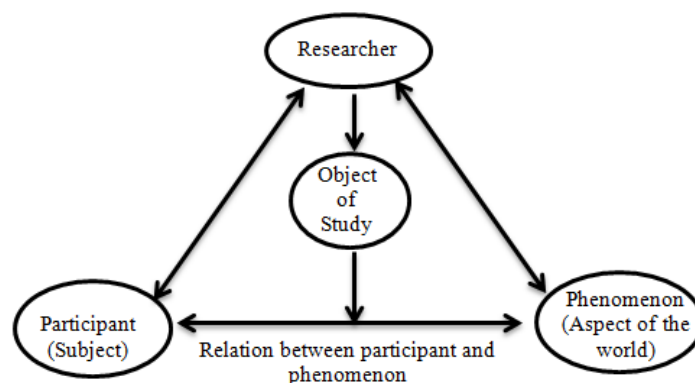


*Figure 3.1.* The object of study in phenomenography (Bowden, 2005, p. 13)

When making sense of a phenomenon, people focus on significant aspects, which characterise the phenomenon (Stoodley, 2009), recognising and differentiating between them. The lived experience of making sense of the phenomenon is the object of the phenomenographic study. These experiences or conceptions can be formed into categories representing the collective view of the group of people (Akerlind, 2005a). A basic principle of phenomenography, therefore, is that there are only a limited number of ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Stoodley, 2009).

Phenomenographic research has been used primarily in studies relating to student learning. The approach has also emerged in research across education topics not investigating student learning and in contexts outside the education field. Examples of research not investigating student learning include identifying primary and secondary teachers' conceptions of creativity (Bryant, 2014), educators' experiences of workplace culture and bullying (Noble, 2009), experiences of practitioners in a teaching role (Shreeve, 2008) and parents' conceptions of the preparatory year in a non-government school (O'Gorman, 2007). In the nursing field, studies using the phenomenographic approach include investigations of the perceptions of nurses' practices in relation to their qualifications (Degen, 2010), the conceptions of recovery for mental health consumers among emergency department registered nurses (Marynowski-Traczyk, 2015) and the experience of school based youth health nurses (Sendall, 2009).

Information literacy has been a topic investigated through phenomenography. For example, Yates (2013) undertook an investigation of people's experiences of using information about health, Stoodley (2009) explored IT professionals' experience of ethics, and student nurses' understandings of information literacy were investigated by Osborne (2011). Within engineering and architecture, phenomenography has been used to explore conceptions of sustainable design in engineering (Mann, 2006) and conceptions of house, home, place and space among sustainable home designers and builders (Speed, 2008).

The focus of this study is to identify the multiple experiences, conceptualisations or understandings early childhood educators have of the impact of regulation. Phenomenography, with its ability to uncover people's experiences, has been utilised in this study. The voice of the collective is represented through the use of this research approach.

### 3.4.1   Ontology and epistemology.

The aim of the phenomenographic approach is to unveil the variation of ways that people experience the world. The research subject (the person experiencing something) and the object (that which is experienced) are not viewed as being separated. That is, the way in which the person (subject) experiences the

phenomenon (object) forms a relation between the two. The idea that the experience between subject and object, and the person and the phenomenon, is viewed as an interrelational process means the phenomenographic stance is non-dualistic (Akerlind, 2005a). In turn, this means that the ontological position, which is concerned with the nature of existence and the structure of reality, is neither objectivist nor subjectivist. That is, there is only one world and different people see the world in different ways (Bowden, 2005; Marton & Booth, 1997). What is important then is that people's conceptions of the truth for them, in that context, are understood as an internal relation between the world and the person (Marton & Booth, 1997). The essence of the experiences people describe when reporting their relationship with phenomena is sought (Sendall, 2009).

The epistemological position, which is concerned with what counts as knowledge in this non-dualist stance is represented by the ontological position. The interest of phenomenography is not in what people think per se, but in the experiences they have had in dealing with different aspects of their world (Mann, 2009). According to Marton and Pang (2008), the epistemological stance of phenomenography is based on the principle of intentionality. Intentionality comes from the phenomenological tradition and sees the human consciousness as always intentionally directed towards something other than itself (Sandberg, 2005). This means that when confronted with a "something", it is the experience of that "something" that impresses itself upon the consciousness, not the "something" itself. Intentionality incorporates the idea that experience is interpreted as an internal relationship between human beings and the world (Pang, 2003). This is a non-dualistic view of human consciousness (Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012) as there is a relationship between people's different understandings of the phenomenon and their different acts of engaging with the phenomenon (Marton, 1981).

### 3.4.2   Phenomenography and phenomenology.

Phenomenography and phenomenology are sometimes thought to be the same and an explanation of the two is required for clarification. Both research approaches seek to describe the lived experience of people, with phenomenography borrowing terms to explain aspects of this experience from phenomenology (Bruce & Ahmed, 2014;

Larsson, 2010; Richardson, 1999). The association between the two research approaches stems from this common use of terms (Giorgi, 1999).

Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences (Thibodeau & MacRae, 1997) and aims to describe a phenomenon as it appears to the participant by focusing on what is common in the descriptions (Larsson, 2010). The researcher's understanding of the participants' view of the phenomenon is presented, therefore providing the perspective of one individual (Giorgi, 1999). This is referred to as a first order perspective and is considered a description of the world without taking into account the variety of ways of experiencing something (Marton, 1981; Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002). Barnard, McCosker, and Gerber (1999) describe it as engaging "in a psychological reduction of the experience" in which the world is described as it is (p. 214). A first order perspective occurs when a researcher analyses data collected about the aspects of the world being experienced by the participants and goes on to create statements from his/her (the researcher's) perspective based on that data (Cope, 2002).

Phenomenographic research is also interested in the lived experience, but, it focuses on the participants' way of experiencing the phenomenon rather than the phenomenon itself. Phenomenography takes a second order perspective in which the world is described as it is experienced. The second order perspective taken in phenomenography is explained further in the following section.

### 3.4.3   Second order perspectives.

Phenomenography adopts a second order research perspective. A second order perspective focuses on people's way of "experiencing various aspects of the world" (Marton, 1981, p. 171) or the way in which the phenomenon is conceived. It does not involve a psychological reduction of the data (Barnard et al., 1999; Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002) because the focus is on how participants experience a phenomenon rather than the cognitive process involved in understanding it (Yates et al., 2012). The phenomenon is described through the subject's experience not through the researcher's statements about it (Lin, 2011). This perspective focuses on the relationship between the subject and their world (Yates et al., 2012). A second order perspective involves a researcher making statements about other people's

experiences of the world (Marton, 1981), whilst bracketing their judgements about the experience (Marton & Booth, 1997).
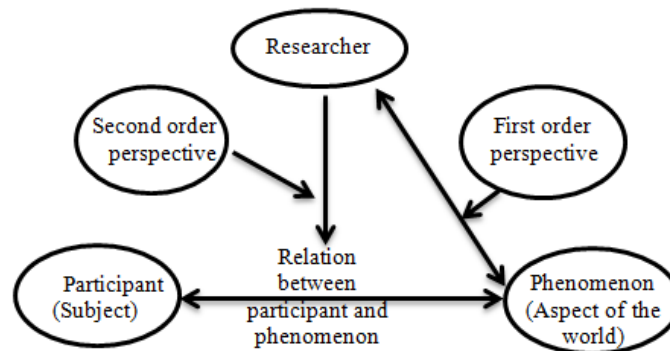


*Figure 3.2.* First and second order perspectives (Lin, 2011, p. 7218)

As indicated in Figure 3.2 the object of the study is not the phenomenon or the aspect of the world being discussed (first order perspective), but rather the relation between the participant and the phenomenon (second order perspective) (Lin, 2011). The subject's experience is the data collected, data analysed and data presented. The critical differences within a finite set of qualitatively different ways a phenomenon is experienced by a group of people (Marton & Booth, 1997) is sought with the emphasis being on the collective meaning. It is understanding that is represented.

### 3.4.4   Conceptions and phenomena.

The description of conceptions is central to phenomenography. Individuals focus on different aspects of a phenomenon in different ways at different times and this is expressed as a "way of being aware of something" (Marton, 1994, p. 44). The different ways people experience the world is influenced by the context in which the aspect is experienced (Mann, 2006). This way of experiencing a particular aspect of reality is expressed as a conception (Sandberg, 1997) which is considered the unit for description in phenomenographical research (Irvine, 2006). A conception comprises the internal relationship between an individual and an aspect of their world and is considered unstable because contexts change and people change (Bowden, 2000). Additionally, the conception of a phenomenon that is revealed through the research process frequently signifies something that has not been reflected upon by the participant and is tacit or implicit (Marton, 1981). As explained by Johansson, Svensson, Anderberg, and Alvegard (2006), "a conception is not visible, but remains tacit, implicit or assumed" (p. 236). Marton and Booth (1997) note, however, "the

structure and meaning of a phenomenon as experienced can be found both in pre-reflective experience and conceptual thought" (p. 116) and therefore there is no need, when seeking the conception, to try to discover what is not reflected upon. Johansson, Marton, and Svensson (1985) note that a "conception is not visible but remains tacit, implicit, or assumed" (p. 236). The researcher's aim is to encourage conversation so as to permit a flow of experiences by the participant.

Bowden (2000) points out that the term conception has been used "loosely" in some phenomenographic literature and stresses that conceptions must be reported as faithfully as possible. It is not possible for the researcher to be the participant and therefore the researcher can only report the communication (Bowden, 2000). Throughout this study, the term conception will be used to describe the participants' understandings of the phenomenon. The phenomenon to be investigated in this study is regulation in early childhood education, and its impact on the profession, as conceptualised by the educators.

### 3.4.5   Structure of awareness.

A conception is the basic unit of description in phenomenographic research and across the literature has been called various names such as "ways of experiencing", "ways of seeing" and "ways of understanding" (Marton & Pong, 2005). There are a limited number of elements of an aspect of the world that can be discerned, and simultaneously be in, a person's awareness at any one time (Mann, 2006). It is the conceptions that exist within the participant's utterance that provide the raw data for analysis in phenomenography.

For the purposes of analysis, it is necessary to break down conceptions into smaller parts creating a framework to support the process (Harris, 2011). Two frameworks for analysis used by phenomenographers have been identified in the literature (Harris, 2011). Marton and Booth (1997) explain the first framework, the what/how framework, as comprising both a "what" aspect, which corresponds to the object, and a "how" aspect, which relates to the act of the experience (see Figure 3.3). Both aspects are intertwined and go to making up the person's awareness.
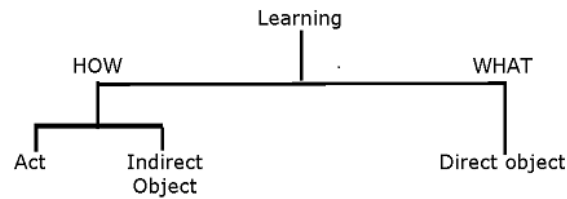
*Figure 3.3.* The what and how aspects (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 85)

Marton and Booth (1997) explain the what/how framework of awareness through the act of learning educational content. The content to be learned is the 'what' aspect. It is the direct object of the experience. How the person learns is, of course, the how aspect. This is divided into two foci; the indirect object, which are the capabilities the person wishes to learn or develop, and the act, which is what the person does to learn. This framework was applied across phenomenographic investigations predominately associated with the processes of learning (Harris, 2011).

The second framework comprises referential and structural aspects, which are further broken down into both internal and external horizons (Harris, 2011). This framework provided greater insight into understanding the structure of the conception (Marton & Booth, 1997). Researchers in different circumstances have elected to use either both or one of these framework types (Bruce & Ahmed, 2014). For the purposes of this study, the referential/structural framework has been applied and all aspects of a concept will be referred to as *aspects*, whereas the titles *referential and structural aspects* will be altered to *referential and structural components*.

The referential/structural framework comprises referential and structural components, with the associated internal and external horizons (Marton & Pong, 2005). The referential component focuses on what is being experienced and is the global meaning or particular meaning of the phenomenon. The structural component deals with the relationship between different aspects of a phenomenon (Marton & Pong, 2005) and is made up of two elements referred to as the internal horizon and the external horizon (Harris, 2011; Marton & Booth, 1997). The internal horizon refers to the different parts that make up the conception and the external horizon refers to the way in which the experience is defined within the context. Figure 3.4 demonstrates the relationship between the aspects of a conception of an experience (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 88).
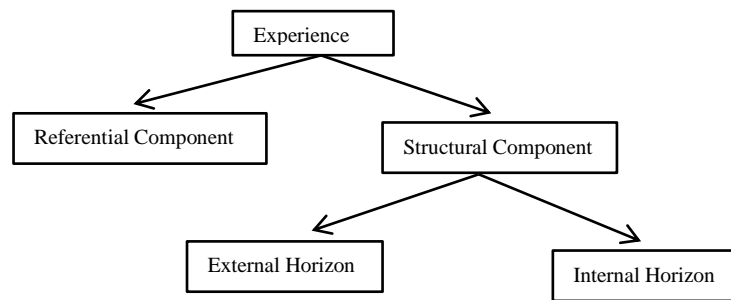
*Figure 3.4.* The referential and structural components (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 88)

As the phenomenographic research approach continued to be utilised, the need for theoretical underpinnings grew. Marton and Booth (1997) attended to this by providing grounding for the referential/structural framework in Gurwitsch's (1964) model of awareness. What is important to understand is that a way of experiencing is related to how a person's awareness is structured. A way of experiencing something arises from aspects of a phenomenon being present in a person's awareness. Gurwitsch suggested that human consciousness, or awareness, was made up of three areas: the theme, thematic field and margin. The term theme was used to describe the object held in the person's immediate focus, that is, the object that they were thinking about. The thematic field was made up of those aspects that were relevant to the theme and gave the theme meaning, and the margin comprised aspects that were associated with the theme but were in the background (see Figure 3.5). Therefore, a way of experiencing a phenomenon is about the discerning aspects of it and having these aspects in the focus of one's awareness to differing degrees (Marton & Booth, 1997).

From a phenomenographic perspective, Marton and Booth (1997) noted a person can be aware of everything all the time, but cannot be aware of everything at the same time in the same way. The awareness has structure and layers. The layers occur because, at any given point in time, a person will hold an aspect or aspects of the phenomenon in their focal awareness or theme, whilst other aspects will exist in the field (or thematic field) surrounding this focus. Other aspects again will exist in the margin (Marton & Booth, 1997). What determines the positioning, or the structure, of these aspects depends upon what it is that the person is focusing on at a given time in a given context. Differences in awareness occur when some aspects are being

focused upon and others are not or when the aspects are seen in a succession rather than simultaneously (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Martin and Booth (1997) located the focal awareness or theme of an experience in the internal horizon of the structural component of the framework, while the thematic field and margin are attributed to the external horizon. The theme or focal awareness is referred to as the focus in this study and is located in the internal horizon (see Figure 3.5). The external horizon is made up of the thematic field and the margin which are referred to as the field and the fringe respectively (see Figure 3.5). Cope (2002) states that "awareness then has a structure which can be described in terms of an internal horizon and external horizon and the relationship between them" (p. 68) and he refers to as the "structure of awareness" (p. 11).
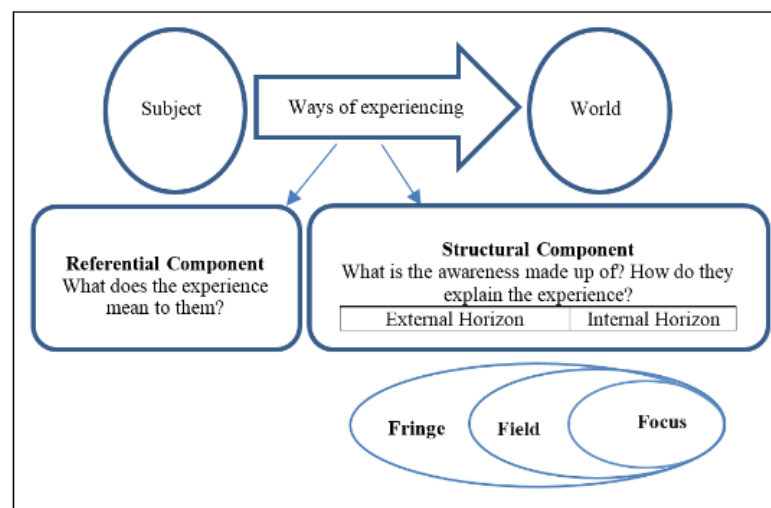


*Figure 3.5.* Structure of awareness (adapted from Cope, 2002, p. 69)

A person's way of experiencing a phenomenon exists within their structure of awareness of that phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997) and this way of experiencing can be analysed and described in terms of a structural component (the internal and external horizons of the awareness) and a referential component (the meaning of the experience) (Cope, 2002).

Using the structure of awareness to analyse conceptions offers opportunities to reveal differences in understandings of the phenomenon. Differences will occur in relation to "the number of aspects of the phenomenon comprising the internal horizon, the nature of an aspect, the number and strength of the relationships between the aspects,

and the nature of the boundary between the internal and external horizons" (Cope, 2002, p. 69). In the analysis, more complex understandings may be revealed when a greater number of aspects are evident in the focus or internal horizon or when the nature of the aspect itself is more complex (Booth, 1997).

### 3.4.6    Outcomes of phenomenographic research.

The outcomes of phenomenographic research is presented as an outcome space, which is a diagrammatic representation of the categories of description and dimensions of variation. The intention of the outcome space is to reflect the internal relationship between the qualitatively different categories of description and the dimensions of variation (Andersson, Willman, Sjostrom-Strand, & Borglin, 2015).

### *3.4.6.1 Categories of description.*

The object of a phenomenographic study is to reveal the variation of ways of experiencing the phenomenon. Sandberg (1997) states that the different ways of experiencing are "typically presented in the form of categories of description" (p. 204). The phenomenographic researcher seeks to generalise individuals' experiences from the data and form categories of description (Irvin, 2005). A set of categories of description are "relative, experiential, context-orientated and qualitative" (Marton 1986, p. 33). The categories of descriptions are developed out of the aspects of the experience of many individuals (Bradbeer, Healey, & Kneale, 2004; Irvin, 2005; Trigwell, 2000) and refer to the collective ways a group of people experience a phenomenon.

Transcripts of interviews are generally used to establish what categories of description of experience are present. The analysis starts with investigating the individual responses; however, it is the variation in the range of experiences across the whole collection of transcripts that is sought. Transcripts are read, and reread, many times so that the categories emerge from the whole body, rather than from individual responses. During this process, Bradbeer et al. (2004) stress that caution is needed and that the researcher must be extremely sensitive to the context in which the phenomenon is experienced, the context in which the experience was gathered and the language used to express it.

Marton and Booth (1997) suggest the following criteria for categories of description:

1. Categories should relate clearly to the phenomenon so that something distinct is revealed about a particular way of experiencing a phenomenon. The category should reveal clear and distinct things about the experience.

2. Categories should stand in logical relationship with one another, usually hierarchical, and denote a series of increasingly complex subsets of the totality of the diverse ways of experiencing a phenomenon.

3. System should be parsimonious – meaning that as few categories as possible should be achieved to capture the critical variation.

Suggestions of when to commence the development of the categories of description differ across the literature. Bowden (2005) suggests that all categories of description should be developed before the relationships between them is sought. Other researchers suggest that searching for structural relationships can occur from the beginning of the analysis (Akerlind, Bowden, & Green, 2005). Bowden (2005) argues that this latter approach could influence the researcher's ideas throughout the analysis of the transcripts and therefore negate any successful bracketing of the researcher's thinking.

The researcher in this study has been an early childhood educator for more than 20 years and was therefore inclined to follow Bowden's (2005) advice to ensure the focus remained on the understandings being presented by the participants. By following Bowden's approach, the researcher developed the categories before looking for structural relationships among them. The categories of description were developed by reading the transcripts, noting those utterances that were of interest to the questions being investigated (Bowden, 2000), and gathered based on similarity. The transcripts were revisited in relation to the descriptions that had emerged and readjusted where needed. Categories were also differentiated from one another in terms of their differences (Marton, 2000).

### *3.4.6.2 Dimensions of variation.*

An important aspect of the phenomenographic analysis process is to discern the critical aspects that distinguish one category from another, and then describe the qualitatively different critical aspects of each category. The critical aspect of

awareness is simultaneously discerned, and focused upon (Govender, 2006). Marton and Booth (1997) identified this aspect of the research process as discovering dimensions of variation:

> A certain way of experiencing something can thus be understood in terms of the dimensions of variation that are discerned and are simultaneously focal in awareness, and in terms of the relationship between the different dimensions of variation. As the differing ways of experiencing something are different ways of experiencing the same thing the variation in ways of experiencing it can be described in terms of a set of dimensions of variation. (p. 108)

 The dimensions of variation, whilst being common to multiple categories, change character in each category (Harding, 2008). Dimensions of variation are themes or common threads that traverse each category of description as recognised by the researcher (Yates, 2013). They are themes that run through each category but are experienced differently in each category and indicate a further expansion of awareness. Different terms have been used to denote these variations of experiences across categories in the literature. Akerlind (2005b) used the term "themes of expanding awareness" to denote this further layer of awareness identified in the participants' structure of awareness (p. 122). Akerlind described the themes of expanding awareness as "representing structural groups of dimensions of variation highlighting the structural relationship between different dimensions" (p. 122). According to Akerlind (p. 122), a theme could be identified if it were:

1. apparent in each category of description,
2. distinguishable between each category of description.

A way of experiencing something is linked to how an individual's awareness is structured. Marton and Booth (1997) state that in order to experience something as something an individual needs to "be able to discern it from and relate it to a context, and be able to discern its parts and relate them to each other and to the whole" (p. 108). They go on to say that the whole, the parts and the relationship between them are discerned in terms of various aspects, which represent dimensions of variation in awareness. In this study, these additional findings or themes of expanding awareness were referred to as dimensions of variations.

### 3.4.6.3 Outcome space.

The final product of phenomenographic research is referred to as the outcome space. The outcome space is represented by the set of empirically related categories of descriptions, which contain the variety of conceptions held by the subjects (Orgill, 2002). Categories of description depict the limited number of different ways in which certain phenomena, and the logical relationship between them, are experienced (Marton & Booth, 1997). Throughout the analysis of the interview transcripts, these categories of descriptions are developed and redeveloped through an iterative process and ultimately reflect the relationship between the different conceptions that have been identified. This variety indicates there are differences in the ways a phenomenon is experienced and these differences are made evident through the categories created (Walsh, 2000). The successful bracketing of the researcher's bias allows the conceptions to be discovered and the categories to be developed (Bowden, 2000). The use of a framework based on preconceived views is not appropriate here (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). Walsh (2000) suggests "the practice of careful reading of the whole transcript" (p. 30) and therefore consciously attending to the data in the transcript offers the opportunity to bracket preconceived ideas.

The outcome space portrays the complexity of different experiences, which together comprise the phenomenon, and represents the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). The outcome space may be presented in different formats (for example, table, diagram or image) with the intent of illustrating the relationship between the categories (Yates et al., 2012). The outcome space may illustrate some form of hierarchical relationship among the categories (Marton & Booth, 1997) and regularly this hierarchical relationship is based on increased levels of understandings. That is, the hierarchy does not represent a transition from a lesser state to a better state but rather a transition from less complex understanding to more complete understanding (Bucks & Oakes, 2011). Where the hierarchical structure is defined in terms of increasing complexity, the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon may be defined as subsets of the component parts and relationships within more complex ways of experiencing the phenomenon.

### 3.4.7    Relationship between researcher and phenomenon.

There is an unavoidable relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon being investigated because the researcher is required to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the phenomenon (Stamouli & Huggard, 2007). This is necessary so that the researcher can discuss and ask questions of the participants about the issues relating to the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). It is, however, essential that the researcher be careful not to impose their own interpretation of the phenomenon on the participants during the interview (Bowden, 2005) or on the data during the analysis process. The action of placing to one side all knowledge of the phenomenon is referred to as bracketing.

Concern has been expressed about researchers' abilities to bracket themselves out of the interview and data analysis process as suggested above (Tight, 2015). Lack of agreement still exists as to amount and type of researcher influence that is acceptable (Engward & Davis, 2015; Ortlipp, 2008). Engward and Davis (2015) suggest that to achieve a successful level of bracketing it is necessary for researchers to engage in critical self-reflection of held assumptions and pre-conceived ideas. According to Finlay (2002) a process of thoughtful and conscious awareness on behalf of the researcher is required. Cherry (2005), in her discussion around the application of phenomenography, suggests that careful, methodical work in an iterative way can support successful bracketing.

During the interview process in this study, the researcher thoughtfully considered how her interactions with the participants might be influenced by her own professional background and experiences. By enacting a strategy of allowing the participant to set the pace of the interview, the researcher hoped that participants would feel that they were exercising a measure of control over the interview process. The role the researcher took in the interviews was one of listening, reflecting and questioning. The suggested questioning style of focusing on what was said by the participant, as opposed to introducing lead questions into the conversation, served to place the participants' dialogue in the central position of the interview.

In relation to bracketing during the data analysis process, Walsh (2000) suggests that because the relationship between the participant and the phenomenon is revealed through the data, the researcher needs to be cognizant of their analysis approach.

Walsh acknowledges that some researchers may consciously interpret the data, choosing and discarding data, and thereby construct the relationship, rather than look "into the transcripts to discover the particular ways in which people understand the phenomenon" (p. 20). Bowden (2000) advises that focusing only on the content that is present in the transcripts will reduce the possibility of distortion. Aiming to represent the data faithfully, by clearly describing and adhering to the processes, also offers improved possibilities for bracketing (Tight, 2015). The researcher's application of bracketing in this study was strengthened by her close adherence to the described methodological guidelines, which included the rigorous application of the framework for analysis of the structure of awareness (Figure 3.6), during the interrogation of the data. As with the bracketing that was enacted during the interview process, the researcher focused on the ideas, words and concepts presented by the participant in the transcripts and aimed to understand the meaning of the phenomenon from the participant's perspective in a non-judgmental way

### 3.4.8   Phenomenographic approaches.

Phenomenography was initially used to investigate how students approached the task of learning and achieved the outcomes of learning (Yates, Partridge & Bruce, 2012). More recently, phenomenography has been described as a research approach for analysing the meaning people attribute to the world (Saljo, 1988). A large range of phenomenographic research approaches have evolved over time and these are overviewed. This study is then situated within the relevant phenomenographic approach.

Marton (1986) outlined three lines of development in phenomenographic research thus indicating the range of types of research carried out. The first line of phenomenographic research focuses on the qualitatively different ways of experiencing the learning process and how this connects to the learning outcomes. Marton (1986) refers to this as content-related studies and goes on to say that in these types of studies "the qualitative differences in learning outcomes are consistently related to qualitative differences in approaches adopted by the learners" (p. 37). The intent of this approach is to show how the qualitatively different learner approaches relate to the learner's perceptions of the learning task and their understanding of what learning is (Saljo, 1988). The second line of development in phenomenographic

research focuses on the study of learning in particular domains, for example, maths, physics, nursing (Marton, 1986). The third line of phenomenographic research focuses on how people view aspects of their reality in areas outside education, such as politics, religion and economics (Dall'Alba, 2000). This line of development is concerned with describing the full range of the diverse ways in which people experience conceptions of a phenomenon and aligns with "pure phenomenography" (Marton, 1986, p. 38). To differentiate between the second and third line of phenomenographic research one must consider "whether or not the phenomenon of reality being described has been the object of formal study by those whose understandings are being explored" (Dall'Alba, 2000, p. 84).

This study, with the aim to reveal the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation on their profession, is not related to learning as in the first line nor to a particular learning domain as in the second line. Even though this study may be 'read' as being in 'education', the phenomenon is the impact of regulations and is not considered a learning topic or domain. Whilst this phenomenon occurs in an education context, it does not constitute formal study (Bowden, 2000). The interest in this study is to discover how the early childhood educators conceive the aspects of reality of their lived experience of the implementation of regulations, which equates to how people view aspects of their reality in areas outside education. This study therefore sits in the third line as it focuses on the participant's view of the impact of regulation. Although this lived experience occurs within the education arena, it is not about education; rather it is about change imposed by outside forces.

Bowden (2000) differentiates two further approaches of phenomenographic research: pure phenomenography and developmental phenomenography. According to Marton (1986), pure phenomenography is "describing how people conceive various aspects of their reality where the concepts under study are mostly phenomena confronted by subjects in everyday life rather than course material studied in school" (p. 38). The research approach of pure phenomenography focuses on the phenomenon under study where the aim is to develop a full description of the variety of ways of experiencing that phenomenon without intending to use the outcomes to effect change (Bowden, 2000). Developmental phenomenography on the other hand is

undertaken in a particular context to discover how people experience some aspect of their world. The outcomes of this research approach are then used to enable change in some way in the worlds of the participants or other people (Bowden, 2000).

Developmental research is regularly undertaken in education contexts in relation to learning with the aim to improve learning. Bowden (2000) notes that taking a developmental phenomenographic approach influences the choice of participants, context, and questioning. He explains that the choice of the "particular methods used in developmental phenomenography are affected by the intended use of the research outcomes" (p. 4).

This study is considered a pure phenomenographic study as it seeks to understand early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation. The study does not seek to change or improve the views of the early childhood educators in relation to this phenomenon. It makes a contribution to the field by revealing early childhood educators' experiences of regulation. Possible suggestions to support future change or improvement in implementing regulations in the early childhood sector will be offered. The description of how the participants conceive the phenomenon under study, however, remains the main aim.

Phenomenography has been further differentiated into five classifications in relation to the way that the data are produced and the reasons data are produced (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997). Experimental phenomenography seeks to reveal outcomes emerging from specific set activities; for example, studies of approaches to learning. Discursive phenomenography is likened to pure phenomenography in that the participants' conceptions are explored. Outcomes resulting from pre-directed learning are not under investigation here. Naturalistic phenomenography collects data from any given situation without direct prompting or intervention from the researcher. The data collection process regularly involves observing and recording. These data are then analysed phenomenographically. The fourth classification is hermeneutic phenomenography in which texts and statements not intended for a phenomenographic research project are analysed. Lastly, if using phenomenological phenomenography, the researcher is attempting to understand the phenomenon as it appears to the individual and then "categorise this understanding across many individuals" (Ireland, 2011, p. 67). This study sits within the discursive

phenomenographic tradition as outcomes resulting from pre-directed learning are not the aim. The intent is to discover the participants' conceptions of the phenomenon through the data collection process of semi-structured interviews.

As explained by Bowden and Walsh (2000) there is no prescriptive format to follow when undertaking phenomenography. When using this approach, therefore, it is necessary that the procedure be well documented and individual variations in the method be clearly explained (Bowden & Walsh, 2000). In the following section, an explanation of the variation in the method of this study, the methodological elaboration, is explained.

## 3.5 Methodological Elaboration

This research study sits within the interpretivist paradigm in the social sciences deploying a qualitative research approach. Research approaches in the social sciences have become more complex in design in an effort to improve understanding (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Qualitative researchers make use of a wide range of interconnected data collection methods, aiming to reach a greater understanding of the phenomena under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative research involves the collection and studied use of a variety of empirical materials such as interviews, visual texts and representations that describe meanings in individuals' lives (Hughes, 2003). Within the interpretivist paradigm, acceptable examples of data collection tools include interviews, observations and visual data analysis (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Flick (2009) divides data collection within qualitative research into two types:

1. Verbal data: collected in semi-structured interviews or as narratives;

2. Visual data: created by applying various methods, "ranging from participant and non-participant observation to ethnography and analysing photos and films". (p.11)

These verbal and visual data are then converted into texts by documenting and transcribing (Flick, 2009) ready for the analysis process.

### 3.5.1 Phenomenographic interview.

Phenomenography is the qualitative research approach used in this study. Of the suggested techniques outlined above, the phenomenographic researcher traditionally uses interviews to collect data. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) suggest that the use of the interview as a data collection tool will most successfully enable the researcher to enter the life world of the participant. Marton and Booth (1997) put forward two important points to be considered in relation to the interview process. Firstly, it is necessary to bring the phenomenon under study into the focal awareness of the participant and secondly, it is necessary for the participants to focus on their ways of experiencing the phenomenon, an awareness that they may not even be aware that they hold. Marton and Booth (1997) report that this component of the interview may be therapeutic, as the interviewee reveals previously "unsuspected reflections" (p. 130). Reaching success across the interview process requires the interviewer to engage with sensitivity, active listening and paraphrasing to maintain the interview relationship (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000).

The phenomenographic interview is noted for its specific elements, including the aim of revealing variation of experiences and focusing upon relationships between the participants and the phenomenon (Francis, 1996). The interview is conducted as a conversational partnership in which the interviewer assists the participant with a process of reflection through the use of open-ended questions (Bowden, 2005). Marton (1986) advises that the intent of data generation is to capture the participants' experiences and the use of open-ended questions in an interview can encourage participants to select the "dimensions of the question they want to answer" (p. 42). Marton goes on to say that "the dimensions they choose are an important source of data because they reveal an aspect of the individual's relevance structure" (p. 42).

The style of the phenomenographic interview is open-ended and non-directive, but also involves the use of some pre-determined questions to focus the interviewee on predetermined content of the particular context and to maintain this focus throughout the study (Bowden, 2005; Francis, 1996). Throughout the interview, the semi-structured approach allows the researcher the freedom to explore experiences with the participants as they are revealed. Follow-up prompts throughout the interview seek clarification from the participants and are considered valuable in eliciting

underlying meaning (Akerlind, 2005a). Akerlind (2005a) stresses the importance of developing appropriate prompts "on the run" (p. 65) as "it is vital to get it right" (p. 65). The interviewer is to seek clarification without influencing the interviewee to respond in particular ways.

Despite this semi-structured, non-directive approach to data generation, issues associated with collecting qualitative data through face-to-face interviews have been highlighted (Bahn & Barratt-Pugh, 2011). For example, participants, finding the interview process uncomfortable, may be reluctant to share perceptions and understandings with the interviewer (Akerlind et al., 2005). Schouteden, Verburgh, and Elen (2010) noted that the interview approach presupposes that participants are able to communicate their conceptions in meaningful spoken ways and Wenestram (1984) questioned whether verbal responses to questions could accurately reflect understandings of the phenomenon. Leitch (2006) suggests that some phenomenon may be better represented by the visual data. Additionally, the focus required at the beginning of the process, to ground the interview in the predetermined content of the particular context, may influence the interviewee to continue to respond in a particular way (Briell, Elen, Depaepe, & Clarebout, 2010; Walsh, 2000).

To counter the possible impacts associated with interviews as the sole data collection tool, a methodological elaboration was devised for this study. This alternate approach combined both visual and verbal data, and the data collection process was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved the creation of visual data. This took the form of an arts-inspired plate created by each participant. The participant created the plate in a space and time away from any intrusion from the researcher. The arts-inspired plate was to be an artefact created by the participant in a medium of their choosing and was to reflect their experience of regulation.

The second stage of the data collection process then became the semi-structured interviews. Within this second stage the arts-inspired plate was utilised at the beginning of the interview to ground the dialogue in the predetermined content (Bowden, 2000; Walsh 2000). Throughout the interview, the participant returned to the arts-inspired plate when necessary to either expand on a topic or introduce a new topic into the interview. The researcher made use of the visual data to reignite the interview by encouraging the participant to reflect on possible alternate points

depicted in the arts-inspired plate or to aid in the framing of a question based on the participant's discussion (Bowden, 2005). Provided in the next section is the rationale behind the inclusion of the arts-inspired plate as a data collection tool.

### 3.5.2    Arts-inspired plates.

The aim of research is to discover something previously unknown, to bring new awareness or new knowledge to a topic. New awareness of phenomena arises out of people making sense of their lives in particular circumstances through the interplay of sensory relationships with the world around them (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). In the context of this study, new awareness is sought of the lived experience of early childhood educators in relation to the phenomenon of the impact of regulations. Because all senses of the person can be engaged in the process of understanding their world, it is then considered prudent to make use of all senses when asking the person to explain their understanding of their lived experience of the phenomena under discussion. According to Butler-Kisber (2002), the more traditional qualitative data collection processes are being increasingly viewed as limited in their ability to reflect this complexity of sensory awareness. Creative research methods, such as the arts, that utilise the senses are viewed as being important when seeking to discover people's lived experiences (Prosser & Loxley, 2008).

This recognition of the arts as an approach to research acknowledges art as an exercise in knowledge construction where meaning is constructed in the form of visual data (Marshall, 2007; Sullivan, 2005). Liebenberg (2009) and Harper (2002) note that many researchers engage with the idea of including visual data during interviews, noting that it facilitates the interview process by adding depth to topics discussed and enhances the quality of the data collected. The use of visual data "challenges attempts to define" the lived experience "in purely linguistic terms" and by enhancing the interview process, "pre-conceived notions of life" are surpassed and broader representations of contextual knowledge is reflected (Liebenberg, 2009. p. 444). Leitch (2006) expresses concern with the view that nothing meaningful exists outside words, therefore reducing meaning to something that can only be revealed through words. She goes on to argue that considerable emotion can reside "outside narrative, even outside what can be spoken" (p. 552). The use of the arts in the data collection process "gives voice" to those who may otherwise be silenced by

the need to articulate their experiences (Huss & Cwikel, 2005; Schouteden et al., 2010). Creative visual data provide the opportunity for the expression of unique individual emotional perspectives that enrich data collected by the traditional interview process (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

McIntyre (2004) notes that it is recognised that visual data in its many different formats may reveal knowledge and understanding that could be missed or overlooked in the more traditional textual forms of data. The process of creating visual data provides the opportunity for participants to step back and reflect upon their lived experiences, allowing for a deeper understanding (Mannay, 2010). Metacognitive activity occurs during the creative process as the creator engages in an inner conversation around the piece they are developing (Catterall, 2005). This serves to assist in the clarification of their thinking (Catterall, 2005). Through this reflection, process, or metacognitive activity, participants may encounter aspects of the experience they may have ignored or blocked. Emotional as well as cognitive ways of knowing are enabled and this is seen to encourage reflexivity (Ewing, 2010). Unacknowledged notions may be realised and possibly confronted, and more subtle components of the experience may be revealed. These new and unexpected notions are assimilated into the thinking around the lived experience of the phenomenon. Huss and Cwikel (2005) note where the participant owns the creative process (the contents of the research) and the interpretation (an explanation of the contents), "the participant is empowered and the relationship between the researcher and the participant is intensified and made more equal" (p. 2).

The arts, as visual data, are viewed as a valuable means for communicating complex social phenomena (Finley & Knowles, 1995) because of their ability to assist in the expression of the lived experience (Ewing & Hughes, 2008). By engaging the senses, the arts can provide a means through which people can become more in touch with their experiences (Stein, 2003), and the arts can be a way of stimulating the imagination providing greater access to the experienced world (Michael, 2009). Visual data seeks the creation of images that are meaningful and will shed light on situations that humans seek to understand. Visual data can be created in many different ways to represent the knowledge and understanding of the participants (Bown & Sumsion, 2007). It is any means of expression (for example, drawings,

sculpture, photographs, or poems) that the participant may feel offers the maximum opportunity to represent understandings (Barry, 1996).

Research through the arts provides a context that merges "forms of the arts with scholarly work for the purposes of advancing knowledge" (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 59). The approach offers the possibility to be a stand-alone methodology, a form of analysis (Huss & Cwikel, 2005), or, as in the case of this study, a methodological elaboration of another research approach (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Ewing and Smith (2004) argue that joining visual data with another data collection method "can drive new learning" (p. 517). As such, the phenomenographic data collection process of this study was enhanced with the inclusion of a participant created arts-inspired plate.

The arts-inspired plate in this study focuses on the process of creation and the accompanying expression of the lived experience. Through the creation of visual data, the structural relationship between the person experiencing the phenomenon and the lived experience of the phenomenon can be reflected. The interaction of the verbal and visual data through creative processes enables the representation of the possible layers of complexity associated with the phenomenon (Finley, 2003). Weber (2008, p. 47) suggests the following five ways that visual data can be components of inquiries:

1. production of images as data;
2. using existing images as a springboard;
3. to provoke other data;
4. to be used as feedback;
5. modes of interpretation.

In this study the visual data, the arts-inspired plate, was produced by the participant and therefore constituted initial data. The arts-inspired plate was used as a provocation for discussion around the phenomenon to gather other data. It is important to note, however, that this was not the only way that the data were generated. Whilst the arts-inspired plate was used to stimulate the discussion and was referred to throughout the interview, data were also generated through general discussion and appropriate questioning designed to promote deeper explanation on behalf of the participant.

This approach to research in art moves away from the more conventional investigation of artistic pieces. The subject of the analysis was not the final product but rather the lived experience as expressed within the visual data created. The decision to utilise art created by the participants was based on the encouragement provided by Finley's (2003) point that "the unschooled minds of untrained artists can construct and express ideas through the media of the arts" (p. 292). The creation of the arts-inspired plate was open-ended to encourage personal, contextual choices.

### 3.5.2.1 Opportunities for triangulation.

The methodological elaboration designed for this study offered the opportunity for triangulation. Triangulation refers to looking at phenomena from more than one viewpoint and provides researchers with more comprehensive knowledge about the phenomena (Cohen et al., 2007). The term triangulation is used "metaphorically" in social science (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2002, p. 146) and is described as a technique that assists in the validation of data across two or more sources (Olsen, 2004). For triangulation to aid in the validation of a research project, a clear explanation of the process must be included in the description of the method undertaken for that research project (Flick, 2009). The process of triangulation provides the opportunity for more complex understandings of the phenomenon under discussion (Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006).

Flick (2009) notes that triangulation does not always have to be enacted for the purpose of arguing the validity of a research project. He states that the focus of triangulation has "shifted increasingly towards further enriching and completing knowledge" (p. 444). Neuman (2003) points out that a more accurate view is gained by looking at something from different perspectives. Through this process the researcher's understandings may deepen and widen (Olsen, 2004).

In this study, the focus on triangulation is its value in enabling increased understanding of the participant's experience of the phenomenon rather than as an explanation of the validity of the project. The combination of verbal data and visual data provided the opportunity for triangulation across the investigation of data (Schouteden et al., 2010). The use of different data collection processes within this study reflects one of the types of triangulation known as "triangulation by method"

(Miles & Huberman (1994) in Meijer et al., 2002, p. 146) which served to develop a more comprehensive view of the participants' understandings.

Triangulation was enabled during the data collection process as the participants' arts-inspired plates provided one representation of their experience and the dialogue produced during their interview provided a second representation. Throughout the interview, individual participants referred back to their arts-inspired plate with the intent of either using the visual representation to assist them in making a point or to remind them of something they had not yet revealed about their lived experience. In the same way, the researcher referred to the arts-inspired plate for clarification of a point made by the participant, or as a stimulant for further questioning within the interview. This process delivered an opportunity for inadvertent cross checking of the commonalities and similarities captured by the representations of the participants' lived experiences providing the opportunity for the development of a more comprehensive view of the early childhood educators' understanding of the phenomenon (Meijer et al., 2002). Seeking clarification of the phenomenon (Sin, 2010) through cross checking the verbal data with the visual data during the interview reduced the risk of participant or researcher exaggeration of understandings (Barnacle, 2005).

During the analysis process, the researcher engaged with triangulation of data when aligning the visual data of the arts-inspired plates with the verbal data of the interview transcripts and the emerging pools of meaning. This data analysis step involved an intuitive approach, with the researcher relating data across the collection (Meijer et al., 2002). Additionally, the step within the research process of selecting arts-inspired plates to represent the categories of description in the presentation of the research findings required further alignment. These steps of alignment of data served to augment the researcher's deepening understanding of the participants' experience of the phenomenon.

As stated above, it was not the remit of this study to enact a triangulation process as part of the research design to establish the validity of the project. Beyond the triangulation opportunity offered by the use of two different data collection processes, a planned conscious enactment of triangulation as a method to support the validity of the project was not undertaken. Instead, triangulation across the research

process served to add depth to the researcher's understanding of the participants' lived experience. The planned process to attain reliability, validity and trustworthiness in this study is contained in the following section.

## 3.6 Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

To access people's experiences, data are collected and analysed for meaning (Merriam, 1998). The researcher seeks to discover the deep understandings about the phenomena as revealed by the study subjects and present this as new knowledge contributing to the world of research. For knowledge to be accepted as worthy it is necessary for the rigour of the research project to be established. Rigour is the means by which the legitimacy of the research process is demonstrated (Porter, 2007).

Rigour is evaluated by the criteria of validity and reliability in both quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Sin, 2010). A research study is deemed to be reliable if it can be conducted a number of times and the same results can be achieved (Creswell, 2012; Sin 2010). Validity is deemed to have occurred when the study has achieved what it stated it would achieve (Gibson, 2010). Creswell (2012), and Seale and Silverman (1997) suggest that reliability and validity are regarded as being less appropriate for qualitative approaches because of their beginnings in the sciences and quantitative research.

There has been discussion in the literature around the how to ensure reliability and validity in phenomenographic studies (Cope, 2004: Sandberg, 2005). Researchers, working with the qualitative approach of phenomenography, have suggested that trustworthiness as an addition to the regime (Cope, 2004). Trustworthiness is established by the judgements the reader makes about the credibility of the project. Trustworthiness is aided by ensuring the perceptions of the participant are presented rather than those of the researcher (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001). Reliability, validity and trustworthiness, as aspects in establishing rigour in the context of phenomenography in general, and in this study in particular, are discussed below.

### 3.6.1 Reliability.

When considering reliability in a research project, the focus is on the use of appropriate procedures and methods to ensure quality and consistency (Kvale, 1996,

2006). Within the qualitative research approach of phenomenography, reliability is viewed in some literature as being unachievable because of the nature of the research. Research of this kind (phenomenographic) generally occurs in the social world and replication of a situation and those involved is not always possible (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Sin (2010) notes that regular verification methods for reliability are rejected by phenomenographers because such methods "overlook researcher procedures" (p. 311). In discussing ways in which reliability can be applied to phenomenography, Sin (2010) reports the following:

> Marton (1986) and Säljö (1988) have argued that the outcome space in phenomenographic studies is a form of discovery that has arisen from a rigorous process of transcript-reading iterations, analysis, and validation with data, and that such discoveries do not have to be replicable. (p. 311)

It is deemed reasonable, however, to expect that another researcher could recognise instances of the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon under investigation once the outcome space of the phenomenon has been constructed (Noble, 2005). Sandberg (2005) describes this as "interjudging reliability" (p. 56) and notes it is a form of reliability characterised as a measurement of the communicability of phenomenographic findings.

Sandberg (1997) discusses the reliability of the interpretive process, because it is viewed that, during this activity, the researcher exercises interpretive awareness and maximum fidelity to the data. Interpretive awareness is described as occurring when "the researcher acknowledges and explicitly deals with his or her own preconceptions throughout the research process" (Sin, 2010, p. 311). It is important that the researcher demonstrate how they have controlled and checked their interpretations across the phenomenographic process (Mann, Dall'Alba, & Radcliffe, 2007). This demonstration is achieved through explanation around the formulation of the research questions, the selection of the participants, the interview process, the analysis process and the reporting of the findings (Sandberg, 1997). What is important for reliability in the phenomenographic approach is the acknowledgement by the researchers of their position in relation to the phenomenon and this position needs to be declared at the beginning of the project (Akerlind, 2005a).

### 3.6.2 Validity.

Validity in phenomenography is achieved through the transparency of the research process (Bowden, 2005). To achieve transparency the researcher needs to be clear about the purpose of the study and the strategies by which they will achieve the end purpose (Bowden, 2000). The researcher needs to provide a "full and open account of the study's method … and the use of the strategies" (Cope, 2004). Mann (2009) proposes strategies to achieve validity across the research project. The first stage is the interview stage where participants are to be informed that the researcher is interested in their experiences of the phenomenon, that there is no right or wrong answer and that no judgement will be made of the utterances that are presented (Mann, 2009). During this phase, the researcher will stimulate the discussion using open-ended questions based on the interview content, to encourage the participant to explain the experiences further (Mann, 2009). The second phase involves the analysis and the researcher is directed to view the utterances within the whole of the transcript, rather than reviewing them out of context (Mann, 2009). Forcing utterances to fit into a category is to be avoided. The validity and reliability of a phenomenographic study is its credibility and trustworthiness, as determined by the reader and best obtained by a clear account of the research method and results (Cope, 2002).

### 3.6.3 Trustworthiness.

There is discussion in the phenomenographic literature around the unsuccessful application of reliability and validity in establishing the rigour of qualitative research projects (Bryant, 2014). To counter this perceived deficit, phenomenographic researchers suggest trustworthiness as an approach. Bruce (1997) notes that "increased attention is being paid to the need to establish trustworthiness within phenomenographic research" (p. 106). Stoodley (2009) posited that the trustworthiness of outcomes within a study relies on the conceptions being described faithfully by the researcher who has not imposed his/her own experience on the analysis and therefore misinterpreted the participant's experience. Attending carefully to, and clearly defining the observed structures of awareness, was advised by Cope (2002). The application of a phenomenographical reduction applied during the data gathering and analysis process helped to ensure that the researcher would come as close as possible to seeing the experience through the participants' eyes

(Bruce, 1997). Stoodley (2009, p. 85) articulated the phenomenographical reduction in this way:

1. An orientation to the phenomenon as to how it appears throughout the research process;

2. A focus on the description rather than the explanation of the phenomenon, not going beyond the participants' experience;

3. Treating all aspects of experience expressed by the participants as equally significant (named "horizontalisation");

4. Searching for a basic meaning structure which is stable across the data;

5. Respecting the structure of experience (that is using "intentionality as a correlational rule").

Bruce (1997, p. 106) suggests the trustworthiness of the outcomes of a phenomenographic study may need to be defended on the basis of:

1. The outcome having a demonstrable orientation towards the phenomenon through the process of discovery and description

2. The conformity to the phenomenon of interest

3. They are communicable.

Find below a discussion to the points highlighted by Bruce (1997) with respect to this study.

### 3.6.3.1 A demonstrable orientation towards the phenomenon.

The whole research process was orientated to the participants' experience of the impact of regulation. The data collection process was conducted in two stages and the first stage was designed with the particular intention of orientating the participants towards the impact of regulation in relation to their particular context and their experiences of it. The introductory remarks and accompanying questions, associated with the discussion around the creation of the arts-inspired plate, stressed the researcher's interest in the participants' own experiences. Care was taken not to impose any of the researcher's beliefs or understandings about the impact of regulations through the process of bracketing. Clarification around the orientation of the research project and the arts-inspired plates was provided whenever sought by the participants. The task of developing the arts-inspired plate was open-ended and self-

directed, enabling significant participant orientation with minimal researcher input or imposition.

The second stage of the data collection process involved asking open-ended questions in a conversational interview using the participants' own arts-inspired plate as an orientation and leading prompt (Walsh, 2000). This orientation to their experiences of the impact of regulation was maintained throughout the interview aided by reference to their arts-inspired plate whenever appropriate. The inclusion of the arts-inspired plate assisted the researcher to bracket her own experiences throughout the interview because the plate was the participants' expression of their lived experiences from their personal perspectives and this remained the focus of the interview. Each arts-inspired plate was different, removing any possibility of predictability on the researcher's behalf regarding the direction of the interview. The arts-inspired plate, as visual data, greatly aided the researcher in seeing the experience through the participants' eyes.

A pilot study was used to check that the data collection process orientated the participants to the phenomenon (Bruce, 1997). A close examination of the beginning of the interview was undertaken to assess whether the use of the arts-inspired plate and the focusing questions were successful in mining comment on the topic under investigation (Bowden, 2005). The overall data were examined to see if the questions asked adequately maintained a focus on the impact of regulation and elicited the participants' experiences (Stoodley, 2009). The researcher reflected upon her ability to extract the participants' understandings and adjusted the approach accordingly. Questions were adjusted as needed.

The analysis process was orientated to revealing and describing the participants' experiences. The participants' own words were regularly used in the descriptions of the concepts and construction of the categories of description. A selected quote from the participants' transcripts was used to represent each of the categories and further quotes were used throughout the presentation of the findings. The orientation to the data collected was achieved through the iterative process, which involved visiting and revisiting the data collection and category development.

### *3.6.3.2 Conformity to the phenomenon of interest.*

The construction of the outcome space is dependent upon the emergence and identification of the structural features of the concepts (Bruce, 1997). Therefore, it is necessary to demonstrate that the structural features of the conception have been identified. During the analysis, the structural features of the conceptions were interrogated with reference to the contextualised utterances and the arts-inspired plates. Stoodley (2009) notes that for conformity to the phenomenon interest to be maintained, the categories formed during the analysis process need to sustain a "logical cohesiveness" in relation to the experience under investigation (p. 87). The categories of description developed in this study are logically hierarchical with each category being embedded in the one above, indicating consistent association between the categories and the phenomenon.

### *3.6.3.3 Communicability.*

Communicability is pertinent for the interview process, the analysis process and the verification process (Sandberg, 1997). The interviews were conducted as conversational episodes enabling a two-way dialogue. Through this dialogue, the participants' contributions were privileged. The dialogue was further facilitated by the use of probing questions to enable clarification of the descriptions. As the quality of the research outcome is deemed to depend upon how the researcher interacts with the data (Sandberg, 1997), the transcripts were interrogated in their fullness to maintain the context of utterances during analysis and fidelity to the transcripts (Bowden, 2005). Selected utterances were separated from the transcripts in the final stage of the development of the categories of description.

Communicability of categories needs to be meaningful for the intended audience (Stenfors-Hayes, Hult, & Dahlgren, 2013). For verification of communicability, the categories of description and outcome space were shared regularly with the researcher's principal supervisor, an experienced phenomenographer from the early childhood field who had an understanding of the topic under investigation. Additionally, the results were presented to academic peers during the biannual Post Graduate Early Career Researcher seminars held by the university at which the researcher was enrolled. The peer audience included colleagues experienced in phenomenographic research and peers from the education faculty who had an

understanding of the topic. The peers were able to perform the role of "phenomenographic/challenger" (Dunkin, 2000, p. 142) and provide commentary on the communicability of the categories of description and outcome space. The researcher also presented two research seminars organised in conjunction with national conferences. These were attended by a group of academic peers with experience and understanding of the early childhood context. Peer feedback received on these occasions indicated the categories were meaningful providing appropriate checks for communicability.

## 3.7 Data Generation

In this study a phenomenographic approach with an arts-inspired elaboration provides a framework for the method of data generation. The method in a research project refers to the tools or techniques of data collection or data generation, such as questionnaires, interviews and observations. Organised and careful planning is required for the achievement of a successful project. When discussing phenomenography, Bowden (2000) explains, "the research must be planned and managed from beginning to end" (p. 5). He goes on to suggest that a phenomenographic research study "should begin with a clear intention; the research should be planned around a particular purpose: that purpose should provide a focus through the whole study and guide action" (p. 6). The initial step in the plan is for the researcher to declare any connection with the phenomenon and the participants. Therefore, as the researcher, I declare I am an early childhood educator and have worked in the field for over 25 years. During this time, I have experienced some regulatory change. I am not currently teaching in the field and am not directly experiencing the regulatory change that has accompanied the implementation of the National Quality Framework. I therefore have the knowledge required to conduct the interviews, but I bracketed all preconceived ideas throughout the study process.

### 3.7.1    Purpose and strategies.

The purpose of this study was to explore the different understandings that early childhood educators had of the regulatory environment resulting from the implementation of the National Quality Framework Australia wide and how this impacted on their profession. Data were collected by interviewing early childhood educators on their experiences of the regulatory environment. The data were

collected from May to December 2013 following the implementation of the National Quality Framework on 1 January 2012 (ACECQA, 2013a). The process for sourcing the participant group, and its subsequent make-up, is described in the next section.

### 3.7.2    Selection of participants.

There are various ways people experience, or understand, a given phenomenon (Marton, 2000). The different ways of experiencing phenomena are representative of the different ways the participants have of dealing with those phenomena. Marton (1981) states there are a limited number of qualitatively different ways in which people experience a certain phenomenon therefore indicating the number of participants required for a study. Dunkin (2000) states that "for saturation of categories to be reached, some fifteen to twenty interviews are required" (p. 144). The number of participants sought for this study was 25 and the researcher was responsible for the recruitment. Potential participants were approached by email and phone (see Appendix A).

The recruitment process took between 3 and 4 months. Participants needed to have experience with regulation in centres and the implementation of the NQF. To begin the process, the researcher approached known colleagues working in the sector and emailed a selection of early child care settings. To reach the saturation number of 25, it was necessary to contact additional early child care settings plus seek introductions to suitable participants from those agreeing to be part of the project. Of the final 25 participants, 10 were colleagues known to the researcher, 9 volunteered in response to the emails and those agreeing to be part of the study introduced a further 6 to the researcher.

The pool of potential participants all had experience with the phenomenon and therefore the selection was non-random. Those contacted were early childhood educators currently working in early childhood contexts in southeast Queensland. The educators who agreed to be participants were contextually aware. This meant they had experience with regulation in an early childhood context in general, and of the implementation of the NQF in particular. Experience with regulation was viewed as the participant having engaged in any activity that was required by the governing body for the licensing and running of the centre. Ashworth and Lucas (2000) note that the "selection of participants should avoid presupposition about the nature of the

phenomenon or the nature of the conceptions held by particular "types" of individuals while observing common-sense precautions about maintaining "variety" of experience" (p. 300).

The 25 educators interviewed were from a range and variety of early childhood education sites. Participants were sourced from standalone kindergartens, long day care centres and kindergartens on school sites in regional, rural or urban areas in south east Queensland. The Queensland Government had constructed four of the sites across 2009-2011 specifically for the purpose of providing infrastructure for universal access to kindergarten (DEEWR, 2011). The remaining sites were established early childhood education and care centres. All sites provided services operated by approved providers. Sixteen services were each part of an organisation, four were community managed, four were associated with a school and one was run privately. The size of the services also offered variety across the participant group. Nine of the early childhood educators were employed in single unit kindergartens meaning that they were the only university trained early years teacher on the premises. Of the remaining 16, eight early childhood educators worked in two unit kindergartens and eight were in long day care settings with multiple rooms.

The early childhood educators worked either full-time or part-time, with two participants engaging in full-time employment by taking up two part-time positions at two different sites (both newly established sites). The early childhood educators were centre directors or early childhood teachers (ECT), with one participant undertaking a director's role in one centre and an early childhood teacher's role in another. The educators were classified as experienced (more than five years teaching) or novice (less than five years teaching). Two early childhood educators held diploma level qualifications in early childhood; 18 held early childhood education bachelor degrees; four held postgraduate early childhood education degrees and one held a Master of Education. All 25 participants fulfilled the role of Educational Leader in their service whilst 22 also took on the role of Nominated Supervisor. This means that they fulfilled the two roles specified under the National Law and National Regulations. Educators of different genders were sought. One male and 24 female early childhood educators were interviewed. This representation of participants is in keeping with statistics that this is a highly feminised field of

work (Productivity Commission, 2011). Table 3.1 provides a summary of the range of contexts and experiences of the participants.

*Table 3.1.*

Employment Contexts and Experience of Participants

**Educator Information**

| Location | Regional | 11 |
|---|---|---|
| | Rural | 11 |
| | Urban | 3 |
| | | |
| Service Type | Standalone | 10 |
| | Long Day Care (LDC) | 8 |
| | School Site | 7 |
| | | |
| Service Size | Single unit kindergarten | 9 |
| | Double unit kindergarten | 8 |
| | Multiple room LDC | 8 |
| | | |
| Employment Type | Full Time | 18 |
| | Full Time (PT&PT) | 2 |
| | Part Time | 5 |
| | | |
| Position | Director | 18 |
| | Director/ECT | 2 |
| | ECT | 5 |
| | | |
| Level of Education | Diploma | 2 |
| | Bachelor | 18 |
| | Post Graduate | 4 |
| | Masters | 1 |
| | | |
| Length of Experience | Experienced | 16 |
| | Novice | 9 |
| | | |
| Roles in service | Nominated Supervisor | 22 |
| | Educational Leader | 25 |
| | | |
| Gender | Female | 24 |
| | Male | 1 |

### 3.7.3   Data collection.

Both visual and verbal data collection tools were employed in this study. Bowden (2000) suggests that rigour is best achieved by providing a transparent plan for the entire phenomenographical research process, including a plan for the interview process. To this end the plan, based on the suggestion provided by Bowden (2000), was followed in this study:

1. the phenomenon was presented to all participants in precisely the same way;

2. a limited set of planned questions was used to cover any new ideas that might be introduced during the interview;

3. other questions focused solely on encouraging the participants to explain their ideas as fully as possible were used.

The research plan included pilot interviews and the main interviews. The main interviews were conducted in two stages. The first stage was the development of an arts-inspired plate, and the second stage was a semi-structured interview. This process will now be expanded upon. The implementation of this interview plan is described in the next section.

### 3.7.3.1 Pilot interviews.

Two pilot interviews were conducted at the beginning of the process. To develop the skills necessary for productive interviewing, it is deemed necessary to undertake pilot interviews (Bowden, 2005). This activity is said to provide the interviewer with the opportunity to practise the art of interviewing so that appropriate data are elicited from the participants (Green, 2005). Inappropriate questioning/responses, or in fact lack of questioning/responses, may result in the dialogue becoming stunted and unproductive. The pilot interviews provided the opportunity to trial the arts-inspired plate. The appropriateness of the questions was checked. Additionally, it is essential in phenomenography for the researcher to enact bracketing during the interview process and the pilot interviews offered the opportunity to practice this skill (Akerlind, Bowden & Green, 2005).

As Bowden (2000) suggested, the phenomenon was presented to the pilot participants in "precisely the same way" (p. 10). The pilot participants were asked to develop an arts-inspired plate prior to the interview in response to the following two questions:

1. How do I understand what regulation is?

2. How does regulation affect me as I carry out my profession?

The pilot interviews provided an opportunity for reflection on the appropriateness of the questioning as a catalyst for encouraging the participants to reveal their deep

awareness of their experience of the regulatory environment. Immediately following each interview, debriefing was conducted between the interviewee and interviewer. Following the debriefing, the researcher reflected on the interview sessions and reviewed the audio, seeking instances of active listening and paraphrasing.

### 3.7.3.1.1 Establishing interview questions.

For this study, the two broad questions asked in the pilot interviews reflected the questions presented as a stimulus for the development of the arts-inspired plates. These two questions became the planned questions of the main interview:

1. What do you understand regulation to be?

2. How has regulation impacted upon your profession?

The success of the arts-inspired plate acting as a leading prompt and prompt during the interview was established. The pilot participants noted a lack of questioning to clarify meaning during the debriefing process. In both cases, the pilot participants indicated that they could have said more had they been asked. In response to this reflection by the pilot participants, the set of planned questions was expanded upon to include some types of questions that aim at seeking clarification and explaining the meaning further (Bowden, 2000). Based on Bowden (2000), the following questions for encouraging the participants to explain their experiences were included in the interview plan:

1. What do you mean by that?

2. Could you explain that further?

3. Can you tell me some more about that?

4. Is there anything else you would like to say about this?

Following the examination of the pilot interviews, the main research interviews began. The interviews were conducted within an allocated time in a location of the participants' choosing. The interview was carried out with sensitivity and empathy (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) and the arts-inspired plate was utilised as the leading prompt (Walsh, 2000).

### *3.7.3.2 Main interviews.*

The main interviews constituted two stages. The first stage was the creation of the arts-inspired plate. The participant undertook this task in his/her own space and time away from the researcher. The second stage was the interview session. The participant and researcher met at a place of the participants' choosing. The participant brought the arts-inspired plate to the interview and both the participant and researcher referred to it throughout the interview. The main interviews are explained in detail below.

#### 3.7.3.2.1   First stage.

All participants who had agreed to be subjects in this research study were contacted at least one month before the planned interview date by phone. In the phone conversation, a basic script was followed to ensure that all participants had the phenomenon presented to them in "precisely the same way" (Bowden, 2000, p. 10). The script is included in Appendix B. During this phone conversation, the participants were asked to develop an arts-inspired plate prior to the interview in response to the following two questions: (1) how do I understand what regulation is? and (2) how does regulation affect me as I carry out my profession? Dates for the interviews were set. Clarification around what constituted an arts-inspired plate and the process of creating an art-inspired was provided. This included discussion around what medium could be used and what format it could take. It was explained that participants were to use resources available in their immediate surroundings. Participants were encouraged to contact the researcher at any time for further clarification if needed. A follow-up email clarifying all of the information provided over the phone was sent to each participant.

Participants were asked to represent their experience of the impact of regulation on their profession through the creation of an arts-inspired plate. An arts-inspired plate was to be any artefact that the participants created to represent their life experiences of regulation. Participants were free to choose any format or medium. They were to develop this plate before engaging with the interview in a place, space and time of their own choosing using a format or medium of their own choice. The participants were free from any intrusion from the researcher, being left to their own thoughts and reflections. The development of the arts-inspired plate was open-ended and no

restrictions were placed on the final product. Participants were encouraged to make use of any materials available to them and to produce anything they chose. As noted above, the term 'arts-inspired' refers to any means of expression or visual data that the participant felt offered the maximum opportunity to represent understandings (Barry, 1996). The researcher, however, provided some ideas, during the initial discussion where participants sought further clarification.

The participants had been informed that the arts-inspired plate would be used throughout the interview. The intent in asking participants to engage in the creative process involved in making the arts-inspired plate was to provide the participants with time for reflection unimpeded by the presence of the researcher. Through reflection, the participants had the opportunity to consider how they would articulate their lived experience, possibly adding further clarity to any explanation presented during the interview. This opportunity for reflection was afforded through the participant being away from the intrusion of the researchers voice (Mannay, 2010). This private and personal space provided the prospect for deep consideration, which, in turn, could promote feelings of empowerment on behalf of participant (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). The outcome of this reflection process could enable the participants to arrive at the interview session with greater confidence in their ability to express their thoughts and understandings about their lived experience. The process of creating the arts-inspired plate combined with the semi-structured interview enabled greater understanding than may occur when using conventional forms of communication (Liebenberg, 2009).

### 3.7.3.2.2   Second stage.

The second stage of the data collection process was the interview session. The style of the phenomenographic interview was open-ended and non-directive, except at the beginning of the process. The interview commenced with a focus on the arts-inspired plate as a leading prompt.

The interviews took place at a location and time of the participants' choosing. Some participants elected to go off site and undertake the interview in public locations such as coffee shops or their own home, whilst others nominated to come into the researcher's place of work. Other participants elected to be interviewed at their early

childhood site, some after hours, and some during their allocated administration time. This entailed a significant amount of travelling on the researcher's behalf to reach those participants in the variety of rural and urban locations. In one rural location, two interviews were conducted in one day. The minimum length of an interview was 45 minutes with some interviews taking up to 2 or 2.5 hours. All interviews were audio-recorded using two different recording devises. A beverage was enjoyed during each interview and this assisted in creating a more relaxed environment.

In this second stage of the data generation process, the arts-inspired plate created by each participant was used as an anchor for the semi-structured interview and the initial discussion was framed around the content of the plate. The interviewee was thanked for creating the arts-inspired plate and invited to talk about their creation through open-ended questions intended to encourage narrative. For example, in replying to the third interview question, "Can you tell me a little about it?" the participant replied, "It's stretched to the limit in every way and I'm just thinking any personal life in non-existent." Comments such as this placed the initial focus of the interview onto the plate rather than the interviewee (as demonstrated by the wording "It's …") whilst providing some guidance on what to talk about (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). During this time, it was hoped that the participant would have the opportunity to gather their thoughts and feel more relaxed within the interview process.

The intent of the interview was to reveal the qualitatively different ways the early childhood educators understood the impact of regulation on their profession. The following questions were asked:

1.  What do you understand regulation to be?

2.  How has regulation impacted upon your profession?

The direction the interviews followed was dictated by the conversation offered by the participants. Throughout the interview, the participant returned to the arts-inspired plate to refocus his/her thinking on the topic or use the visual data to expand on or assist in the explanation of a point. Comments such as "As you can see here …" or "Now this bit over here shows …" were common. The researcher also referred to the arts-inspired plates to encourage the participant to expand on points they had made or

to frame prompts based on the participant's dialogue (Bowden, 2005). Questions such as "What does this represent?" and "You said this section represented … Can you expand on that?" using prompt questions proved significant in encouraging the flow of conversation and the deeper explanation of points.

The researcher engaged in the process of active listening across each interview. Active listening was essential when seeking meaning and was a skill that required conscious effort. The researcher observed key elements of active listening by ensuring an open and inviting posture and demeanour, and providing acknowledgment of participant messages with short verbal comments, relevant questions and facial expressions, such as a nod or a smile. The researcher paraphrased, sought clarification and summarised the participant's comments. Paraphrasing involved a restatement of the information given by the participant in the words of the participant; that is, the participant's own words were used. The use of paraphrasing demonstrated that the interviewer was listening and understanding. It ensured that the interviewer's interpretation of what was being said was correct.

As with the pilot interviews, two devices were used for recording: an audio digital recorder and Quick Voice Recording software on an iPad. Both forms of recording were transferred to a laptop computer. Two recordings of each interview were captured as a safeguard against the risk of losing interview content due to equipment failure. Photographs were taken on the iPad of each arts-inspired plate at the end of the interview. Some participants presented the plate to the researcher for her keeping.

Transcriptions of the interviews into text transcripts were commenced after all interviews were completed. Interviewees were de-identified using pseudonyms (e.g. Participant 01) and references to locations, people and organisations were replaced with general words, such as, location or husband. Following the advice of Akerlind (2005a) the 25 interviews were transcribed verbatim.

### 3.7.3.2.3  *Bracketing.*

Throughout the interview, bracketing was enforced. Ashworth and Lucas (1998) describe the action of bracketing as "the resolve to set aside theories, research presuppositions, ready-made interpretations etc. in order to reveal engaged, lived experiences" (p. 418). It was not necessary, however, for the researcher to bracket

knowledge of the phenomenon under discussion. As Bowden (2000) pointed out it is necessary for the researcher to have an understanding of the phenomenon to form appropriate and relevant questions and comments. This involves being aware of which of the participants' comments requires further exploration (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) and, by questioning this, promote the participants' willingness to discuss and reveal their experiences. Questions or comments that do not relate to the phenomenon may result in the dialogue becoming stunted and unproductive. It is, therefore, the researcher's formed opinions of the phenomenon, not their factual knowledge, that are to be bracketed.

This process of bracketing personal ideas and assumptions was essential across the whole research project, but no more so than at the time of interviewing. Green (2005) states that any interview tainted by the influence of the researcher must be discarded at the analysis point. According to Bowden (2000) by engaging in "more extensive dialogue during the interview" the researcher may, "in an unplanned way" introduce ideas "going beyond what the participant has already introduced into the conversation" (p. 10). The process of bracketing requires the researcher to "hear what the participant is saying and converse in a way which will evoke their life world" (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998, p. 421). There is a requirement for the researcher to focus on the experience as much as possible from the perspective of the participant and thus attend in a non-judgmental way to what they are expressing. At the same time, it is necessary for the researcher to be aware of any comments made by the participant that may lead to further explanation.

As practised during the pilot interviews the researcher enacted active listening and was very conscious of not asking lead questions. Apart from the two planned questions, the researcher's questions and points of clarification were formed immediately during the interview using the ideas, words and concepts presented by the participant. This conscious effort on behalf of the researcher, to focus on what the participant was saying, dissuaded the introduction of content by the researcher that may not be part of the participant's lived experience. Staying focussed on trying to understand the meaning of the phenomenon for the participant was an effective strategy. Asking the participants why they talked about their experiences in the way they did (Akerlind, Bowden & Green, 2005) assisted in focusing the interview solely

on what the participants offered through their dialogue. Having knowledge of the phenomenon assisted the researcher to understand the features of the phenomenon to which the participants referred. By developing questions that reflected what the participant talked about, the researcher aimed to encourage a deeper description of the lived experience of that feature.

## 3.8 Data Analysis

In this study the aim of the data analysis process was to discover the conceptions of the impact of regulation as conceived by early childhood educators, to develop categories of description to reflect these conceptions, to discover the dimensions of variation and finally to build an outcome space which would communicate these understandings to the readers of the study. The notion of the category of description dimensions of variation and outcome space as a component of the phenomenographical approach has been previously described. The following discussion will be around the process of analysis through which the components of the data presentation evolved for this project.

There is no prescribed set of techniques for conducting a phenomenographic study. Saljo (1988) notes that the research approach is more about discovery than verification. This deems the approach a difficult one for the novice researcher to apply. Prosser (2000) however suggests a close reading of experienced phenomenographic researcher's reflections maybe helpful. The advice to engage with experienced phenomenographer's reflections was followed. Comments such as "the process was time consuming and intellectually difficult and challenging" (Prosser, 2000, p. 38), and "time pressures resulted in a fairly constant desire to get to closure of some kind" (Cherry, 2005, p. 62) were uncovered. Marton (1986) also notes:

> . . . the [phenomenographic] process is tedious, time-consuming, labour-intensive, and interactive. It entails the continual sorting of data and re-sorting of data. Definitions for categories are tested against the data, adjusted, retested, and adjusted again. There is, however, a decreasing rate of change and eventually the whole system of meanings is stabilised. (p. 43)

Some assistance was offered within the literature in the form of common principles for data analysis. Marton and Booth (1997) provide the following directions about data analysis: "this is achieved by applying the principle of focussing on one aspect of the object and seeking its dimensions of variation while holding other aspects frozen" (p. 133). Akerlind (2005b) highlights the need to set aside predetermined views relating to the project, refrain from drawing conclusions about possible categories of description too early, maintain a focus on the purpose of the project and search for meaning or variations in meanings across the transcripts. Walsh (2000) stresses that it is important to look closely at what the interviewee has said and how they have understood the phenomenon, rather than just record the dialogue. Bowden (2000) notes that the researcher must retain conscious awareness of the study's purpose during the analysis phase, as during the interview process. Thorough documentation of all steps undertaken during the analysis is essential (Bowden, 2000).

Differing approaches to phenomenographic analysis were presented which required resolution before undertaking the task. Walsh (2000) synthesised the approaches into two types: the first being a process of construction and the second being a process of discovery. If the researchers take a construction approach there is a risk of their imposing their perspective over the data thus "influencing the categories 'in' the data" and this "presupposes the need for the categories to fit some predetermined framework" (Walsh, 2000, pp. 20 & 21). Alternatively, if the researchers takes the discovery approach it may be that an analytical process may not be implemented (Bruce, 1997). Bruce (1997) explains the analytical process in phenomenographic research as being "the identification of the structural components of the framework and how they are connected in the … outcome space" (p. 103). This step provides the research process with a stronger theoretical basis (Cope, 2002). Bruce goes on to highlight that the two types of approaches were encapsulated in the point made by Johansson et al. (1985), being "conceptions are discovered and categories are constructed" (p. 250). Bruce (1997) posits that it is acceptable and possible to engage with both approaches simultaneously across the analysis procedure with a process of discovery occurring "because conceptions reveal themselves through the data" (p. 103) and a process of construction occurring "because the researcher must identify

and describe these conceptions in terms of the referential and structural elements" (p. 103).

### 3.8.1   Analysis in this study.

The two approaches for data analysis, as presented by Walsh (2000), were managed through the employment of the five phases suggested by Noble (2005) based on Bruce (1997). The five phases comprised becoming familiar with the data, determining the referential or meaning element of a conception, determining how people's awareness was being structured, drafting the categories of description and establishing the outcome space. This five phase approach, whilst presented in a linear format, was undertaken as a series of iterative cycles moving back and forth across the phases and between the verbal data (transcripts) and the visual data (arts-inspired plates). The emerging conceptions (discovery) and the required construction of the categories (construction) were kept in mind across the interpretation of the data. Reassessment of earlier phases occurred regularly throughout the process.

To assist in the analysis of the data across the five phases, an analytical framework, based on a version developed by Cope (2002), was developed (see Figure 3.6). The framework assisted in the discovery of the meaning of the experience and the structure of the awareness. According to Yates (2013), these two components of the experience are closely related and are regularly experienced simultaneously. A person's awareness is layered with some aspects appearing in the foreground and some aspects receding progressively to the background. The aspects that appear in the foreground are the ones that the person is focusing on at that point in time in that context and are identified as being in the focus of the awareness in the internal horizon. Other aspects that are referred to but are peripheral to the focus appear in the field of the external horizon. Within the fringe of the external horizon is the aspect or aspects that provide the context for the awareness that "temporally and spatially coexist" (Marton, 2000, p. 110).

When investigating the referential component and structural component, with the inclusive structure of awareness, the framework for analysis of the structure of awareness, depicted in Figure 3.6, supported the process. A number of different questions were asked of the data to assist in the focusing of the researcher's analysis (Bruce, 1997) in Step 2 and Step 3 of the analytical phase. If initial questions such as

"What are they talking about?" or "How are they talking about it?" did not provide clarity, alternate questions such as "What is the experience?" or "How do they explain the experience?" were asked. The different wording of the questions proved to be helpful in determining the focus of the participants' awareness. Following the discovery of the focus of the awareness, the field and fringe generally appeared.
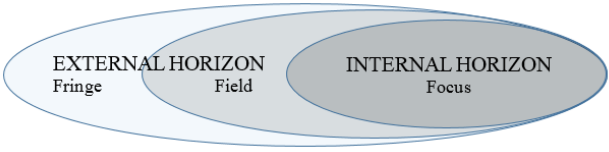
| Experience | |
|---|---|
| Internal relationship between the person (subject) & the world (object) (phenomenon) | |
| What is the awareness? | |
| **Referential Aspect** | **Structural Aspect** |
| Meaning of the experience | What is the awareness made up of? – Awareness structure |
| **What** does the experience mean to them? What is the experience? What regulation is conceived as… | **How** do they explain the experience? How is it understood? How it is conceived… |
| What are they talking about? | How are they talking about it? |
| Ways in which phenomenon is distinguished from the content | Ways in which phenomenon and parts are related to each other |
| *What are ECEs concepts of regulation?* | *How do they conceive the impact of regulation on their profession?* |
| | External Horizon — How must the phenomenon be delimited from its context to make sense? / Internal Horizon — What dimensions of variation must be discerned in the quote is to make sense? — Dimensions of variation |
| |  |

*Figure 3.6.* Framework for analysis (adapted from Cope, 2002, p. 69)

### 3.8.1.1 Five analytical phases.

As indicated above, five phases were followed to analyse the data. The plan encompasses the phases as suggested by Noble (2005) with the inclusion of a guiding questions from the framework for analysis, which were applied to the data at each phase. The 25 interviews were transcribed verbatim and 25 transcripts were created as word documents stored online. The participant's code (for example, P01) and the date of the interview was used to identify each word document. The transcripts were formatted online into a table with columns and rows. Three columns were developed with the left column being narrow, reserved for short notation, and numbering. The middle column contained the transcript and the right column was left blank for notation. The transcripts were divided into rows according to the person who was speaking, that is, either the interviewer or participant. The row was notated in the left column with me for interviewer or P for participant. Each row was numbered in chronological order to enable efficient referral. The transcripts were then read, and

reread, in both the electronic environment (online) and the hard copy format. The analytical process is described below.

*Phase 1: Becoming familiar with the data.*

*Guiding questions*: How does the early childhood educator understand the phenomenon? What is regulation experienced as? What concepts are used to explain it? What types of similarities with other concepts are introduced? (Bruce, 1997).

*Process:* The first phase of the analysis is for the researcher to become as familiar as possible with the transcripts whilst consciously bracketing preconceived ideas (Bowden, 2000). Bruce (1998) describes this as becoming immersed in the utterances. Firstly, the audio for each interview was listened to whilst following the accompanying transcripts online to check for accuracy. The interviews were then read through another three times before any attempt to make notes or annotations was made. The interviews were then read through with continual reference to the associated arts-inspired plate. All arts-inspired plates were photographed. The photos were saved to a computer and printed in colour on A4 paper. The researcher had the A4 photo of the plate next to the associated transcript when undertaking the analysis of the interview. Utterances relating to the arts-inspired plates were highlighted with annotations added to the right hand column of the transcript. Below is an example of the type of utterances relating to the arts-inspired plate noted within a transcript and the accompanying arts-inspired plate:

> *So basically, this is me up here. I feel like I've always got so many different roles ... I feel those are all the hats that I wear every day .... That's the scales showing the tipping the balance. P07*

The arts-inspired plate in Figure 3.7 is a drawing of a figure balancing a number of different roles and a number of different hats. The researcher recalled that the participant physically pointed to sections of the arts-inspired plate during the interview. This was corroborated by the use of deictic expressions within the dialogue (for example, up here, those are, and that's).
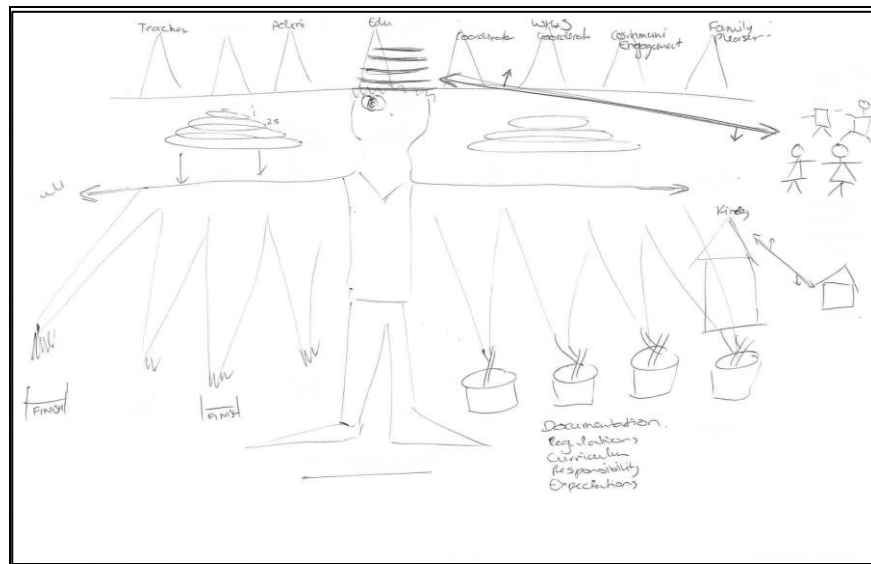
*Figure 3.7.* Arts-inspired plate of figure balancing roles and hats

At the end of each reading the underlined utterances and annotations from the transcripts were copied onto the document with the photo of the arts-inspired plate. It was also important to record the essence of the context in which the utterances were made. This was essential because according to Marton (1986) "the interpretation must be made in relation to the context from which the utterance was taken" (p. 43). This collection of 25 annotated arts-inspired plates provided a second set of data.

The 25 interviews were then read through in their fullness many times to find "utterances of interest for the question being investigated" (Marton, 1986, p. 42). The intent of these readings was to discover what experiences the early childhood educators had had, and what these experiences meant to them in that context. The transcripts were read both online and as hardcopies. During this phase, sections within the transcript, that were identified as a conception, were noted and annotations were added in the right column. This procedure was repeated across 25 transcripts. The interviews were read and reread, and noted sections and annotations were checked to ensure that they reflected the participant's concepts of regulation. At this stage pools of meaning were emerging. Following Bowden's (2000) advice, the data were viewed as whole transcripts so as to retain the associated context. The transcripts were continually checked against the arts-inspired plates.

*Phase 2: Determining the referential or meaning element of a conception.*

*Guiding questions*: What are they talking about? What are early childhood educators focusing on in order to experience regulation in this way? How might the statement: "The impact of regulation is experienced as …" be completed on the basis of the data (Bruce, 1997, p. 105). See Figure 3.6 for additional questions.

*Process*: Working online, the transcripts were read to discover the meanings of the experience of regulation noted by the early childhood educators. The search for meaning, rather than the search for structural relationships between meanings, was the priority in this phase (Akerlind, 2005b). The researcher's attention had now shifted from the individual subjects to the meaning embedded within the quotes themselves (Marton, 1986). The focus was on considering the transcripts holistically rather than associating them with individual participants. The application of the guiding questions proved very useful here. The similarities and differences of meanings were noted throughout the analysis. Whenever the information became overwhelming the application of the focus questions assisted in revealing possible meanings. Meanings were highlighted in different colours as they emerged and possible categories of description seemed to appear in the form of meaning groups. As before, the transcripts were checked against the arts-inspired plates.

This process of seeking meaning was time consuming with the number of meaning groups taking time to settle. At the initial stage of this phase, 11 groupings emerged for the researcher (they could not be defined as categories at this stage). Following the interrogation of data, the development of the groupings was encouraging for the researcher. Greater clarification had been reached around what a variety of ways of experiencing something might look like. For example, by closely reading the transcripts to seek out what the participants were talking about, it was revealed through phrases such as, "They have got no idea of the hours upon hours you do out of the centre" and "It's good to have that contact with the people but then you've got to have the time to do that" the participants were focusing on the aspect of time. The educators had adeptly moved back and forth across experiences as they discussed their conceptions, often describing the same experience but in unique and different ways. The variety of descriptions led to the numerous groupings presented in Figure 3.8.

| Theme emerging from data/interviews | |
| --- | --- |
| Time workload | Stress |
| Staff/Relationships | Working with children |
| Parents | Professional Recognition |
| Positive NQF/Inservice | Change |
| Awful career | Responsibility/expectation |
| Additional Regulation | |

*Figure 3.8.* Initial stage of grouping

These groupings were shared with the researcher's supervisor following the advice of Bowden (2000):

> Working with experienced researchers, checking, testing and probing the proposed set of categories in light of the data is probably the most effective way of coming to understand the analytical process. (p. 32)

It was considered prudent by the researcher to undertake this checking process at this point in time to aid in the development of the understanding of the analytical process. The supervisor identified two groupings and an informative discussion ensued resulting in more reviews of the data being conducted by the researcher. Over time the number of meaning groups moved from anywhere between two to eleven before finally settling at five.

*Phase 3: Determining how people's awareness was being structured.*

*Guiding questions*: How are they talking about it? What is the awareness made up of? What are they focusing on? See Figure 3.6 for additional questions.

*Process*: The utterances of the participants revealing meanings associated with the qualitatively different ways of experiencing the phenomenon had been highlighted. These were collated into groups by creating a file for each group via copying and pasting online. Each utterance was coded and indexed for ease of tracking. Fresh unmarked transcripts were organised with all utterances within the groups being cleared of all highlighting. The utterances in the groups were read a number of times (with reference back to original transcripts where needs be), with the focus being on what the awareness was made up of. This phase was greatly aided by the framework devised for the study (Figure 3.6) as it provided a focus for the interrogation. The question, 'How are they talking about it?' proved most helpful here. In the process of

searching for how they were talking about it, it was necessary to move some utterances between groups because the deconstruction of the structural component revealed meanings (referential component) that deemed the utterance to belong in a different group. The structural and referential components, being elements of a conception, appear simultaneously in a person's awareness (Marton, 1994) and at times, the deconstruction offered further clarity. Booth (1997) notes that the structural and referential components are intertwined and register in the awareness simultaneously.

This phase required the discovery of the focus of the awareness, plus the field and fringe (Cope, 2002). The way in which the aspect or aspects of the internal relation between the participant and the phenomenon appeared was important here. At this point, it was essential that the researcher bracketed any preconceived thinking, and took a second order perspective (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). This was a time-consuming task as it was necessary to analyse each conception with constant referral back to the whole transcript and the meaning group for contextualisation. As Marton (1986) noted:

> each quote has two contexts in relation to which it has been interpreted: first the interview from which it was taken and second the "pool of meanings" to which it belongs. The interpretation is an interactive procedure which reverberates between these two contexts. (p. 42)

The process was iterative and involved going back and forth across the emerging themes and the data to check meaning and context. Throughout this phase of the analysis process, the focus often changed resulting in a change in the meaning. This necessitated a working and reworking of phases 2 and 3 simultaneously.

The arts-inspired plates and accompanying utterances and notes were referred to when searching for the focus of the awareness. The investigation of the arts-inspired plates with accompanying utterances were of significant assistance in this phase as the focus of the participants' awareness was regularly captured within their creation. For example, in Figure 3.9 the participant explained that the plate captured her conception of regulation as interrupting the work life balance, where regulation was seen as consuming a significant portion of the total amount of time available. The

participant's private life section is coloured yellow, with the remainder of the sections representing aspects of the working life.



*Figure 3.9.* Arts-inspired plate representing educator's allocation of time

A graphic for each structure of awareness was developed with accompanying quotes to indicate relationships between the categories.

*Phase 4: Drafting the categories of description.*

*Guiding questions*: How does their awareness appear in each category? How are the categories significantly different from each other? What of dimensions of variation?

*Process*: Categories of description were developed by simultaneously contrasting differences and similarities (Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991) between meanings and groupings of meaning, and bringing together the referential and structural components. In each category, the referential component was highlighted and critical differences noted. A draft meaning statement was developed using the format "The impact of regulation is experienced as …" (Bruce, 1997, p. 105). Each category represented one way that early childhood educators experienced the impact of regulation on their profession. The categories of description were rechecked against the transcripts and the arts-inspired plates. The categories were differentiated qualitatively but had links or connections. The aspects of the experience noted and focused on simultaneously by the participants delimited the categories. A key quote from the transcripts, and an arts-inspired plate, was selected to exemplify the meanings of each category.

Themes emerged across the categories that revealed additional aspects to the participants' awareness. The themes were evident in each category but were experienced differently in each category and became the dimensions of variation.

*Phase 5: Establishing the outcome space.*

*Guiding question*: What is the logical relation among the categories of description?

*Process*: Following the discovery of the conceptions through the data, the researcher constructed and described the outcome space (Bruce, 1997). The outcome space represents interpretations the author constructs from the data. The construction of the outcome space emerges out of the clarification of categories of description (Akerlind, 2005a) and of the logical relationship between the categories (Bruce, 1997) through close examination of the referential component or meaning, and the structural awareness of each category. The categories of description were considered using this two-tiered approach based on the premise that the different ways of experiencing a phenomenon are logically related to one another (Marton & Booth, 1997). The relationships that emerge between the categories of description are "commonly expected to form a structural hierarchy of inclusiveness with some ways of experiencing being more complex that others, but including aspects of awareness constituted in less complex ways of experiencing" (Akerlind, 2005a, p. 72). Such was the case in this study with the categories of description being represented hierarchically in the outcome space.

In this study the data were investigated through the analytical process to discover meaning structures and awareness structures (which made up the categories of description), and dimensions of variation, and all three were considered when developing the outcome space (Bruce, 1997). This is important in phenomenography as the researcher aims to describe the logical structure of the critically different ways of experiencing the same phenomenon (Akerlind, 2005a). From an application point of view, this phase involved the revisiting of earlier steps in the process. The outcome space represented the phenomenon of regulation as the early childhood educators participating in this study experienced it.

Bowden (2000) notes that thorough documentation of all steps taken during the analysis process is essential and that the "transcripts [be] subjected to rigorous

phenomenographic analysis" (p. 10). The technique of applying the five analytical phases described above enabled this necessary rigour. The range of different conceptions of the impact of regulation held by the early childhood educators was discovered through an exploratory process and categories of description were constructed. The categories of description arose out of the researcher's focus on the aspects of the collective experience rather than those of the individual experience. The researcher bracketed preconceived ideas throughout both the interview and analysis process allowing the conceptions of the early childhood educators to emerge. The iterative approach of the analysis process enabled numerous reworking's of possible emerging conceptions and then categories of description. The inductive process of searching for the findings from the data, grounded in the transcripts, created a bottom up focus (Akerlind, Bowden & Green, 2005) compelling the researcher to put aside (or bracket) her own views and beliefs and represent those presented by the collective. The validity of the research was sustained through the steps of bracketing, iteration and triangulation with the arts-inspired plates.

## 3.9 Presenting Research Results

The research results in a phenomenographic study are presented as categories of description and dimension of variation. Five categories of description and two dimensions of variation were identified in this study.

Associated with each category of description is a description of the referential component, structural component and dimensions of variation. The referential component is represented by a label, a key quote and a photo of an arts-inspired plate. The researcher selected the plate deemed to most closely represent the meaning of the category. The structural component is captured by a diagrammatical representation of the associated structure of awareness. Quotes from the interview transcripts are included with each structural component. The dimensions of variation for each category of description are included with supporting quotes. The quotations from the interview transcripts used across the categories of description are presented in italics, so as to differentiate them from the main text of the thesis. The quotes are numbered for identification against the pools of meaning. Following each category of description is a table providing a summary for that category.

Twenty-five arts-inspired plates were developed for this study. The formats included photographs downloaded from the internet, collections of photos and graphics downloaded from the internet used in the creation of mind maps, collages, and thinking webs, photos of commercially produced toy, personal photos, drawings, paintings, sewn creations, rubber band, nail and wood constructions, constructions using commercially produced manipulative equipment, and poetry. Not all arts-inspired plates are presented visually in this thesis. The arts-inspired plates constitute the visual data for this study, just as the interviews constitute the verbal data. Bowden (2005) points out that phenomenographic interviews have the ability to encourage participants to "reveal something about themselves they had not expected they would" (p. 31). Bowden goes on to say, that for this reason, no published item should ever provide material that could identify the interviewee. In keeping with this, only a selection of arts-inspired plates is used throughout the presentation of the study's findings.

A diagrammatic representation of the categories of description and dimensions of variation are represented in the outcome space. A diagrammatic outcome space is created to reflect the internal relationship between the qualitatively different categories of description and the dimensions of variation (Andersson, Willman, Sjostrom-Strand, & Borglin, 2015). The outcome space for this study is presented after the discussion of Category 5. Following the outcome space is a summary of the analysis of the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experience the impact of regulation on their profession and this is presented in a table format.

### 3.9.1   Discussing and interpreting results.

The process of interpreting and discussing results was supported in this study by the use of Bourdieu's ideas as a set of thinking tools. Rawolle and Lingard (2008) suggested that Bourdieu's theoretical collection, including the concepts of habitus, capital, field and practice, which sit in "synergistic relationship to each other", could assist in discussing the interactions between education policy and professional practice (p. 729). Davey (2009) provides a formula for demonstrating Bourdieu's thinking tools in relation to practice: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (p. 277). The formula demonstrates the interconnection between the concepts of habitus, capital, field and practice. A change or alteration in one concept will lead to a

disruption in one, or all, of the other concepts impacting upon the established practices of the profession. In the context of this study the focus will be on the habitus, capital and field presented by the early childhood educators and the repercussions for their practices.

Habitus as a central component is used by Bourdieu to define the dispositions that come to inhabit people (James, 2011). Habitus consists of dispositions, values, beliefs and attitudes, which influence the way people, interpret and make sense of the world and the people in it (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2012; Callaghan, 2005). According to Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002), habitus reflects the attitudes and dispositions people develop when they become part of a group and the resulting "way in which those individuals engage in the practices" appropriate to that group (p. 12). Each individual's experience, and hence habitus, is unique, but at the same time individuals who have experienced similar social contexts, or occupied equivalent positions within fields, will develop similar elements of habitus (Light & Kirk, 2001). To take this further, according to Reay (2004), Bourdieu writes that habitus is expressed through different ways "of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (p. 432).

Bourdieu's concept of capital is an important component in this set of thinking tools. Capital may manifest in terms of economic, cultural, social and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1989). Cultural capital is relevant to this study and is said to be acquired through effort and experience. People develop skills and understandings through personal investment of commitment and time to their work (Farrell, 2010). Cultural capital is also conferred through the institutionalised state (Reay, 2004) in the form of academic qualifications (Farrell, 2010). This institutional credit is important for the recognition of professional status (Davey, 2009; Klibthong, 2012). Other competencies making up cultural capital include knowing the means of communication and dominant discourse of knowledge, and possessing the ability to strategically engage in the profession (Klibthong, 2012).

To discuss the relationship between people's practices and the context, that is, the institutions, and values and rules in which these practices occur, Bourdieu uses the idea of "field" (Reay, 2004). Interactions between institutions and the rules also make up the field and each field has its own set of rules and forms of authority to

retain a degree of autonomy from others (Webb et al., 2002). Wacquant (2008) notes when entering a field people have its specific dispositions imposed upon them and this disposition is maintained once a person is in the field. The field is the dynamic site inhabited simultaneously by institutions and people on which combatants manoeuvre to enact the business of their profession. Klibthong (2012) describes this as "a struggle … over specific knowledges or stakes and access to them" (p. 72).

Bourdieu's set of thinking tools was used to support the understanding of the five categories of description and the two dimension of variation that arose from this study. The thinking tools have been applied across the discussion of the findings in Chapter 5.

## 3.10 Ethical Considerations

In keeping with accepted ethical guidelines, full ethical clearance of the research tool and data collection process was obtained from the USQ Ethics Committee (USQ Ethics Approval Number H13REA158: see Appendix C).

Participants were clearly informed about research procedures before consenting to involvement in the project. The participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview process at any time.

All research participants were informed about complaint procedures in the event of concerns regarding the conduct of the research. This information was outlined in the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix D). Participants were made aware of the nature of the research and the approach taken.

Matters concerning the anonymity of participants and confidentiality of the information provided were achieved by the maintenance of strict confidentiality guidelines relating to storage of the raw data and transcript material and information. Participants were informed that all responses were confidential and anonymous, and any potentially identifying information would be removed from transcripts (e.g., reference to the locality in which a participant resided). Written consent was gained from the participants prior to the commencement of the research (see Appendix E).

## 3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented phenomenography, the research approach selected for this study. It has outlined the key features of phenomenography and detailed how the approach was implemented in the current study. In the following chapter, the study's findings will be presented. These findings provide descriptions of the various ways in which early childhood educators experience the phenomenon of the impact of regulation on their profession.

# CHAPTER 4.   FINDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

The intent of this study was to investigate the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation on their profession. The regulations arose from the implementation of the National Quality Framework in the early childhood education and care sector on 1 January 2012. The early childhood educators who constituted the participants in this study were employed in either long day care settings, standalone kindergarten services or kindergartens incorporated into primary school sites in south east Queensland.

In the previous chapter, the selected research design approach of phenomenography was described. This chapter presents the findings of this research study. At the beginning of the chapter, a summary of the study's findings is presented with an outline of the way in which the results will be presented and examined. The summary is followed by five separate sections and these sections present the categories of description that describe the critically and qualitatively different ways in which early childhood educators experienced the impact of regulation. The final part of this chapter presents the outcome space for the phenomenon of the impact of regulation and it depicts the relationships between the categories of description.

## 4.2 Summary of Findings

The data analysis uncovered five qualitatively different ways in which the impact of regulation was experienced by early childhood educators. Taken together, these five categories of description represent the phenomenon of the impact of regulation as conceived by early childhood educators. For this study, the early childhood educators' experience of the impact of regulation revealed the following:

Category 1: The impact of regulation was experienced as enabling guardianship

Category 2: The impact of regulation was experienced as complicating administration

Category 3: The impact of regulation was experienced as interrupting core business

Category 4: The impact of regulation was experienced as being accountable

Category 5: The impact of regulation was experienced as scrutiny of performance

It is important to note that not every participant in the study experienced the impact of regulation in each of the five categories of description presented. Instead, these five categories present the critically and qualitatively different ways of experiencing the impact of regulation that were identified among the collective group. Furthermore, it must also be emphasised that each category of description refers to the collective level, and is regarded as an aggregation of the experiences of multiple individuals. As such, the categories represent groupings of particular ways of experiencing the impact of regulation, rather than groupings of people.

It is also important to recap that a second order of perspective was taken as per the phenomenographic process. That is, phenomena were investigated through the experience of the participant rather than through the experience of the researcher. The researcher is beholden to present the experiences of the participants as a collective without interjecting the researcher's own interpretation.

Through the process of data analysis, two dimensions of variation were also uncovered. The dimensions of variation emerge as a representation wherein the conceptions within the categories of description can be further distinguished. The two dimensions are:

1. Variation across the professional dimension – this dimension describes the experience of regulation from a professional perspective. In other words, it describes the ways in which regulation impacted upon early childhood educators' abilities to conduct themselves professionally.

2. Variation across the personal dimension – this dimension describes the experience of regulation from a personal perspective. In other words, it describes the ways in which regulation impacted upon early childhood educators and their personal lives.

In the following five sections of this chapter, each category is presented and explained in turn. Within each category, the qualitatively different ways in which the early childhood educators experience the impact of regulation is described in terms of the referential and structural components. As explained in the previous chapter, the referential component refers to the overall or global meaning that was assigned to the experience of the phenomenon. For each category in this study, the referential meaning is captured in the category's label (for example, in Category 1 the impact of

regulation was experienced as enabling guardianship), a photograph of one participant's arts-inspired plate, the explanation provided at the beginning of each section and a key quote.

The diagram of the structure of awareness represents the structural component for each category. The different layers of awareness, that is, focus, field and fringe, present in the qualitatively different ways of experiencing the impact of regulation, constitute the structural component. A graphical representation of the structure of awareness accompanied by an explanation is presented directly below the referential component in each category.

The dimensions of variation relevant to each category of description are presented at the end of each category. The dimensions uncover further layers of awareness that are recognisable as common themes that run through each category of description. Dimensions of variation appear in each category, but these change across each category. In addition, a summary table that outlines the referential and structural components, and the dimensions of variation, is included at the conclusion of each section.

### 4.2.1 Category 1: Enabling guardianship.

#### *4.2.1.1 Referential component.*

Category 1: The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as enabling guardianship.



*Figure 4.1.* Arts-inspired plate representing enabling guardianship (Category 1)

*What are they talking about? What was the experience?*

In Category 1, the early childhood educators talked about regulation in relation to the guardianship that was experienced by the stakeholders. The regulations were seen to enable guardianship for stakeholders through the stated expectations associated with the embedded National Quality Standards, National Law, National Regulations components and the rating and assessment process (ACECQA, 2013a). The stakeholders the early childhood educators were referring to include the children, educators, staff, parents and committees. The arts-inspired plate that is shown in Figure 4.1 represented the opportunities offered to the children through the National Quality Framework. The early childhood educators perceived that stakeholders experienced benefits, such as high quality care and education being available equally to all children across all services, guidance to staff relating to qualification expectations and mandated expectations providing direction for management of centres as indicated in the key quote below.

Key quote:

*Okay well firstly I'd like to say that I believe the National Quality Framework is an absolute step forward across the … on the National level and I guess the thicker ropes there really represent that strong tie and strong connection between all early childhood services and that vision for improving the quality of the opportunities for children, for young children. (P2)*

### 4.2.1.2 Structural component.

*How are they talking about it? How was it understood?*

Children were in the focus of the structure of awareness in this category with emphasis on their welfare and education. Support offered to early childhood educators because of the implementation of regulations in relation to staff interaction and interaction with other stakeholders was situated in the field. Regulation was in the fringe.
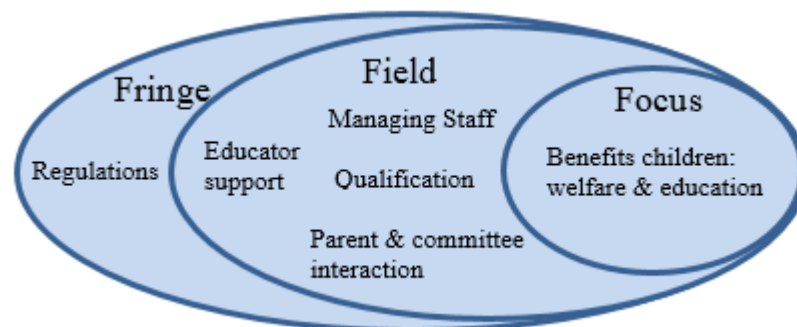


*Figure 4.2.* Structure of awareness for Category 1

The structure of awareness of the impact of regulation was experienced as enabling guardianship. The focus of the early childhood educators' awareness was on welfare and education of the children.

Table 4.1.

*Summary of the Structure of Awareness for Category 1*

| Focus | Benefits for children: welfare and education |
|---|---|
| Field | Educator support: qualifications, managing staff & parent & committee interactions |
| Fringe | Regulations |

*4.2.1.2.1  Focus: Benefits children: Welfare.*

The early childhood educators focused on the benefits regulation provides for children as indicated in the quote from the interview transcript below:

> *And I've got that they are necessary. I think regulations are necessary in our field because way back when, when I first started there weren't really any regulations and all. There weren't that many rules really. It was just like a big childcare centre where you could just look after as many kids is you want. There weren't any child staff ratios. Or anything like that. I can remember those times, so I think that regulations coming along are helpful. (P24)*

They saw that because of the regulations associated with the National Quality Framework children would be safe and secure. The early childhood educators highlighted that one of the objectives of the National Quality Framework was to "ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services" (ACECQA, 2013a, p.3). The early childhood educators noted that to provide an education and care service within a community, approved providers were required under law to meet minimum requirements to be eligible to be granted a service approval from the regulatory body (ACECQA, 2016a). It was acknowledged that the National Quality Standards (a component of the National Quality Framework) set a national benchmark of minimum requirements for the quality of education and care services to achieve (ACECQA, 2013a). Under the National Quality Framework, the regulatory authority in each state and territory carries out assessment and rating of children's education and care services. The implementation and policing of the National Quality Standards were seen to ensure safe and secure environments for all children.

*4.2.1.2.2  Focus: Benefits children: Education.*

The early childhood educators acknowledged that it was important for all children to have access to high quality early childhood education and care regardless of location or context and the regulations associated with the National Quality Framework were seen to promote this. The framework was also seen to provide opportunities to

achieve this through the implementation of an approved learning framework as indicated in the quote below:

> *I guess, provided a structure so that all childcare centres can have some quality that they need to maintain, and that all children are getting the same experiences, in a way, then, so that they aren't missing out with the EYLF. (P12)*

The presence of regulations was seen to promote equality for all children across Australia through the provision of a national framework to guide early childhood educators as they "extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school" (DEEWR, 2009a, p. 5). The framework, titled *Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF), was the first national framework for early childhood education and care in Australia (DEEWR, 2009a) and its enactment was embedded as an integral part of the national quality standards.

High quality care and education were viewed as important for the industry and it was perceived that staff with higher qualifications would be better able to provide these increased levels of education and care. Increased qualifications were perceived to afford educators with the knowledge's required to provide the desired high levels of care and education for young children as demonstrated by the following quote:

> *The intent of the National Quality Framework is to improve quality, I absolutely applaud, I absolutely applaud the fact that we need to have higher qualified people working in our services. (P23)*

### 4.2.1.2.3  Field: Educator support.

In the field of this structure of awareness was the guidance afforded to the early childhood educators. Guidance was seen to be achieved through the regulations stipulating levels of qualifications for staff and describing levels of expectations through the standards and elements.

### 4.2.1.2.4  Field: Educator support: Qualifications.

The regulations provide clear direction as to the levels of qualifications required by early childhood workers. The early childhood educators noted that less intervention

from educational leaders and centre directors was required where staff were engaging in tertiary level early childhood study. The increased knowledge's gained through additional tertiary early childhood study were seen to provide educators with clearer understandings of, and enabled deeper conversations around, the requirements and implementation of the national quality standards as demonstrated in the following quote:

> *I found as I did more courses at uni and unpacked it* [National Quality Framework] *more at work that the NQF requirements made more sense to me. At the beginning, especially being a new group leader – I've been a group leader for about 18 months now. At first, it's this big, wide – and people go, you've got to be doing this and you've got to be doing that, and I'm going, okay, no, you've got to do that. But yes, as we've worked as a team, and that's including with the educational leader and the group leaders together, our director is brilliant as well, yes, it's given (pause) it's shown me all of that direction. (P10)*

Increased levels of qualifications were seen to attract a desirable level of professional recognition and respect from those outside of the industry. It was perceived that by having higher qualifications, early childhood educators would be viewed as making informed decisions when working with the children rather than just engaging in babysitting activities.

> *I think that they give clarity to what we do and the qualifications are necessary for us to be looked upon as more than just people that are in here throwing blocks down on the floor so that the kids can play with them. That we actually have a purpose for giving the children the blocks and what they will learn from that. And I think that's a good thing. (P11)*

> *4.2.1.2.5   Field: Educator support: Managing staff.*

The National Quality Framework (ACECQA, 2013a), which was underpinned by the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, was seen to support centre directors, nominated supervisors and educational leaders when encouraging staff to undertake activities in a particular way as indicated below:

*So don't come and say to me can we do this? Are we allowed to this?*
*That's a regulation. That's a law! We have to do it! So there is no getting*
*away with it. Simple things like nappy changing procedures and all that.*
*This is what we have to do now. Not like 20 years ago when you just put*
*the baby up on there and do whatever. You've got to have, you know, use*
*your gloves and all that for workplace health and safety. (P10)*

The role of the educational leader was to lead the implementation of the approved framework for learning in services through strategies such as leading and being part of reflective discussions, mentoring other educators, observing interactions between children and their educators and offering suggestions and talking with parents about the program (DEEWR, 2010a). From this perspective, the early childhood educators viewed the regulations as offering guidance and support. The role of the educational leader was specified under regulation 118 of the National Regulations (*Education and Care Services National Regulations 2016* (NSW). The National Quality Framework could be referred to when holding difficult conversations with staff who may be reluctant to proceed in a particular manner when enacting the approved learning framework. It was possible to refer to the National Quality Framework and refer staff to the National Quality Framework for direction.

The implementation of the regulations provided points for discussion between peers therefore opening up opportunities to contact collaborate and network with staff in other services. The early childhood educators felt justified in seeking the support of their peers during this time of change as conversations revealed a need for clarification across their networks. New alliances were enabled as a broader range of services was brought under the auspices of the National Quality Framework; these alliances previously did not occur. This networking has engendered feelings of collegiality and companionship between early childhood educators across the services.

*It's probably made me a lot closer to some other colleagues, too, because*
*we're all in the same boat, and tend to ring each other and have a little*
*talk, and say, what do you think about this, and how did you get around*
*that, or what did you do for this? It's offered opportunity (pause) for the*
*discussions. I guess sometimes panic (pause) ring someone and say, help,*
*what did you do here, or say (pause) yes. (P17)*

*4.2.1.2.6   Field: Educator support: Parent & committee interactions.*

Regulations were also seen to provide protection and support for early childhood educators in discussion with parents and committees.

> *Parents can be difficult at times and it has been helpful to be able to refer to the NQF. We can just say, "Look we have to follow the regulations." (P13)*

The expectations for early childhood education and care were perceived to be clearly and professionally laid out by the standards and elements of the National Quality Standards. This information was also accessible to the public. The fact that the regulations were underpinned by legal documents offered a sense of security for the early childhood educators when undertaking difficult discussions.

### 4.2.1.3 Dimensions of variation.

*4.2.1.3.1   Professional dimension.*

The implementation of the EYLF and the expectation that staff gain qualifications helped ensure staff were more able to offer high quality early childhood experiences for the children, in their view. The early childhood educators recognised that high quality care and education was necessary for young children to achieve their best possible start to life. Professional recognition and respect from both inside and outside of the industry were seen to be improved as a result of staff achieving qualifications.

> *They* [NQS] *are necessary for (pause) to have high standards in early childhood and I think people like to have clarity. As I said there they give clarity to what we do. Certainly for the staff. (P11)*

*4.2.1.3.2   Personal dimension.*

It was perceived that all children, regardless of where they attended, would experience greater safety and security with the implementation of regulations. Early childhood educators expressed a passion for working with children, and children's wellbeing, regardless of context or location, was important to them. The knowledge that children had a greater chance of being safe and secure was comforting for the early childhood educators.

Additionally, regulations helped educators feel less vulnerable by providing them with a legal document to refer to, or refer others to, when placed in a difficult or threatening position.

> *And I guess in that way it gave me a support so when you know a family came and children would be sitting at a table learning it was a tool to say hey look lets look at what is happening here (pause) and with this as a supporting document. (P05)*

Table 4.2.

*Summary of Category 1: Enabling Guardianship*

| Category of Description 1 | The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as enabling guardianship. | |
|---|---|---|
| **Referential Component – Meaning** | ECEs viewed regulations as providing guardianship for stakeholders in the industry. | |
| **Key quote** | *Okay well firstly I'd like to say that I believe the National Quality Framework is an absolute step forward across the … on the National level and I guess the thicker ropes there really represent that strong tie and strong connection between all early childhood services and that vision for improving the quality of the opportunities for children, for young children.* | |
| **Structural Component** | Internal horizon focus | Benefits for children: Welfare – all children would be safe and secure<br>Education – children would have a greater opportunity to receive high quality care and education through the use of the EYLF and access to educators with qualifications. |
| | External horizon field | Support for educators through stipulating levels of qualifications and describing levels of expectations. |
| | fringe | Regulations |
| **Dimensions of Variation** | | |
| **Professional dimension** | Implementation of the EYLF and the expectation that staff gain qualifications ensured staff were more able to offer high quality early childhood experiences for the children in their view. Professional recognition was seen to be improved because of qualifications. | |
| **Personal dimension** | Children would be safe and secure<br>Regulations helped educators feel less vulnerable. | |

### 4.2.2 Category 2: Complicating administration.

### *4.2.2.1 Referential component.*

Category 2: The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as complicating administration.



*Figure 4.3.* Arts-inspired plate representing complicating administration (Category 2)

*What are they talking about? What is the experience?*

In this category, the experience of the impact of regulation means a complication of administration for early childhood educators. The early childhood educators undertake administrative tasks as an accepted role within their profession (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). The implementation of the National Quality Framework has resulted in increased administrative requirements, therefore complicating this administrative role. The arts-inspired plate that is shown in Figure 4.3 depicts the amount of administration expected of the early childhood educator and the complication this creates. The educators' workspace was filled with texts, documents, paper, records and a computer. When talking about administration, early childhood educators refer to organisational tasks, such as setting up and maintaining policies and files, and documentation, such as completing forms, recording evidence

and collating information for the assessing and rating process as demonstrated in the key quote below.

Key Quote:

> *Sometimes, I would love to have some sort of computer attached to my head so that it just can be spinning out all the paper that they require that's attached to my thinking process. (P21)*

### 4.2.2.2 Structural component.

*How are they talking about it? How is it understood?*

In Category 2, early childhood educators were talking about regulation in relation to the complication it imposed on their experience of administration. The focus of this structure of awareness was on the demand regulation creates for documentation and organisational tasks which results in excessive workloads and time commitments. In many circumstances, the documentation was perceived as being unnecessary and of limited value professionally. Situated in the field was the awareness that excessive workloads create time constraints and stress which impacts upon the work life balance of the early childhood educator. The early childhood educators found it necessary to undertake excessive amounts of administration after hours and at home to the extent that significant erosion of their personal life occurred. Additionally, the early childhood educators talked about emotional and physical health related issues resulting from the increased demand administratively. Regulation sat in the fringe.
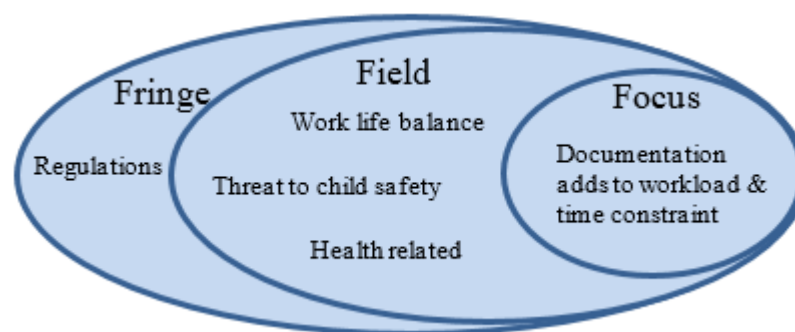


*Figure 4.4.* Structure of awareness for Category 2

The structure of awareness of the impact of regulation was experienced as complicating administration. The focus of the early childhood educators' awareness was on the workload issues and time constraints associated with documentation.

Table 4.3.

*Summary of Structure of Awareness for Category 2*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Focus** | ECE - demand for documentary evidence result in workload issues and resulting time constraints. Some documentation was perceived as being unnecessary professionally |
| **Field** | Impact on work life balance. Health related issues. Threat to child safety |
| **Fringe** | Regulations |

*4.2.2.2.1  Focus: Documentation.*

The early childhood educators explain their experience of regulation as an increase in the amount of documentation required. This was perceived as excessive, repetitive and endless creating increased workloads and time commitments as indicated in this quote:

> *Everything is documented; whether that child fell off a bike, if a band aid was applied, what you did, and there are two pages of it and then there's triple signatory. You know. It's two pages two foolscap pages of documentation, per accident. Then the parent has to be notified at the end of the day so there's that documentation to be followed up. So if three fall off a bike, there are three parents to be notified and it goes on. (P24)*

Much of the documentation was perceived as being unnecessary because it did not have a purpose. It was seen to be developed for persons outside of the individual service for whom it had no meaning. The quote below provides an example of the need for documentation to be completed because of external demands for written evidence of a conversation about a child with a parent:

> *My assistant works with the children with small group games … and I'll get up and go and grab the mum or the dad and I'll say "You know Johnny was doing this today and I've noticed how this has happened and da da da dah", but then you know three weeks later I'll think, "Oh I should have written that down there. I had a conversation," where as to the parent and to me it doesn't matter that I didn't write it down and that's where the extra pressure comes in because really who do I need to write down for? I don't need to write it down for the parent and I don't need to write for me or the child because I have already made certain*

*observations that I have discussed with that parent, but they want to see*
*evidence that I have discussed it with the parent and that's where I think*
*it's just an overload of having to produce stuff which is not necessarily*
*got any real purpose. (P01)*

For early childhood educators, documentation and organisational tasks included developing and collating policies for their services. The early childhood educators' viewed, the individual development of policies for each service as a waste of time and would prefer that the time be employed on other tasks.

*They just, all these people writing policies and policies and policies,*
*whereas I'd rather see work on the ground with the children. I mean, it*
*seems to me the meaning's just lost between writing documentation and*
*then surely they could put somebody up in head office that wrote the*
*policy for all of us, big umbrella, here's your policies. (P07)*

*4.2.2.2.2 Field: Work life balance.*

The early childhood educators talked about having to stay at work for long hours or take work home to complete the administrative tasks required. This activity was viewed as eroding personal life and disrupting their work life balance.

*In regards to regulations, because I feel that, across the board, the hours*
*that are being worked are not uncommonly in the 60 to 70 hours. Have*
*you found that? That is not uncommon. There are women who are*
*working more hours than that, and they will go home and they are living*
*and breathing – the families are – that is not life, and should not be so.*
*(P20)*

Excessive hours spent completing work related tasks during what was considered family time was seen to be directly impacting on relationships with family members. The early childhood educators noted that this was creating stress in personal relationships.

*I was spending my weekends, pretty much from the time I got up to the*
*time I went to sleep on my weekends, and that was affecting my*
*relationship, because my partner was just like, well, you're not spending*
*any time with me. (P19)*

The early childhood educators noted that there was no overtime payment or recognition for the increased number of hours required to "do" the job. Two conceptions were expressed relating to this. Firstly, non-early childhood education professionals were noticing and commenting on the excessive number of "unpaid" hours being spent by the early childhood educators on work related tasks as indicated in the following two quotes:

> *But certainly, my husband notices it – that I'm here a lot longer hours than what I'm actually employed for. We don't get paid any overtime at the centre, so to be here still at 7 o'clock in the night when you finished your shift at 5, it's something hubby really notices. (P02)*

> *Seeing that all of the staff are on board, are all understanding where we're coming from and why we need to. And it's made them do extra hours and then some staff say "Well why am I doing these extra hour? I'm not being paid." When you've got some staff with families at home. A husband who is saying "Why you know every minute I do extra I get overtime. Why aren't you? Why are you going back for a meeting?" So you know when you're asking them to do something out of hours. It's a fine line. (P03)*

Secondly, the lack of overtime payment meant the early childhood educators were reluctant to ask staff to undertake additional responsibilities. This administrative burden then remained in their personal workload.

> *I'm a co-director, so there's two of us, plus two different assistants, and we don't expect the (pause) from what assistants get paid, we don't expect them to come in on the weekend. (P13)*

> *4.2.2.2.3   Field: Health related issues.*

The demand for documentation has resulted in excessive workloads, which consume increasing amounts of time leading to high levels of stress experienced by the early childhood educators.

> *We feel a bit of resentment towards this regulation (pause) and stressed probably. I could have had a head spinning one in there too, because*

*there are times when I'm just thinking, I'm just really stressed about*

*everything I have to get done at the end of the day. (P12)*

Additionally, early childhood educators experienced feelings of being overwhelmed by the amount of administrative work expected:

*Well, obviously, overwhelmed at times by the paperwork burden, the*

*amount of reading, and the written requirements that seem to be thrown*

*in. (P09)*

The early childhood educators expressed experiences of unwellness, which they related to the workload that they were expected to undertake. The excessive workload impacted upon their ability to find the time necessary to relax and unwind from the pressures of the job or sleep well at night. This workload manifested itself in ill health not previously experienced by the early childhood educators.

*When I got the flu, and like, I'm sure that's because I was stressed this*

*year, because I haven't been sick for 30-something years, but I got the flu*

*this year. So, that's an impact. (P17)*

*4.2.2.2.4  Field: Threat to child safety.*

Regulations stipulated that all incidents considered accidents were to be documented. The early childhood educators were aware that specific procedures were required in relation to accidents and that all actions by the staff involved were to be recorded and reported. As a result of this, early childhood educators followed the regulations closely even when in some contexts these expectations resulted in cumbersome practices that placed children at risk. The early childhood educators experienced extreme discomfort with this scenario. The need for this documentation was seen to be problematic and was viewed as getting in the way of caring appropriately for the children.

*What worries me the most I guess would be the overhead rulings that*

*don't necessarily fit what happens in your daily program. And just the*

*fact like everything being under lock and key. It will take you so long to*

*go and find they key, put on gloves, find everything and by that time the*

*child's in dire distress. The other children are gathering around being*

*either frightened or (pause) or trying to be helpful and, maybe doing*

*more damage. I guess, I think when it comes to rules and regulations; it would be very nice if they actually related to the situation you were working with. (P24)*

### 4.2.2.3 Dimensions of variation.

#### 4.2.2.3.1 Professional dimension.

Professionally early childhood educators understood that administration was a necessary task within the role. However, the amount of documentation that arose as a result of the National Quality Framework was viewed as excessive. The requirement of additional documentation complicated the early childhood educators' administrative role by adding significant pressure to their workload, which in turn placed pressure on their time. The early childhood educators' professional work balance was disrupted because they found it necessary to take time from other professional tasks. This time adjustment was experienced as having to undertake other professional tasks in less time. This change occurred because the temporal boundaries within their professional working life were altered.

> *I work until 5 most days, just getting the paperwork side of things done and the office side of things, and then doing the learning stories and the programming and that. But, yes, and we get there at 7:30. People are like, why are you there so early? (P19)*

#### 4.2.2.3.2 Personal dimension.

The increased workloads requiring greater time commitments eroded the time usually allocated for their personal life. The early childhood educators were experiencing an uneven and inappropriate work life balance. The impact on their personal life was significant as they experienced pressure from partners and family and episodes of ill health.

> *It affects family and things like that. You feel, well, actually, I can't help you with that, because I've got to go to work. You're constantly doing work at home, making sure it's up to date and making sure you're getting that good, like, good, decent (pause) programming and everything. (P13)*

Table 4.4.

*Summary of Category 2: Complicating Administration*

| Category of Description 2 | The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as complicating administration. | |
|---|---|---|
| Referential component – Meaning | ECEs viewed regulations as complicating administration. | |
| Key quote | *Sometimes, I would love to have some sort of computer attached to my head so that it just can be spinning out all the paper that they require that's attached to my thinking process.* | |
| **Structural component** | Internal horizon focus | Demand for documentation<br>Excessive workload & time commitment<br>Administration get in way of safety |
| | External horizon field | Impact on work life balance<br>Health issues |
| | fringe | Regulations |
| Dimensions of Variation | | |
| Professional dimension | Work load increase<br>Unnecessary administration i.e. multiple forms<br>Policy writing could be done by central body with space for contextualising<br>Administration gets in way of safety | |
| Personal dimension | Taken away from time spent with family<br>Work overflowing into personal time and life creating health issues<br>Partner commenting on amount of work<br>Pay not reflecting amount of time put in | |

### 4.2.3    Category 3: Interrupting core business.

#### *4.2.3.1 Referential component.*

Category 3: The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as interrupting core business.



*Figure 4.5. Arts-inspired plate representing interrupting core business (Category 3)*

*What are they talking about? What is the experience?*

In this category, the early childhood educators' experience of the impact of regulation was seen as an interruption to their core business. The core business of the profession, as identified by the early childhood educators, was working with children. Regulation and the associated implementation were experienced as an interruption to their ability to satisfactorily facilitate the children's learning and development. The arts-inspired plate in the associated graphic that is shown in Figure 4.5 represents the nuclei of the early childhood educators' core business: working with children. With support and facilitation from early childhood educators, children have the opportunities to be creative and to investigate aspects of their world. As a result of the National Quality Framework, early childhood educators find themselves being drawn away from their core business to take on an administration role.

Key Quote:

> *It's frustrating for the older staff like me when you can see that change*
> *and all of a sudden, we're stuck in offices being officers. It's not*
> *educational people but office work – pen pushers. (P24)*

### 4.2.3.2 Structural component.

*How are they talking about it? How is it understood?*

In Category 3 early childhood educators were talking about regulation in relation to the core business of the profession. The early childhood educators nominated working with children as their core business and this was in focus in this category. They noted that their ability to carry out teaching to their usual standard was impacted. The early childhood educators also noted that their opportunities to be creative were modified. The passion that they experienced when working with children was reduced because of this administrative pressure.

Working with staff, families, committees and communities was placed in the field. Ongoing relationships between early childhood educators, staff, families, committees and communities were challenged as early childhood educators struggled to involve these stakeholders in the service as directed by the regulations. Additionally, changes in early childhood education staff relationships have arisen as some members expressed a reluctance to commit to the additional workload that was required as a result of the implementation of the regulations. Regulation sat in the fringe.



*Figure 4.6.* Structure of awareness for Category 3

The structure of awareness of the impact of regulation was experienced as interrupting core business. The focus of the early childhood educators' awareness was on working with the children.

Table 4.5.

*Summary of Structure of Awareness for Category 3*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Focus** | Working with children |
| **Field** | Working with staff.<br>Working with families, committees and communities |
| **Fringe** | Regulations |

*4.2.3.2.1 Focus: Working with children.*

Working with children was seen by the early childhood educators as their core business and was the focus of this awareness. The early childhood educators explain their experience of regulation as interrupting their ability to work with the children.

> *Having quality time with the children, and those interactions are top*
> *priority because that is what the core business is, quality interactions*
> *with children. We keep that core goal in mind. But that's just it. You*
> *know that core goal is there, but you're like, you've got to do this and*
> *you've got to do that, and there's things attacking you from every angle*
> *to try and remember that. (P22)*

The early childhood educators feel distracted when working with children because of the expectations associated with the implementation of the National Quality Framework. When they were with the children they felt torn between listening and interacting with the children and thinking about other tasks that required attention.

> *You're not fully in the moment. I've got a lot of things happening that – it*
> *does impact on your day and the joy of being with the kids and learning*
> *and learning together, because you feel like you're half there and you're*
> *half already back thinking of what you've got to get done in the*
> *afternoon. (P04)*

The early childhood educators regularly record information relating to children's learning whilst in situ with children. Early childhood educators explained that, an aim of documenting children's learning whilst sitting with the children was to relieve some of the pressure of recording the gathered information at a later time. As a result of this they noted that their thoughts became focused on linking the learning to the National Quality Framework rather than paying attention to the children's demonstrations of their ongoing learning missing the opportunities for possible

extensions under offer at that point in time. By missing this essential information around the children's learning and development there may be a mismatch between the judgements made by the early childhood educators about the children's learning and the children's actual learning needs.

> *I think, a lot of the time, like, I get so focused on, okay, I've got to do these observations and I have to link it (pause). But then I feel like I'm missing out on quality time to spend with these children and actually, like, engage with them, so that I can extend on their learning and actually see what their thoughts are. (P19)*

With their focus being on meeting the requirements of the National Quality Framework, early childhood educators talked about experiencing impulses of wanting to direct the children's learning so that specific results could be achieved and documentation could be developed. The core business of working with young children as expressed by the early childhood educators was embedded in a philosophy of supporting children to learn through play. The pressure to collect evidence of pre-conceived results does not sit well with this philosophy.

> *Well you feel sometimes that you're doing something. You're not just sitting back and listening and playing with the children and following them. Sometimes you feel you're almost wanting to guide them because you wanting an end result. It's your end result not their end result. So those days you've got your checklists saying have they done this? Have they done that? (P03)*

The early childhood educators noted that, they experienced diminished opportunities to enjoy the activity of learning with the children, which in their view was essential to their core business of working with children. The pressure to provide recorded evidence of the children's activities was getting in the way of spending quality time with the children.

> *The other thing I think it's done is, now, instead of just coming in and enjoying and playing with the children, I feel like, I must take an observation, I must get a photo of that, I must go and write that down. Instead of just keeping with them, thinking, they're doing this, and just remembering it, I must prove that. (P11)*

The early childhood educators noted that, their passion for working with children was one aspect that inspired them to engage in the profession initially. This passion had also sustained their continued commitment to the profession. However, the pressure to complete documentation has made engagement with the children less enjoyable and caused them to question their level of passion and therefore their desire to remain in the profession.

> *I think all it's going to do is make people like me who, two and a half years ago, if I won the Lotto, I would have gone to work, do you know what I mean? I just was so passionate about it but now, I just think, if I won the Lotto, I'd take six months and just sleep. Do you know what I mean? I'd just (pause) and that is a result of all that pressure and that just never getting to the finish line as far as job satisfaction and feeling that I'm doing a good job. (P07)*

The lack of opportunity to spend extended periods of time with the children impacts upon the early childhood educators' abilities to develop satisfying relationships with the children. The early childhood educators noted that an essential part of the core business of working with children was centred on the development of the children's social skills. Successful development of social skills requires relationships in the early childhood educators' view. A lessening of the opportunity to develop relationships with children in turn reduces opportunities for educators to assist children as they develop emotionally and socially.

> *It's taking me away, really, from the children and therefore the relationship I'm developing with the children as well. (P09)*

The early childhood educators reflected that in the future, they might feel deterred from running their current programs. The expectations associated with the regulations had forced some rethinking around what it was they could realistically offer in a program in the future.

> *So, all of those wonderful, beautiful things where we just go with the flow and we have this full story. I have in my head 100 million transitions, 100 million songs, 100 million stories that you can just grab and do. So, that flexibility of your programme that I think you need a lot of experience to*

*be able to do really well may not continue because it's too hard. It's too*

*hard to write it down, reflect on it and do it. (P14)*

*4.2.3.2.2   Field: Working with staff.*

Working with staff was considered an element of the early childhood educators' core business and was situated in the field of this awareness. The early childhood educators talked about issues relating to working with staff and issues relating to interactions between staff. Regulations as a result of the National Quality Framework were required to be implemented in early childhood services. This was considered to be a substantial task. Whilst having a significant number of staff at a service was considered advantageous because tasks could be shared around, managing the number of staff also produced its own complexities for the early childhood educators.

> *It was good to have several educators here because we could share, but*
> *several educators also bring more problems because we've got a staff of*
> *11 now, including myself, so you've got 11 balls in the air. You're*
> *juggling, as well as your two groups of children. You know. (P03)*

The introduction of the National Quality Framework has meant a significant learning curve for staff at services. The early childhood educators have been required to organise learning opportunities for the staff outside of work hours. For the early childhood educators, this has meant an additional time commitment to prepare. This entailed the preparation of resources, the development of suitable pedagogical approaches for the staff learning sessions and organisation of the timing of the sessions. For the staff this meant a commitment outside of their work hours to attend professional development sessions and to implement the new learning.

> *I have had to train the assistants in the Queensland Kindergarten*
> *Learning Guidelines. I've had to train them in the Early Years Learning*
> *Framework. But with them having to document each page, they know*
> *they have to get the child's voice where possible, and I've said, just write*
> *it out spontaneous, staple it in, because it's taking too long. They will be*
> *spending at least probably an extra five hours a week, on top of their*
> *hours, keeping up. (P14)*

Staff meetings have traditionally provided the space for reflective discussions amongst the staff about what has occurred in the centres and the possibilties for future planning. The introduction of the National Quality Framework has seen a significant amount of staff meeting time being dedicated to learning about the National Quality Framework therefore reducing the opportunites for this important reflection. Staff expressed a level of frustration and reluctance in reaction to this loss of reflection time which challenges the relationships between early childhood educators and their staff.

> *We would have our staff meeting and we would discuss various scenarios. We would discuss various things that would come up and they were enjoyable meetings. We would sit and talk about things that were topical, what was going in the various units. So my assistant and I would talk about what we had been doing. The unit 2 girls would talk about what they had been doing. And we would discuss professionally. It would be a professional conversation about what has been going on. Whereas since the NQF, and I suppose half way through 2011 when it was going to be coming in in 2012, we started talking about National Quality Framework and then 2012 hit. And they were saying now every staff meetings you have you should really be discussing National Quality Framework, National Quality Standards. Making sure (pause). So it did impact on us as a team. The topics to discuss and all so sometimes the staff members would say "Oh here we go again" and "why is this changing"? (P20)*

Not all staff were willing to take on additional work within the service offering passive resistance when approached by the early childhood educators. The view of some staff was that the role they had originally signed up for did not include the amount of documentation that was now being asked of them. Also, not all staff saw the documentary requirements of the National Quality Framework to be the responsibility of someone in their position.

> *I think that's been difficult for her, because she chose to be an aide, 11 years ago when we both started here together. She was very happy for me to have the responsibilities and that was her deliberate choice, her intentional choice. She didn't want to do the hours, she didn't want to*

*carry home the burdens, the thinking burdens and the decision making*
*burdens. (P01)*

The early childhood educators were cognisant that staff did not receive any additional renumeration for engaging outside of their nominated working hours. This influenced the early childhood educators in their decision not to ask staff to stay for lengthy periods after hours during the week or to return to the service on the weekend. The early childhood educators elected to assume the responsibilty to complete tasks and therefore take on additional hours themselves.

*We don't expect the (pause) from what assistants get paid, we don't*
*expect them to come in on the weekend. So, we've been, for the last*
*(pause) definitely since term started back, once a weekend, we've been in*
*there. (P13)*

All services were to receive a rating from ACECQA and this required extensive preparation by the service to demonstrate that they were meeting all of the requirements set out in the National Quality Standards. The achievement of a rating depended upon input from each staff member in some way. The pressure created by the assessment process caused the staff to be more critical of each other. This in turn created friction between staff members and early childhood educators were required to manage this. The early childhood educators noted that this had not previously been a factor. The early childhood educators suggested that friction arose from the strain that staff were under to create the evidence required for the assessment process.

*I think um relationships within even a small little staff like this have the*
*potential to become strained because everybody is so stressed about it at*
*and overworked and trying to do the right thing that um people start to*
*be bit more critical than they used to be and a bit less accepting of*
*differences. (P01)*

Some staff felt so strongly about the additional pressure exerted by the implementation of the regulations associated with the National Quality Framework that they threatened to leave the profession. For some early childhood educators this produced a dilemma, as staff were not always easy to come by in the more isolated

settings. The added task of having to train new staff would add to the already significant workload experienced by the early childhood educators.

*We have a large staff turnover. We're a small town. You might have educators that come in here. But if their partner moves somewhere else, they're going to go, because the money is in the mines, not in childcare. They are hard to replace. We have a waiting list but cannot take anymore because we don't have the staff. (P14)*

*4.2.3.2.3 Field: Working with families, committees and communities.*

The core business of services also includes working with families, committees and communities. These aspects were situated in the field of the early childhood educators' awareness. The implementation of the National Quality Framework has necessitated the process of making information available to all stakeholders related to the service.

The early childhood educators provide information about the National Quality Framework to families through media such as newsletters inviting feedback from them. This was experienced, however, as a waste of time by the early childhood educators because very few replies from families were received. The early childhood educators report that families in general were not overly interested in the content of the National Quality Framework. The families were more interested in how their child felt about attending the service (for example, Are they happy?), how the child fitted into the service and if their child had any issues or problems. The early childhood educators spent time preparing and providing the information about the National Quality Framework, contextualsing it for their location, but experienced a lack of engagement from the families. The early childhood educators acknowledged they were doing this to achieve the required rating for their service rather than for any real purpose.

*I sometimes feel that we're just ramming all this information down parents' throats but they just go, "Whatever. I don't care. I just want to know my child is happy and I want them to have a nice folder at the end of the year of their memories of their time at kindy, and I want you to tell me if my child isn't interacting appropriately for their stage of development or if you have any concerns, any other areas." I just think*

*there's a point where documentation – all that is useful but I just think it's just gotten out of hand and it just becomes unachievable. (P07)*

The expectation was that early childhood educators would undertake an active education program for centre stakeholders and this meant early childhood educators were required to lead discussions around the National Quality Framework at management committee meetings. To prepare appropriately and adequately for meetings, early childhood educators stressed that they needed to be "up to speed" with the topic at hand and create the necessary documentation to support the discussion. They found that they were taken away from their task of planning and programming for the children to undertake the reading required to develop an understanding around the topic for discussion and to plan and prepare for the meetings.

*So we have the early childhood adviser telling us. We have staff meetings once a fortnight where we talk about an aspect of the National Quality Framework. We have our management committee meetings once a month, where we discuss an area of the National Quality Framework. So we are constantly getting ready for meetings and talking about it. I need to make sure I understand everything before going into the meetings and so have to do some last minute swatting up. (P20)*

Under the National Quality Framework, services were expected to connect with the community. This was not always possible because not all communities were willing to reciprocate as described in the following quote. The early childhood educators were at times hindered in their ability to meet the regulations when they found themselves having to deal with an community that was not interested or had no understanding of the National Quality Framework or its impact on a service.

*They have suggested in the new framework to build the partnership with the community, because, although we're quite open and willing to work with the community, the community may not be. It can be difficult as well. But I suppose a lot of the community doesn't understand that it's something we need to do as part of our framework. (P12)*

Connecting with the community required an after hours commitment by the early childhood educator and staff. This after hours commitment included activites such as

organising community events at the service, attending community events away from the service and organising material for publication in the community paper. This placed a additonal demand on their time, and early childhood educators found that they had to make choices around what they could realistically achieve. As indicated in the quote below, this meant that some tasks are left unattended.

*We were a brand new kindy when they came to assess us. The reason we went down is because we hadn't established those connections with the community, and so they marked us down. There was no way we could rebut that, because we hadn't. We hadn't had enough time to do anything in the community because we were too busy getting the kindy up and running and that was not taken into account. (P13)*

### 4.2.3.3 Dimensions of variation.

#### 4.2.3.3.1 Professional dimension.

The regulations encapsulated in the National Quality Framework presented the early childhood educators with interruptions to their professional practices. The early childhood educators stated clearly that, the core business of their profession was to facilitate the learning and development of the children in their services. A secondary aspect of their core business was to manage and provide leadership for all other stakeholders associated with the services. These were identified as staff, families, committees and communities. To experience success in the first meant the attainment of the second. To ensure attainment required a significant increase in their workload and thus a greater dedication of time. The early childhood educators saw this as taking away time from their initial core task of working with children.

The early childhood educators experienced the impact of regulation as an interruption to the professional core business of working with the children. The implementation and ongoing management of the regulations required significant amounts of time. The early childhood educators noted an erosion of the time that they had allocated to working with the children. This erosion occurred in the physical sense, when they needed to be physically away from the children to complete documentation and in the mental sense, when they lacked mindfulness when interacting with the children.

*I'm just really stressed about it at the end of the day. I've got to do this,*
*I've got to do a staff meeting, I've got to do a newsletter, I've got to meet*
*with that parent, I've got to write something for that child to go on to the*
*school. So, instead of at the end of the day sitting down and saying, well,*
*that was a really – this worked well, that worked well, I want to get out*
*these resources for tomorrow, you're dealing with all these other things*
*at the same time. So, it is impacting on how you're working with the*
*children. (P07)*

*4.2.3.3.2   Personal dimension.*

The core business of their profession was experienced as an interruption to their
professional practices and this affected their personal engagement with the
profession. The workload and time demand of the regulations meant that early
childhood educators were experiencing personal disappointment and a loss of job
satisfaction with their achievements at the pedagogical level. They recognised that
they were being taken away from their identified core business of working with
children, by not being able to spend the required amount of time to either prepare
adequately or interact successfully with the children. The early childhood educators
were experiencing a lack of opportunity to be creative and innovative in their
professional practices and this was reducing the passion for their chosen profession.
The rigidity of the regulations offered few opportunities for early childhood
educators to engage in the exploration of children's interests and this led to feelings
of disillusionment and self-doubt.

*I think to work with young children, you need a lot of passion and your*
*strength, your energy and your health requires that, but the heart is*
*probably the passion and the belief and the joy that you get with working*
*with young children. At times, the paperwork and the time restrictions*
*and things really impact on that and impinge on that. (P08)*

Table 4.6.

*Summary of Category 3: Interrupting Core Business*

| Category of Description 3 | | The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as interrupting core business. |
|---|---|---|
| **Referential component – Meaning** | | ECEs viewed regulations as interrupting the course business of teaching, leading and managing a service. |
| | | *It's frustrating for the older staff like me when you can see that change and all of a sudden, we're stuck in offices being office– it's not educational people but office work - pen pushers. P24* |
| **Structural component** | Internal horizon focus | Working with children<br>Teaching |
| | External horizon field | Staff commitment<br>Relationships with staff, parents & committee |
| | fringe | Regulations |
| **Dimensions of Variation** | | |
| **Professional dimension** | | Time spent with children and teaching reduced<br>Taking them away from their passion – teaching<br>Complicating their task of managing the staff<br>Challenging relationships with staff, parents, committees<br>Staff expected to do tasks not in original job description<br>Length of risk assessments a deterrent for undertaking interesting activities |
| **Personal dimension** | | Disappointment in not having the time to spend with the children or discussion with other staff about the children and the centre<br>Distress with personal performance with children<br>Loss of passion for job and job satisfaction<br>Loss of opportunity to be creative |

**4.2.4    Category 4: Being accountable.**

*4.2.4.1 Referential component.*

Category 4: The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as being accountable.



*Figure 4.7.* Arts-inspired plate representing being accountable (Category 4)

*What are they talking about? What is the experience?*

In this category, the early childhood educators' experience of the impact of regulation was seen as being accountable. Services were required under law to meet minimum requirements to be eligible to be granted a service approval from the regulatory body (ACECQA, 2011b). To achieve this approval, services were assessed. Department officers, referred to as authorised officers, carried out this assessment. Department authorised officers visited services evaluating the service against the National Quality Standards. The necessary documentation must be prepared before the nominated assessment day and be made available to the authorised officers on the day of their visit. A service was awarded a rating based on the assessment carried out by the officers. The arts-inspired plate in the associated graphic as shown in Figure 4.7 depicts the early childhood educator stretched across the seven quality areas of National Quality Standard. The early childhood educators

felt they were accountable for all practices within the service, either observed or documented, and that they were stretched to their limits to achieve this. The early childhood educators reported that the National Quality Standard comprises a wide range of elements for application across a service. Associated with this was the responsibility of successfully implementing all elements on a daily basis. The early childhood educators experienced this process as their being held accountable for all aspects of the service.

Key Quote:

> *That was the first question I asked at the conference, was "Can we be insured"? Because how can you, even if you have got a reliever in, and I'm sick, I'm still responsible. You cannot open your centres without a nominated supervisor, but with that comes a responsibility of other aspects as well that you may or may not like. (P04)*

### 4.2.4.2 Structural component.

*How are they talking about it? How is it understood?*

In Category 4 participants were talking about regulations in relation to accountability. The regulatory bodies required appropriate implementation of the regulations and it was the role of the early childhood educators to ensure that this was achieved. The focus of the structure of awareness was on the roles and responsibilities associated with working in a service. The early childhood educators focused on the staff positions or roles to be filled as directed under the regulations and the legalities associated with these positions. The collection of evidence for justification, the assessment process and the components of regulation needed to obtain service accreditation and ongoing licensing were in the field. Children had slipped into the fringe of the early childhood educators' awareness.
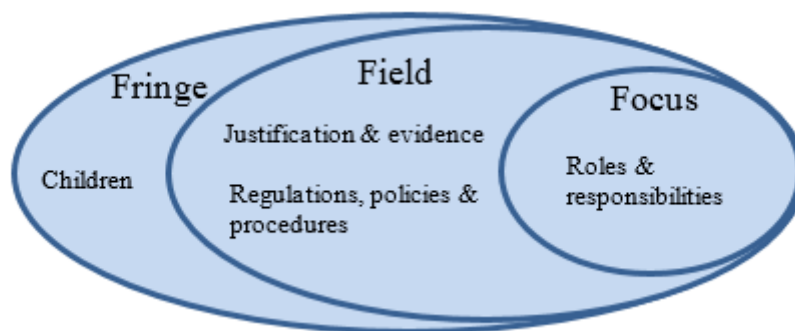
*Figure 4.8.* Structure of awareness for Category 4

The structure of awareness of the impact of regulation was experienced as being accountable. The focus of the early childhood educators' awareness was on the roles and responsibilities expected of the early childhood educators.

Table 4.7.

*Summary of Structure of Awareness for Category 4*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Focus** | Requirements for accreditation; roles and responsibilities |
| **Field** | Justification and collection of evidence; Regulations, policies & procedures |
| **Fringe** | Children |

### 4.2.4.2.1  Focus: Roles and responsibilities.

The early childhood educators reported that the regulations designated specific roles that have legal responsibilities attached and were vital to the continued functioning of the service. A service could not open if these roles were not allocated to the staff who were approved by the regulatory authority, and it was the staff in leadership positions who were expected to assume these specific roles.

> *You cannot operate your centre unless you have someone who has that. It's changed from, you know, before. If you had a diploma you were allowed to, the regulations were that you were allowed to. Do you know what I mean? Be responsible. I mean, it's different for childcare, it's different for kindergartens that all of those regulations have now changed and now it all comes back to a nominated supervisor and responsible person. But I am the nominated supervisor. Generally it's the director. You just have to be the person that is nominated. (P04)*

Each service was to have a nominated supervisor. A nominated supervisor was a staff member who has been allocated a certified supervisor certificate and who has

formally agreed to take on the role. To attain a certified supervisor certificate the applicant must be assessed by the regulatory authority as a fit and proper person capable of being in charge of an education and care service. The early childhood educator, who becomes the nominated supervisor, takes on the responsibility and obligations under the National Law and National Regulations to manage the service. It was the nominated supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the day-to-day management of the centre was carried out in compliance with the regulations. The nominated supervisor was therefore accountable. The early childhood educators experienced the role of nominated supervisor as introducing unwanted responsibility. The responsibility was conceived as unwanted because of possible repercussions that may arise if things were to go wrong. The early childhood educators did not feel as supported as they did in the pre National Quality Framework era.

> *They've become so regulated, that it's so easy to step out and let them have the office on their back you know. Instead of someone having (pause) you know? It used to be that those people were supported. It seems to be like, with all these regulations it's like let's blame these people. (P07)*

The early childhood educators perceived that by being the nominated supervisor they were responsible for the service at all times, even when they were absent from the service in such events as personal illness. It was the early childhood educators' understanding that even if they were able to find suitable relief staff with the required certification that as the nominated supervisor they were still accountable for the service. This requirement to be accountable for the service at all times promoted thoughts of being unwilling to utilise sick leave entitlements because to do so they may be placed at risk.

> *Gee you wouldn't want to be sick would you? I have to let everybody know who the responsible person is and that responsible person, meaning a person who is taking the responsibility of the day, is also taking the legal responsibility to my knowledge. But whatever happens on that day with that responsible person I actually am responsible even though, because I am the nominated supervisor. (P04)*

As nominated supervisor, the early childhood educator has the responsibilty of leading the service's ongoing preparation for rating and accreditation. The preparation for this assessment has been experienced as a substantual increase in workload and early childhood educators expressed a reluctance to assume or continue in the role because of this associated increased workload.

> *An impact is the fact of people not wanting to take on things like nominated supervisor, specifically the kindergarten roles in childcare settings, because of the amount of work that's involved. People see that it becomes unsustainable, because you just think about the long hours that you have put your name down for, especially, because if one thing goes wrong it comes back to you. (P04)*

Additionally, recompense in the form of financial allowance or time allocation for taking on the role was minimal.

> *I am at the moment currently our educational leader and our nominated supervisor, and there's no time allowance allowed for those roles. I don't get any different time to anybody. So, I feel, at times, exactly like this person with the administrative burden and the responsibilities. (P04)*

> *I never understand how they figure out that a contact teacher director gets paid $35 a week extra for the privilege of taking on board all of these and gets no more extra noncontact time than a contact teacher that's not a director. So what the director or the nominated person does is take on a huge workload and I wouldn't recommend anybody to do it right at this moment because it's really hard. (P13)*

The early childhood educators talked about stepping away from leadership roles within the profession and assuming easier positions, which allowed them to engage with their passion of working with children. They prefer not to be accountable for the service.

> *But I don't want the nominated supervisor role. I want to go in and have the pleasure of being able to teach children and have none of that other stuff and just think about what I'm going to do. (P12)*

The regulations have created difficulty for services when they attempt to source staff for the role of relief. Interpretation of the regulations around this point has created confusion for early childhood educators. The expectation that staff will hold a certified supervisor certificate and four year early childhood university degree contradicts the pre National Quality Framework expectations. Educators who had previously been eligible and suitable for services were now no longer able to be utilised. The early childhood educators were experiencing confusion and frustration, leading to increased amounts of time being consumed as a result of this role description.

> *I think it has been very confusing for a lot of educators because we have actually spent an enormous amount of time researching the eligible qualifications for our staff – for our staff, our relief staff and our release staff. And what we are finding it is that people who in the past were perfectly qualified to come in and be relief teachers, or probably even get a job in a situation like this, who has been teaching, for example, preschool for 10 years 20 years, whatever, even five years, are certainly not able to work in this setting. We've got a teacher that we're beginning to want to use who has got a Bachelor of Education (primary) and has taught preschool for a number of years, but she doesn't have early childhood written on her qualification. It's confusing, but it is also very frustrating because we are not finding appropriate staff. (P01)*

The change in the qualification expectation has caused angst for early childhood educators. If they were unwell and unable to attend the service, and were unable to source an educator with the necessary requriements as per the regulations, the service may have to be closed. This had particular impact for services that were one teacher standalone kindergartens in rural settings where the possibility for appropriate relief staff may well be reduced.

> *I actually got sick last year and I could not be there. I had the tummy bug. There was no one who could come in. I was standing there at 8:30 in the morning saying stay away the service is closed. (P13)*

The early childhood educators talk about being placed under pressure to meet the accreditation requirements relating to inservice whilst at the same time being offered

no support to attend inservice sessions. All professional developmnent was
undertaken in their own time.

> *We have to do our professional development. We're expected to do our*
> *26 hours. But they're (pause) I know they're always on my back about,*
> *here's another workshop. But I've already done over 26 hours. We used*
> *to get offered (pause) we could put in for during the week, but they don't*
> *like to do that now. It's all been in my own time. (P19)*

*4.2.4.2.2  Field: Justification and evidence.*

To be accountable, early childhood educators were to demonstrate that all aspects of
the service were meeting the National Quality Standard. To achieve this, evidence
was to be collected across the service covering all aspects. The early childhood
educators saw this as justifying their actions and being accountable in relation to the
National Quality Standard. The early childhood educators found the task of
justification to be ongoing, frustrating and time consuming. This conception is
evident in the following two quotes.

> *I hate the concept of having to write it all down and constantly justify*
> *what you're doing to everyone. That's one of my biggest frustrations, the*
> *justification. (P16)*

> *But what I would say the amount of work it takes to prove – that was*
> *what it was. The evidence was huge so how to prove or go through all of*
> *these are as to say this is what we do so yeah that was a huge amount of*
> *work. And I would say it must take everyone (pause) like it took me*
> *(pause) like working full-time (pause) I would probably say months.*
> *(P04)*

Their experience was that it was necessary to collate evidence successfully to be
sustainable throughout the assessment process. The experience of preparing for the
assessment process was reported as being "scary" as the early childhood educators
talked about being unsure about what the correct answer might be.

> *So it is scary, sometimes, to try and think, do I know everything and is*
> *that the right answer and have I done the right thing; will this come and*
> *strike me down, that I have made this decision that I believe is best, but*

*maybe there's something there that might disagree with me? So, it is trying. Sometimes I wonder, am I using the old or the new when I'm answering that question. (P07)*

It was expressed that support, in the form of clear guidelines, would have been helpful because misunderstanding occurred which resulted in unnecessary time being apportioned to the preparation process. This created frustration for the early childhood educators.

*It was the first time we went through it. We didn't know what to expect. There wasn't even any guidelines, like, you should have this many points. You know. You could just say pick three things in each area and identify. She's like, "Oh, you've put so much detail into all of this" and I said, "I thought that was the process". And she's like, "No. No, they won't look at that. They won't worry about that. It is put down the basics. No wonder it's taken you so long!" And I'm like, "Well, that's just what I thought we had to do." (P13)*

Their knowledge of the impending assessment impacted on the early childhood educators' professional practices. The early childhood educators experienced pressure to collect and collate suitable evidence that could be utilised in required documentation. Their practices became focused on collecting evidence to be used in the assessment process rather than attending to the children.

*Yes. Before, you would just go out to the playground and you would have a playground, knowing it was safe, knowing that you were just going out to play with the children, interact with the children. Now you're carrying all this documentation with you, and preparing for something that's going to happen, that you're going to have to document. (P18)*

The early childhood educators noted that the staff reported doubt in their ability to correctly meet the standards. As indicated in the quote below, staff worried about having misinterpreted requirements and articulating actions inappropriately by not using the "correct" language of the standards. Staff experienced stress associated with this need to be accountable.

*They are very fearful that when that happens* [assessment], *they're going to be asked to justify what's going on, to justify their decisions, or to explain what's going on. They're worried that they haven't got the correct language that they're not using the language that they're going to be asking for, that they're not (pause) that they might miss something or misinterpret something. (P05)*

The experience of being accountable and the worry of meeting the standards appropriately prompted early childhood educators to be constantly checking the information provided. This behaviour was viewed as being distracting and time consuming.

*I'm always checking back. I'm thinking, "Now. I know that's seven. Have I got them all in my head?" And then so (pause). So I've got the folders up on the shelf and if you can't remember them you are always going back up there and checking them and all that but. (P07)*

Early childhood educators developed professional practices, which meant some standards were implicitly achieved. Some standards, however, were perceived as being difficult to provide evidence for. Early childhood educators reflected that they were faced with the task of producing evidence that was difficult to collect and at times be invasive for the child. Tension was experienced between achieving a stated standard and providing the evidence to prove it.

*They were asking for behaviour management. We're like, what do we provide as evidence? It's because, really in your professional practices that you have developed to run your centre, you've developed them in a way that helps the children to self-manage. We don't take photos of children self-managing. That's a bit invasive. (P13)*

The early childhood educators acknowledged that, the regulatory authority was open to questions and offered support. However, insufficient staff appeared to be allocated to this support service. At times, the support staff had insufficient knowledge around a topic causing delays in the delivery of responses. On occasions, the responses were contradictory. This was experienced as being unsupported by the early childhood educators.

*They were open to questions, but there was such an influx of questions*
*and queries to the department. Sometimes it took a while for us to get a*
*response. Or, often (pause) and it just depends on the person you talked*
*to (pause) often they didn't know, and they'd have to research it and get*
*back to you. Then you'd get different responses from different people.*
*(P23)*

The need to provide written justification of decisions made in relation to children's learning on a daily, even hourly, basis, for an external body, was considered a waste of time and was resented by early childhood educators. As indicated by the quote below, decisions were regularly made in a split second and could easily be articulated verbally to an authorised officer. The need to continually record such detail in a written format for someone to read in the context of assessment was considered an inappropriate procedure in the context of the busy and demanding service.

*I actually feel, as I said before, resentful of having to write it down too.*
*I've been doing this business for 30 years. I'm not a university student*
*anymore and having to justify all of those decisions; it just makes it*
*ridiculously impossible actually. It's an impossible task to justify every*
*decision that you're making. I can articulate it. If you say to me, why did*
*you decide that, I'll explain it, but I may not have it written anywhere.*
*Because they're split second decisions that you're making all the time.*
*You're making those decisions constantly. (P06)*

*4.2.4.2.3  Field: Regulations, policies and procedures.*

The National Regulations require services to prepare and maintain a range of policies and procedures. The policies and procedures become components of the regulations in the services. The early childhood educators experienced regulation as being accountable through the process of developing policies and procedures for their individual services. The contextualisation of policies and procedures was considered to create an excessive amount of work.

*So basically you will have your policies and procedures that are put in*
*legislatively and is all correct, but somebody has to read them all and*
*make amendments to them so they are all pertaining to the actual, like*

*their actual centre, because there will be different things that apply and*
*um yeah so it's a huge, huge amount of work. (P13)*

In addition to the time required to develop the policies and procedures for a service was the experience of having to "know" the policies. A significant amount of time was needed to become familiar with all regulation components to ensure appropriate implementation and knowledge in preparation for assessment. The large number of policies and procedures was confronting.

*When the assessors come, they could read that policy and say, well, why*
*aren't you doing that? So we have to know what's in them, so the*
*assistants have to know what's in them. But it's 110 policies or*
*something. It seems like there's a policy for everything. (P21)*

Added to this was the perception that regulations changed regularly or associated policy required upgrading.

*I think there are so many regulations. So it is daunting how many*
*regulations we've got. And when I said daunting there it's daunting that*
*you have to read so much and they are constantly changing constantly*
*and upgrading. (P13)*

Not all policies were deemed necessary. However, there was a perception that the lack of particular policies may be questioned by the authorised officer so all policies were included even if they had no relevance to a particular service.

*She doesn't want to leave any out. So now we have all these policies that*
*I don't know whether all are actually that applicable. (P19)*

*A seatbelt bus policy, and we don't have a bus. Like (pause) but it was*
*left in, because it seemed like we must have it; we must have this, this,*
*and this. (P24)*

To be accountable, policies and procedures were to be implemented correctly in keeping with the regulation requirements. This was not always deemed appropriate for individual services. An example of this was the application of regulatory staff ratios. The implementation of staff ratios was viewed as being unsettling for staff, as

they perceived the impact on the children. The implementation of the staff ratios as directed by the regulations created difficulties for contextualisation.

> *Trying to meet regulations and stuff is an impact on the children. So, my group, if they are early, like, maybe 7:30 arrivals, they have been to four different rooms by 9 o'clock, by the time we get to our classroom. Well, they really just want to be in their room, because they feel like, well, why aren't we still in the Emus room, and it's not my room. My friends are all over the place, and where's my teacher? Like, if I'm not there. Some of them are actually, they're scared of being in this other room. They want to be in their own room. I find this upsetting. (P19)*

### 4.2.4.3 Dimensions of variation.

#### 4.2.4.3.1 Professional dimension.

From a professional perspective, the responsibility associated with the regulations weighed heavily on the early childhood educators. Their understanding was that legal ramifications were attached to the regulations and the need to be accountable for all aspects of the service created stress and concern. The early childhood educators worried about this responsibility to the extent that they expressed a desire to give up their positions and take on a different role.

> *Because of all those regulations, why put yourself out there when you could just go and work for somewhere as a relief teacher and get the money and you know. Just work as a relief teacher and you know less responsibility. (P16)*

They discussed reducing their teaching workload by assuming a part-time position as a way to avoid the responsibility associated with the regulations.

> *The National Quality framework, I think, has added to our workload. Definitely! And it's becoming such a huge workload that we are burnt out. I am going part time next year. It's, the accountability side of it, which is I think adding the time to each day and each week. (P20)*

Accompanying this ongoing concern of accountability was the task of undertaking the assessment process and this compounded their experiences of stress and anxiety. The experience of the assessment process was perceived as being such a burden to

their workload that educators doubted their ability to continue in the profession. The early childhood educators talked about feeling burnt out and as a result thought about the possibility of leaving the industry.

> *Well, there was a stage there when I thought; I don't know that I can do this anymore. I think I need to retire. You just (pause) when it's coming up to the assessment and rating visit, it was just stress. (P17)*

> *4.2.4.3.2   Personal dimension.*

The pressure to be accountable pressed the early childhood educators to commit additional time, both physically and mentally, to the professional. This was seen to have an impact on their personal life by creating mental pressure and affecting their physical health.

> *I don't have a social life! I don't have time. People say, "What do you do on your Monday and Tuesday?" I said to Name the other day, as I was rushing home again, I said, "I just wish that I could have a whole day where I didn't have to rush anywhere, I don't have to watch my clock. I don't have to get in the car and go here and go there." It would be nice to just be able to collect my thoughts. And that's not possible. (P03)*

The implementation of the National Quality Framework has required a significant time commitment from all stakeholders across services. It has been the responsibility of the early childhood educators to drive the implementation. To achieve this they have been required to extract a commitment from the stakeholders, particularly the staff of the service. Staff have expressed reluctance at times to take on the additional work and this has challenged personal relationships between the early childhood educators and their staff, particularly in small services. Early childhood educators have experienced this at a personal level.

> *We are a small centre and our staff have always been close. We get along well. In a small centre if the staff doesn't get along then it can be an unpleasant place to work. No one would want to come into that every day. I rely on my assistant to help run the centre. Asking my assistant to take on this extra work has been hard because she does not see it as her*

*role. It has been difficult and uncomfortable at times. It makes me sad.*

*(P25)*

Table 4.8.

*Summary of Category 4: Being Accountable*

| Category of Description 4 | | **The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as being accountable.** |
|---|---|---|
| **Referential Component – Meaning** | | ECEs viewed regulations as having to be accountable at all times. |
| **Key quote** | | *That was the first question I asked at the conference, was "Can we be insured"? Because how can you, even if you have got a reliever in, and I'm sick, I'm still responsible. You cannot open your centres without a nominated supervisor, but with that comes a responsibility of other aspects as well that you may or may not like. P04* |
| **Structural component** | Internal horizon focus | Roles and responsibilities |
| | External horizon field | Justification & evidence Regulations, policies & procedures |
| | fringe | Children |
| **Dimensions of Variation** | | |
| **Professional dimension** | | Responsibility of having to accountable at all times Responsibility associated with positions Stress and worry from legal responsibility of positions |
| **Personal dimension** | | Stress on health and personal life associated with assuming the responsibility Backlash from staff - Staff resentful about extra work in PD and qualification upgrade |

### 4.2.5 Category 5: Scrutiny of performance.

#### *4.2.5.1 Referential component.*

Category 5: The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as scrutiny of performance.



*Figure 4.9.* Arts-inspired plate representing scrutiny of performance (Category 5)

*What are they talking about? What is the experience?*

In this category, early childhood educators experience the impact of regulation as the scrutinising of their professional performance and the performance of the service. Sites retain service approvals after having successfully met the National Quality Standard. To successfully meet the National Quality Standard, services must go through an assessment and ratings process, which was carried out by an authorised officer representing the regulatory authority. The arts-inspired plate in the associated graphic shown in Figure 4.9 represents the early childhood educators in the service being scrutinised by the officers from the different levels of the regulatory authorities, peers, colleagues and community members. The early childhood educators experience the pressure of the ongoing scrutiny as the regulatory gaze emanating from the stakeholders associated with their centres (Osgood, 2006a). The early childhood educators believed their performance as an educator was closely scrutinised.

Key quote:

*Somebody, you know, will come through from the body and say, "but*
*how are you going to extend this child? I can't see your documentation of*
*that", and I think, "just ask me. I know where I'm going with these*
*children. I know what I'm doing!"(P03)*

### 4.2.5.2 Structural component.

*How are they talking about it? How is it understood?*

In Category 5, the early childhood educators were talking about regulation in relation to performance. Scrutiny of their teaching practices, pedagogy and experience was in the focus of their awareness. To meet the regulations, services undergo an assessment process and receive feedback and an overall rating. The experience of this process was in the field. Awareness of the children recedes into the fringe. The early childhood educators focused on their performance as an educator and the perceived scrutiny of this performance.
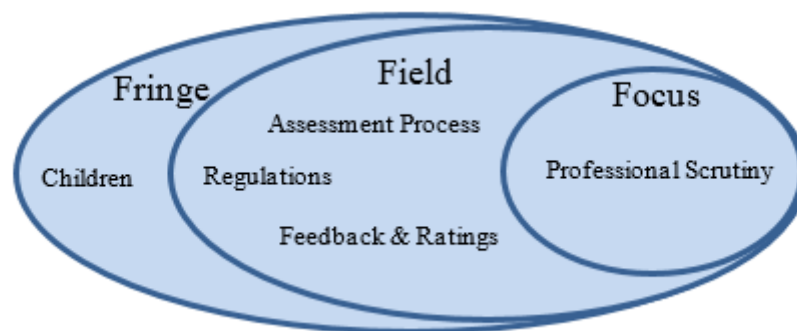


*Figure 4.10.* Structure of awareness for Category 5

The structure of awareness of the impact of regulation was experienced as scrutiny of performance. The focus of the early childhood educators' awareness was on the scrutiny of the educator's professional practices.

Table 4.9.

*Summary of Structure of Awareness for Category 5*

| Focus | Professional scrutiny |
|---|---|
| Field | Assessment Processes. Ratings & Feedback. Regulations |
| Fringe | Children |

*4.2.5.2.1 Focus: Professional scrutiny.*

ECE's focused on the concept of being closely scrutinised as a professional by an external entity. They had a sense of being judged against particular criteria.

> *Well, the whole regulation thing, I suppose people are questioning our professional ability now, which has never happened, really, before. It probably maybe happened by parents and everything, but never from an external source. They are really just looking at (pause) they are questioning our professionalism really. (P17)*

The early childhood educators reflected that with the introduction of the National Quality Framework there were changes to what was being viewed. Previously, it have been their experience that issues relating to workplace health and safety were the aspects most closely investigated, whereas now their personal practices seemed to have come under close inspection.

> *I guess, licensing previously was more focused on health and safety, and have you got any spiders webs. Whereas now, it's a scrutiny of your whole practice. (P13)*

The experience of this close scrutiny brought about feelings of self-doubt in the early childhood educators' own ability to carry out tasks that they had previously been undertaking. They experienced personal anxiety and despair as they felt that meeting the regulations became impossible. They could not find the link between what they had previously been enacting with what was currently expected of them under the regulations.

> *But a lot of people, when this came in, felt incompetent; that it was (pause) really rough on them, and they're just like, "My gosh, I'm not doing any of this. I'm a failure, I can't do this." (P09)*

The early childhood educators experienced the implementation of regulations as an increase in the intensity of their work load. This introduced into their lives, stress, not experienced under the previous regime. Knowing that they had managed in the past, and taking the view that they were under considerable scrutiny, the early childhood educators were challenged by this intense workload. This challenge

engendered thoughts of self-doubt in their professional ability to manage this new process.

> *It's been a massive overload of work stress and so you start to question yourself as far as, "My gosh! Am I good enough? Have I been doing the right thing? Am I doing the right thing?"(P20)*

The number of regulations was so overwhelming that the early childhood educators felt that their existing professional practices were no longer relevant. They experienced the close scrutiny by the regulatory authority as representing disregard of their previous work. This left them with feelings that their work was being devalued.

> *But it is everything. It's just, there's just so many things that have been brought in that I feel like is that we have been twisted this way, twisted that way and twisted that way and almost made to feel like well you really didn't do anything in the first place. (P09)*

Under the regulations, early childhood educators were to provide written evidence of professional practices conducted within the service for assessment. This was perceived as scrutiny of their professional practices and the early childhood educators talk about being disrespected, insulted and distrusted. They believed that the process no longer allowed for the recognition of their capabilities.

> *I've had a discussion with another colleague who actually (pause) he said, "It's quite insulting as an experienced teacher. It is insulting that we have to write down our reflections at the end of the day." (P04)*

> *Reflection, we're meant to be reflecting on our programs and the children's learning and things. I find it quite insulting to think that they think we haven't been doing that all the way along, actually. I've got a teacher buddy next door and every lunch time we talk about what's happened in the morning and we're constantly reflecting. But to justify that to somebody who might come out and look at the assessment, they might say, "Well, we can't see that. Where's it written down?" They can't. I wake up in the middle of the night and I'm reflecting on the programming coming up with ideas and things. But the constant need to*

*justify is something that I'm finding a bit frustrating at the moment, I*
*must admit. (P25)*

The length of the early childhood educators' commitment to the profession, and
therefore their extensive experience, were disregarded in their view. The early
childhood educators identified that by having to document their practices, rather than
present them verbally, was like being placed in the role of a university student. This
created feelings of resentment for the early childhood educators. Their conception
was that this unnecessary demand added pressure to their already busy workload.

> *It's writing your processes down again. We've done that. We've done*
> *that. We've done that for 30 years. We know exactly why we're doing*
> *that: because that child needs to do this. (P04)*

> *I actually feel, as I said before, resentful of having to write it down too.*
> *I've been doing this business for 30 years. I'm not a university student*
> *anymore. (P06)*

> *It's like going back to student days and 'why are you doing this the next*
> *day' and writing paragraphs about why you're going to plan to do this*
> *with your Play-Dough the next day. (P03)*

> *I feel like especially at the end of your professional career, you're being*
> *questioned about whether you're doing things correctly or you've got to*
> *change what you're doing. (P02)*

The early childhood educators also experienced scrutiny from within the centre
where they worked. Some staff passively resisted the regulation process, indicating
that they saw it as the role of the early childhood educator to complete the tasks. In
the face of this resistance, the early childhood educators experienced the watchful
eye of their staff upon them seemingly judging their ability to manage the process.

> *My assistant, I guess, doesn't understand the process that happened up*
> *until the point where she started this year. I guess she probably sees my*
> *shortcomings as a little bit more judgmental rather than understanding,*
> *do you know what I mean?(P18)*

Part of the implementation process involved progressively providing the centre management committee members with ongoing information to support their understanding of the National Quality Framework. This involved the preparation of resources and leading of discussions pertaining to the weekly National Quality Framework agenda item. The early childhood educators considered they were being judged throughout this process as to their understanding of the framework and its impact on the centre.

> *So every meeting I discuss one aspect of the National Quality Framework*
> *with the parents and so the meeting on Monday night (pause) I have to*
> *prepare the material and lead the discussion after a busy day at work.*
> *It's tiring. (P20)*

The topic of the implementation of the National Quality Framework was a regular item in the media at the time and many parents and community members were aware of it. A number of parents and community members were keen to hold discussions and raise questions regarding the points raised by the media. The early childhood educators felt that they were under the spotlight, expected to provide professional and knowledgeable answers. Once again, the early childhood educators experienced a scrutinising of their professional performance.

> *So it's to maintain a real picture here and to build confidence within*
> *the parents – that we know what we are doing. We have helicopter*
> *parents who want to check everything (pause) something they heard on*
> *TV last night. We have to answer those questions on the spot. It is really*
> *stressful. (P23)*

### 4.2.5.2.2  Field: Ratings and feedback.

Following an assessment visit, services were provided with feedback from the authorised officers and awarded a rating for each quality area. The overall rating for the centre was then published, for public access, onto the ACECQA and MyChild websites (ACECQA, 2016a). To prepare for this assessment visit, services were required to develop a significant amount of documentation. As well as preparing the content of the documentation, it was perceived that the presentation of the documentation was considered an important aspect of the process. Reports of some centres enlisting the help of their management committee and parents in the

preparation of the documents placed pressure on smaller centres. Some centres did not have access to management committees or parents willing to assist in this task. The early childhood educators worried this would affect their centre rating. This served to add to the pressure and created feelings of inadequacy for the early childhood educators.

> *We're all terrified of this actual rating thing. Some people have got their whole committees writing up these lovely official documents for their rating. I just don't do that. I've got a lot of work ahead of me yet, as well as teaching. (P07)*

The early childhood educators questioned how the public would interpret the meaning of the different rating scales. There were concerns that the ratings, when published, would not represent the centre appropriately. The early childhood educators referred to experiences relayed to them from colleagues in other education sectors who had already been subjected to the myriad of judgement measures and the associated publication of results. The early childhood educators questioned whether the ratings process would in fact represent services realistically.

> *They're concerned about the rating; the fact that the ratings are going to be listed. They start rating and putting the rating out there. It's a bit like the high school thing that comes out and is going to be posted in schools. You're going to have the same thing. What does it mean? Does it say anything about having a lovely staff or that you have an old building or a new building or whether you have got lovely staff or not. (P12)*

Extending this further, early childhood educators questioned the transparency of the published ratings information. To arrive at the overall rating, of which there are five, the regulatory authority assesses each quality area, standard and element of the National Quality Standard. The National Standard comprises seven quality areas (referred to as Quality Area 1 etc.), 18 standards and 58 elements (ACECQA, 2017). To receive a rating, all elements within a standard must be met to the same level to be awarded that level for the standard, and all standards must be met to the same level to be awarded that level for the quality area. For example, for Quality Area 2 to be recognised at the rating Meeting National Quality Standard, all elements and standards within Quality Area 2 must meet this level. If the service was to receive

the rating Working Towards National Quality Standard for one of the three standards in Quality Area 2, but received the Meeting National Quality Standard rating for the other two standards, the overall rating for Quality Area 2 would be Working Towards National Quality Standard. The overall rating of the service was determined by the lowest rating received across the seven areas. The early childhood educators argue that this information was not made transparent on the website. A parent looking at the published information could conceive that the service was only Working Towards National Quality Standards for Quality Area 2 when in fact a greater percentage of the elements were considered Meeting National Quality Standard. The early childhood educators argued that all of the information should be made available to the parents if they were going to be publicising the ratings

> *I think they should give all of the information so that it has meaning. We – they've got the seven areas that families can see the rating for and then they've got the overall rating. We got four Meeting the Standard, two Working Towards and one Exceeding. They can see that, but within the Working Towards, it doesn't say anything about our service. Do you know what I mean? We could have gotten none of them Meeting, and we could have got Working Towards, or we could have got all of them bar one Meeting. Parents can't see that. We can't see that within that. I think if you're going to give parents information, give them all the information. (P07)*

Coupled with this was the conception that the published ratings would result in judgement by the public, particularly by the parents. The view was that the publication of the ratings could disrupt the existing opinions of parents. This was problematic because the judgement of the parents was highly valued by the early childhood educators. The early childhood educators worried that, the parents would be influenced by the judgment made during a one-day visit by the authorised officers.

> *I am worried about them putting our ratings up for parents to view. They are going to judge us. (P12)*

The early childhood educators became aware that the owners of the centres valued good ratings. The early childhood educators experienced pressure from within their associated organisations to achieve a "good rating",

> *Even how we're viewed by the next level up. I mean, the head of Junior School is desperate to get a good report. I think they'll be very disappointed if we don't get it. (P06)*

The expectation from people outside the service, assuming their success because their centre was part of a recognised organisation, placed additional pressure on the early childhood educators.

> *Well, I guess, the expectation that you will do well, you won't (pause) it's not said overtly, but I think there's that underlying expectation there that you (pause) you will do well. Because you're a centre that belongs to an organisation. (P03)*

The early childhood educators perceived that, the ratings would introduce unwanted competition between services. Services already experienced competition to a degree; particularly in locations were a number of services were located. The competition created by the awarding of ratings served to create additional pressure and angst amongst early childhood educators.

> *But if we just get that, and the school over the road, which is our competitor, got the higher one, or the kindy down that road who have got all (pause) well, maybe they'll think we're not as good. (P03)*

Attracting cliental to a service presented challenges for the early childhood educators. Competition for clientele existed as parents closely compared what the services offered. It was deemed that the publication of the ratings would intensify this competition and early childhood educators would be under additional pressure to create that something "different".

> *It is competitive. There's kindies here, here, and a daycare there (pause) especially the one across the road, especially competitive. So, that's the world of private schools. It is competitive. You have to have the edge. You have to have something different, or be good. You have to be good. (P03)*

The early childhood educators experienced the outcome of the assessment process at an emotional level. The rating level was viewed as either uplifting and affirming for the hard work that they had undertaken, or demoralising, prompting feelings of doubt and incompetence.

> *Well, I feel a sense of professional and personal satisfaction now that we've had our assessment and rating, and we got Exceeding. So, yes, that was my goal for the year, my professional goal. (P10)*

> *How do you think that made you feel? Getting a bad rating? You've been a naughty girl so we've got to sort you out to tell you how to do that and you didn't quite work hard enough so we are going to make sure that you do work hard enough. (P13)*

The early childhood educators were informed that following the assessment visit services would receive written feedback, which would include ways to improve quality areas. The experience of the feedback was that it did not live up to these expectations, particularly considering the amount of work and time early childhood educators recognised they had contributed to preparing and undertaking the assessment. The early childhood educators were disappointed and frustrated with the feedback, feeling that the onus for improvement was placed back onto them with minimal support.

> *I felt like the feedback from that process wasn't specific. It was a whole heap of questions for us to further consider. And I just sort of was sick of that. (P02)*

Additionally, early childhood educators were disillusioned with the tone in which the feedback was presented. Aware that, from a professional perspective, appropriate practices for reporting and feedback were to be framed in a positive style, early childhood educators noted that the feedback they received did not reflect this same approach. Their view was that the feedback lacked a positive perspective and they found this unprofessional.

> *After the visit, we were all positive, and then we got the report. It was – we felt like it was quite a negative report, where as educators, we're not allowed to be negative towards the children. Like, their portfolios have to*

*be positive all the time. We get this report, and it's negative, negative, negative. (P22)*

The early childhood educators also experienced the ratings as being unfair. All centres were judged as equals when in fact, in their opinion, they were not. It was perceived by the early childhood educators that a larger centre would have more resources in the form of staff and materials at their disposal to complete the requirements in a timely fashion. The early childhood educators from smaller centres were overwhelmed by the amount of work, and reflected that it was not possible for them to complete it. They had only one or two people available to do the majority of the work compared to centres with larger staff. The outcome of a lower rating was an unfair assessment under these conditions. Additionally, there was no evidence that this was taken into consideration when ratings were provided to the public.

*Here I am, with all these hats, trying my hardest and underlying all that, passionate about my job and what I want to achieve, not quite achieving that and being judged by some external force that's not there every day, that doesn't see the interactions with families, and they step in and want to put that onto me. (P07)*

*4.2.5.2.3   Field: Assessment processes.*

The National Regulations outline the assessment process for education and care services. They set out the requirements for preparation for an assessment visit. An integral part of the assessment process was the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and services were required by regulation to ensure that the plan was prepared. Once a service had been notified of an impending visit, the service must submit their QIP to the regulatory authority prior to the assessment day. On the day of the visit to the service, the authorised officers observed throughout the day, discussed points with any stakeholders present and sighted any documents or evidence required to be developed by site under the National Law and National Regulations. Following the visit, the service was issued with a draft report. Any response the service wished to make to the report was to be made within 10 days of receipt. The regulatory authority would consider the service's response before the notice of final rating was issued to the service.

The early childhood educators considered the amount of time dedicated to the assessment visit (usually only one day) as inappropriate. The early childhood educators noted that whilst services functioned smoothly for the majority of the time, periodically hiccups that upset the harmony and steady flow of a service did occur. They worried that if an authorised officer were to attend on such a day a poor rating may be allocated to the service. They questioned how a realistic judgement of a service could be achieved on just a one-day visit.

> *Was it a good day or a bad day that they came? Did things tick along or was it one of those days when everything bumped? (P08)*

> *It's very much like NAPLAN or QCS, really; on that day, how you perform. It's like any of that testing – unfair. (P14)*

Early childhood educators experience uncertainty around what was expected under the regulations. The rating levels were inherently imprecise creating uncertainty for early childhood educators as to what specifically was expected. What was "enough" was not revealed until the assessment process was complete and this was considered too late by early childhood educators as expressed in the following quote:

> *Who is to say that's enough, until you're assessed, and then it's almost too late? If it isn't enough, well, you don't get a good rating. Then it's a bit late. (P16)*

The ratings scale includes an Excellent rating and services can apply to be considered for this rating. Services must already be rated as Exceeding to be permitted to submit an application, and a fee would be required before the regulatory authority would review the application. The Excellent rating was the highest rating possible and therefore held in high esteem. Early childhood educators perceived this to be discriminatory because centres that were financially challenged would not be able to apply for such a rating regardless of their quality. Early childhood educators also believed that this money would be better spent on resources for the children.

> *You can get exceeding, and then you have to pay a few thousand dollars to apply to get the top. If you get the one above (pause) if you get the B, then you can pay. Now, not everybody can pay, or everybody wants to pay. A small school who is struggling to buy anything (pause) it is a few*

*thousand dollars. They would not be able to justify spending that money*
*on a rating and not on the children. (P04)*

### 4.2.5.3 Dimensions of variation.

#### 4.2.5.3.1 Professional dimension.

From the professional perspective, the early childhood educators found the scrutiny of their professional practices confronting. They conceived that the implementation of regulations introduced judgement of their administration, leadership, management (Bedeck & Waniganayake, 2003) and pedagogical practices. This had not previously been experienced. This judgement was experienced as a questioning of their professional abilities and was perceived as a "low-trust" experience (Ball, 2003, p. 219).

*I'm feeling like I'm not being respected, and yeah, maybe not being*
*trusted to a certain degree. (P09)*

Early childhood educators considered that they had been let down by the regulatory body that they perceived to be in a leadership role for staff and sites undergoing the assessment process. The regulatory body was perceived to be effective at monitoring systems and producing information but they were found to be lacking in providing specific support at the site level. The early childhood educators thought that the regulatory body disrespected the amount of time they dedicated to the task of meeting the regulations. The feedback that they received was minimal and shallow, providing little guidance and few suggestions about what could be done to improve.

*I was disappointed with just the feedback that came out of it when I took*
*time to really write an action plan for each area and show where we are*
*working towards and just to get questions back for us to reflect on. (P13)*

#### 4.2.5.3.2 Personal dimension.

The impact of regulation, when experienced as scrutiny of performance, caused high levels of anxiety and worry for the early childhood educators. The uncertainty around what was expected from the regulations, the pressure to do whatever was necessary to survive, along with the level of professional scrutiny, resulted in early childhood educators internalising their anxieties. The early childhood educators

experienced feelings of self-doubt in their personal abilities and insult at the lack of respect for their experience. They also resented being judged by others who had a limited understanding of their experience. They were saddened by their loss of passion for working with children. The scrutiny of their performance was experienced as coming from staff, peers, community, employers and regulatory bodies leaving the early childhood educators feeling they were unsupported and isolated.

> *Incompetent. I'm meant to be the person leading and reassuring, and it'll be fine. I had to try and stay calm, because that's just it. You can feel like the world is falling out from underneath your feet. (P18)*

Table 4.10.

*Summary of Category 5: Scrutiny of Performance*

| Category of Description 5 | | The impact of regulation on their profession was experienced as scrutiny of performance. |
|---|---|---|
| **Referential component – Meaning** | | ECEs viewed regulations as being a scrutiny of performance |
| **Key quote** | | *Somebody, you know, will come through from the body and say, "but how are you going to extend this child? I can't see your documentation of that", and I think, "just ask me. I know where I'm going with these children. I know what I'm doing!" P03* |
| **Structural component** | Internal horizon focus | Professional scrutiny |
| | External horizon field | Assessment Processes. Feedback and Ratings. Regulations. |
| | fringe | Children |
| **Dimensions of Variation** | | |
| **Professional dimension** | | Scrutiny of personal practices confronting<br>Judgement of teaching pedagogy and practice<br>Required to justify choices built on years of experience<br>Assessors not viewed as having understanding or experience in context |
| **Personal dimension** | | Doubt of personal abilities.<br>Insulted at lack of respect of years of experience<br>Resent judgement by others not deemed as experienced as themselves<br>Loss of passion for the job as contact with children is reduced |

## 4.3 Outcome Space

The outcome of phenomenographic analysis is an outcome space consisting of a finite set of categories of description, which explain the different ways people experience phenomena in the world. The categories of description are developed empirically through the iterative process and are therefore based upon the interpretations of the researcher (Yates, 2013). The outcome space is described by Bruce (1997) as a "diagrammatic representation of the logical relationships between the different conceptions of a phenomenon" (p. 87). The main function of the outcome space is to show the relationship between the categories. Yates (2013) outlines three different types of outcome space that reflect various ways in which the relations between categories may be viewed:

- an inclusive, hierarchical, outcome space in which a more sophisticated perception will logically include previous, or lower, ones;

- an outcome space in which the different categories are not related to each other but are related to the history of participants' experience of the phenomenon;

- an outcome space that represents a developmental progression, in the sense that the conceptions represented by some categories have more explanatory power than others have and thus may be seen as better.

The outcome space in this thesis portrayed the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experienced the impact of regulation on their profession. Five categories of description of experiencing regulation have been revealed and they have been identified as being inclusive and hierarchical in nature as shown in Figure 4.11. In this figure, the categories of description have been allocated a corresponding level to exemplify this inclusive and hierarchical nature. In this structure, each category is logically absorbed by the one above representing the increasing sophistication in the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon. That is, the range of categories represents increasing awareness of aspects of the phenomenon.

| Level 5 | Category 5<br>The impact of regulation was experienced as scrutiny of performance |
| Level 4 | Category 4<br>The impact of regulation was experienced as being accountable |
| Level 3 | Category 3<br>The impact of regulation was experienced as interrupting core business |
| Level 2 | Category 2<br>The impact of regulation was experienced as complicating administration |
| Level 1 | Category 1<br>The impact of regulation was experienced as enabling guardianship |

*Figure 4.11.* Outcome space illustrating the relationships between the categories

The outcome space demonstrates how the categories progressively developed from a view of regulation as a guiding frame (Category 1) to a view of regulation as being intensely professional and performance focused (Category 5). The early childhood educators' awareness of the impact of regulation moved progressively towards a realisation of their living and working under a regulatory gaze (Osgood, 2006a). This represented a loss of professional autonomy (Ball, 2003, Bradbury, 2014).

In Category 1 (level one), the experience of regulation was altruistic. The regulations offered possibilities to the profession. There was an external focus on the experience of regulation as it was viewed as offering agency for guidance and equality across the industry. Marton (1986) suggests that less complex conceptions can be revealed early in an interview session and to a large degree across the group. Less complex conceptions regularly attract minimal description. Such was the case in this study.

In Category 2 (level two), descriptions of undertaking administration was dominant. The focus was on the immediate, pressing tasks that resulted from the expectations associated with the implementation of the regulations. This was evident in the expressions of frustration associated with the amount of paperwork required. For many early childhood educators this was all consuming.

Category 3 (level three) saw more complex descriptions about the effect that the demands for administration had on the core business of the profession. This demonstrated an increasing awareness of the experience. The core business of the chosen profession was being eroded by the excess administrative demand and this was evident in the expressions of resentment presented by the participants.

At Category 4 (level four), early childhood educators described the experience of undertaking administration, which interrupted their core business, as arising from having to be accountable. This represented a more sophisticated awareness of the impact of regulation. Regulation was seen as a conduit for new forms of surveillance and monitoring (Ball, 2003). This was evident in the early childhood educators' expressions of suspicion and discomfort.

At Category 5 (level five), the experience of regulation incorporated all previous levels and revealed conceptions of a complex nature. The experience at this level was the awareness of the professional vulnerability that had emerged as a result of the impact of regulations. The new regulation regime was seen as investigating the performance of the early childhood educators. Participants experienced regulation in this way as a challenge to their professional capacity.

The categories in the outcome space represent the early childhood educators' increasingly sophisticated understanding of the impact of regulation. Not all participants experienced the impact of regulations as captured by all of the categories in the outcome space. Only some participants described the experience of regulations as captured by Category 5. All participants, however, described experiencing regulations as captured in the first two categories.

Dimensions of variation were also identified across the data. The dimensions enabled additional aspects of the early childhood educators' experiences to be discovered. As the dimensions of variation were associated with the categories of descriptions, providing deeper understanding across each category, they also occurred in a hierarchical nature.

A summary of the five categories of description and two dimensions of variation that make up the outcome space are shown in Table 4.11. This table represents the analysis of the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experience the

impact of regulation on their profession. This table summarises the referential component, structural component and dimensions of variation for each of the five categories of description. The key quote selected to represent each category is also included.

Table 4.11.

*Summary of the Analysis of the Qualitatively Different Ways Early Childhood Educators Experience the Impact of Regulation on their Profession*

| Categories of description | | 1. Enabling guardianship | 2. Complicating administration | 3. Interrupting core business | 4. Being accountable | 5. Scrutiny of performance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Referential component - Meaning** | | ECEs viewed regulations as providing guardianship for stakeholders in the industry. | ECEs viewed regulations as complicating administration | ECEs viewed regulations as interrupting the core business of teaching, leading and managing a service. | ECEs viewed regulations as having to be accountable at all times. | ECEs viewed regulations as being a scrutiny of performance |
| **Key quote** | | *Okay well firstly I'd like to say that I believe the National Quality Framework is an absolute step forward across the … on the National level and I guess the thicker ropes there really represent that strong tie and strong connection between all early childhood services and that vision for improving the quality of the opportunities for children, for young children.* | *Sometimes, I would love to have some sort of computer attached to my head so that it just can be spinning out all the paper that they require that's attached to my thinking process.* | *It's frustrating for the older staff like me when you can see that change and all of a sudden, we're stuck in offices being office– it's not educational people but office work - pen pushers.* | *That was the first question I asked at the conference, was "Can we be insured"? Because how can you, even if you have got a reliever in, and I'm sick, I'm still responsible. You cannot open your centres without a nominated supervisor, but with that comes a responsibility of other aspects as well that you may or may not like.* | *Somebody, you know, will come through from the body and say, "but how are you going to extend this child? I can't see your documentation of that", and I think, "just ask me. I know where I'm going with these children. I know what I'm doing!"* |
| **Structural component** | Internal horizon / Focus | Benefits for children: Welfare – all children would be safe and secure Education – children would have a greater opportunity to receive high quality care and education through the use of the EYLF and access to educators with qualifications. | Demand for documentation Excessive workload & time commitment Administration gets in the way of safety | Working with children Teaching | Roles and responsibilities | Professional scrutiny |

| Categories of description | | 1. Enabling guardianship | 2. Complicating administration | 3. Interrupting core business | 4. Being accountable | 5. Scrutiny of performance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Structural component** | External horizon / Field | Support for educators through stipulating levels of qualifications and describing levels of expectations. | Impact on work life balance Health issues | Staff commitment Relationships with staff, parents & committee | Justification & evidence Regulations, policies & procedures | Assessment Processes. Feedback & Ratings. Regulations. |
| | Fringe | Regulations | Regulations | Regulations | Children | Children |

**Dimensions of Variation**

| | 1. Enabling guardianship | 2. Complicating administration | 3. Interrupting core business | 4. Being accountable | 5. Scrutiny of performance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Professional dimension** | Implementation of the EYLF and the expectation that staff gain qualifications ensured staff were more able to offer high quality early childhood experiences for the children in their view. Professional recognition was seen to be improved as a result of qualifications. | Work load increase -Unnecessary administration i.e. multiple forms -Policy writing could be done by central body with space for contextualizing - Administration get in way of safety | Getting taken away from children and teaching Taking them away from their passion – teaching Complicating their task of managing the staff service -Challenging relationships with staff, parents, committees -Staff expected to do tasks not in original job des -length of risk assessments a deterrent for undertaking interesting activities | Responsibility of having to accountable at all times Responsibility associated with positions Stress and worry from legal responsibility of positions | Scrutiny of personal practices confronting Judgement of teaching pedagogy and practice -Required to justify choices built on years of experience -Assessors not viewed as having understanding or experience in context |
| **Personal dimension** | Children would be safe and secure Regulations helped educators feel less vulnerable. | Taken away from time spent with family Work overflowing into personal time and life: health issues -partner commenting on amount of work -pay not reflecting amount of time put in | Disappointment in not having the time to spend with the children or discussion with other staff about the children and the centre Distress with personal performance with children -Loss of passion for job and job satisfaction -Loss of opportunity to be creative | Stress on health and personal life associated with assuming the responsibility Backlash from staff - Staff resentful about extra work in PD and qualification upgrade | Doubt of personal abilities. Self-doubt in own abilities. -Insulted at lack of respect of years of experience -resent judgement by others not deemed as experienced as themselves -loss of passion for the job as contact with children is reduced |

## 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings emanating from this study. It has described the qualitatively different ways in which early childhood educators experienced the impact of regulation on their profession and discussed the critical differences and relationships that were uncovered among the categories of description. The qualitatively different ways were revealed across five categories of description and two dimensions of variation. This comprised the description of the referential component and structural component identified across each category. The outcome space provided the overview of the findings. In the following chapter, the categories and the dimensions are discussed in relation to the literature.

# CHAPTER 5.   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 provided a detailed account of the research findings with respect to the early childhood educators' experience of regulation. The findings were explained in the outcome space as referential and structural components associated with five categories of description and two dimensions of variation. In this chapter, a discussion of the findings is provided.

The discussion of the findings will include a research overview followed by a discussion of the five categories of description and the relationship between the categories with respect to previous literature. Additionally, the dimensions of variation will be examined to reveal the extended awareness evident within them.

## 5.2 Research Overview

The purpose of this study was to discover the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators conceptualise the impact of regulation on their profession. The research questions designed to reveal understandings were:

1.   *How do early childhood educators understand regulation?*

2.   *What are the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation on their profession?*

A phenomenographic research approach was selected to discover the understandings of the 25 early childhood educators who participated in the study. This phenomenographic study has allowed early childhood educators to articulate their personal experiences of regulation and enabled the presentation of these experiences as faithfully as possible (Bowden, 2000). The study revealed five categories of description, which represent the understandings of the group of early childhood educators of the impact of regulations. The analysis has also demonstrated that there are professional and personal elements, which characterise the entire outcome space. The professional and personal elements represent the dimensions of variation, which overarch the five categories of description that were unveiled.

This study examined the ways in which 25 early childhood educators conceived the phenomenon of the impact of regulation on their profession. Five categories of description emerged:

Category 1: The impact of regulation was experienced as enabling guardianship

Category 2: The impact of regulation was experienced as complicating administration

Category 3: The impact of regulation was experienced as interrupting core business

Category 4: The impact of regulation was experienced as being accountable

Category 5: The impact of regulation was experienced as scrutiny of performance.

Two dimensions of variation representing an extended awareness of experience were identified in each category of variation and across the five categories of description. The two dimensions were a professional dimension and a personal dimension evident in each category.

The categories of description revealed the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators conceived the impact of regulation on their profession. The focus of phenomenography is on the relationship between the participants and their experience of the phenomenon. When using a phenomenographic approach a second order perspective is taken (Marton, 1981). The aim of taking a second order perspective is to describe the experience from the participants' perspective as explained in Chapter 3. For this study, the interest is in the relationship between early childhood educators and regulation, and taking a second order perspective enables these views to be elicited and described.

This study has been undertaken at a time of significant change in the early childhood sector across Australia. As outlined in Chapter 1, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care was introduction across the Australian early childhood sector on 1 January 2012. The participants in this study had direct experience with the regulations, introduced as a result of the implementation of the National Quality Framework, from this date.

## 5.3 Discussion of Findings

Five categories of description were identified in this study relating to early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their profession. Two dimensions of variation emerged revealing deeper understandings across the five categories of description. In this section, the five categories of description and the two dimensions of variation are discussed in relation to the previous literature and to their contribution to current literature.

### 5.3.1   Category 1: Enabling guardianship.

This study found that early childhood educators viewed the regulations as enabling guardianship for stakeholders in early childhood education and care settings. Category 1 makes use of the concept of guardianship as presented by Omarova (2012) in his discussion around business practices. Omarova uses the term guardianship to encapsulate the act of overseeing the implementation of financial services regulation in the business sector to ensure equality for all stakeholders. In other business literature, guardianship is viewed as being an entity that serves to protect and guide. Guardianship in this study is imbued with these same meanings as the early childhood educators perceive that through the implementation of the regulations equality and guidance is enabled for stakeholders, particularly the children and staff.

Early childhood educators highly valued equality for children across the early childhood sector. Early childhood educators conceived that, the regulations offer the possibility for equality to be experienced by all children across the early childhood sector through the transparency that was said to be provided by the National Quality Framework (ACECQA, 2011a). This aim for equality was viewed as being a significant intention behind the development and implementation of the National Quality Framework as indicated by the guiding principle of the National Quality Framework stating 'equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework" (ACECQA, 2011a, p. 8). Similarly, early childhood educators valued equality for staff across the early childhood sector in that the same expectations would be placed upon all licensed sites regardless of ownership or location. They perceived that the regulations afforded staff equal opportunity and recognition.

Category 1 also represents the view that early childhood educators value highly the safety and security of the children in early childhood education and care settings. Early childhood educators viewed safety and security as essential for children's wellbeing. The regulations were seen to provide the guardianship required to enable child safety and security through mandating clear direction and expectations for staff across all early childhood settings. This expectation is reflected in the first objective of the National Quality Framework, as outlined in Section 32 of the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 [National Law] which aims to "ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services" (Education Council, 2014, p. 11). Additionally, early childhood educators acknowledged they work in early childhood education and care because they are passionate about working with children. This interest in children engendered a level of emotional commitment to the role and the safety and security of children was experienced at a personal level. This view was expressed in the early phase of each individual interview, indicating a prominent focus for all early childhood educators (Marton, 1986). It was important to early childhood educators personally that children were well treated and cared for and they held the view that this regulation process would improve the situation for many children.

Early childhood educators understood the importance of being qualified. They held the belief that qualified staff were more able to facilitate children's education and care. Research shows that children have the greatest opportunity to reach their full potential when they experience high quality education and care (Burchinal et al., 2000). An important factor impacting upon centre quality is the education level of the staff (Burchinal et al., 2002). Qualified staff are more able to develop warm, respectful relationships with children, create safe and predictable environments and encourage children's active engagement in the learning program (ACECQA, 2011a). The early childhood educators' views mirrored this aspiration for all children to be "successful" and as a consequence, they also valued gaining qualifications because they understood the agency afforded children when they (the children) engaged with qualified staff. The introduction of the regulations ensured that qualified staff were in situ across all early childhood services, not just those that may have previously committed to this independently.

The early childhood educators were aware of the importance attached to the possession of academic qualifications. The possession of academic qualifications was seen to enhance the early childhood educators' "cultural capital" (James, 2011, p. 3). They held the view that possession of qualifications would raise the professional status of the industry as it provides evidence of the "specialist knowledge and skill set" required to work with young children (Bradbury, 2012, p. 184). Early childhood educators understood the importance of their role in society, but felt that this was not the view held by other members of society to a significant degree. They sensed that they were viewed as babysitters, playing all day (P12). As discussed in relation to Bourdieu's thinking tools in Chapter 2, the concept of cultural capital "involves a person's or institution's possession of recognized knowledge" (Houston, 2002, p. 156) and it supports educator agency, enabling them to strategically engage in society (Agbenyeba & Klibthong, 2012; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009). At a professional level, early childhood educators experienced frustration with the perceived lack of respect for their contribution to society and the possession of recognised qualifications was viewed as a way to alter this societal view.

The early childhood educators interviewed in this study had all gained recognised tertiary qualifications to a Diploma level or above. The regulations associated with the National Quality Framework were viewed as providing support and offering guidance by setting out minimum approved qualification requirements for staff. This stated regulatory expectation to undertake study was viewed by the early childhood educators as providing motivation for staff. However, in some cases they faced resistance from their colleagues to take on the study. When faced with this resistance the early childhood educators found support in the National Quality Standard. The directive for staff to undertake study was presented as an expectation of the regulations and not as an expectation of the early childhood educator. This displacement of authority away from themselves to the recognised authorities (Bown & Sumsion, 2007) enabled the early childhood educators to encourage staff to engage in further study without placing strain on their working relationship. The early childhood educators also talked about the opportunity the National Quality Framework offered all staff to be involved in robust discussions around early childhood education and care. Moyles (2001) noted that qualified early childhood

educators tended to work down to the level of the trained staff so as to not disenfranchise them. Early childhood educators now appreciated that they were able to contribute theoretical knowledge without fear of marginalising colleagues.

Leadership has been identified as fundamental for quality in early childhood contexts and, for this reason, the National Quality Framework requires all services to appoint an educational leader. Radich (2012) explains that the educational leader is "an educator, coordinator or other individual who is suitably qualified and experienced and must be appointed to lead the development and implementation of the educational program (or curriculum) in the service" (p. 2). All early childhood educators interviewed for this study fulfilled the role of educational leader at their early childhood site. It was noted by ACECQA that the educational leader had an influential role within a service. The role of the educational leader was to lead professional leaning and aid in the implementation of the education program of the service. The educator, taking on this role, was to motive, inspire and challenge the professional practices of the educators. This provided the opportunity for the early childhood educator to lead the staff in collaborative critical reflection (Henderson & Noble, 2015).

The introduction of the National Quality Framework was accompanied by a significant amount of media attention. The importance of early childhood educators in the implementation of the National Quality Framework and the consequential benefits for young children and for the nation was highlighted. The essential link between quality early childhood education and care and qualified staff, along with the clear requirement for staff to achieve qualifications, had also been a focus. The term *professionals* has been associated with early childhood education and care staff extensively across the media and through parliamentary speeches such as the one presented by Kate Ellis in her role as Minister for Employment Participation and Minister for Early Childhood and Childcare in 2013 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). The early childhood educators talked about being viewed more as a professional since the introduction of the National Quality Framework, with parents and community members engaging in discussions around the information presented. These activities have helped to raise the status of their profession according to the early childhood educators. The discussions placing early childhood educators in a

professional context was seen as "professionalisation" of their work in the public eye (Kilderry, 2015, p. 638).

The National Quality Framework, along with the associated curriculum framework, the Early Years Learning Framework, had been developed by recognised early childhood experts under direction from the government at that time. The documents reflected the early childhood educators' ways of being, knowing and doing (Gee, 1996; Noble & McIlveen, 2012) in the early childhood context and the early childhood educators saw this as a validation of their beliefs, philosophies and practices by government bodies. This acknowledgement of their ways of being, knowing and doing in the work context added to the growing confidence early childhood educators experienced as a result of the new found focus on the early childhood field. The associated rhetoric delivered by political parties in their justification of government spending on the National Quality Framework positioned early childhood education as an essential component for economic growth. In the paper titled *New Directions for Early Childhood Education*, released in 2007, the then prime minister Kevin Rudd stated, "investing in human capital formation delivers significant benefits to individuals, society and the economy" (Rudd & Macklin, 2007, p. 2). The paper then goes on to say, "as an investment early childhood learning brings a high rate of return, considerably higher than educational investment in school age children or in people already of working age" (p. 4). The early childhood educators experienced this focus on the importance of early childhood education for economic growth as long awaited recognition for their profession.

Early childhood educators viewed the National Quality Framework as a support when involved in discussion with colleagues and stakeholders around early childhood education and care. The concepts and terminology presented within the National Quality Framework provided the early childhood educators with the tools needed to articulate clearly their ways of being, knowing and doing early childhood. Discussions with colleagues were experienced as being more successful as the common discourse of the National Quality Framework assisted in the development of shared understandings and less barriers in communication were experienced. The implementation of the National Quality Framework served as a motivator for early

childhood educators to contact peers for clarification around aspects leading to the development of professional relationships. According to Robson and Futomo (2009), professional relationships may provide support for educators in overcoming challenges arising from regulations. The early childhood educators experienced an increase in collaboration between colleagues within centres and between centres. The early childhood educators reported that they considered that the early childhood workforce was presenting a more unified front to the community.

### *5.3.1.1 Category 1: Professional and personal dimensions.*

Two dimension of variations, professional and personal, were identified across the five categories of description adding greater depth to the early childhood educators' awareness of the impact of regulation. From the professional dimension of Category 1, the early childhood educators experienced feelings of empowerment when considering the regulations. They recognised that the regulations provided guidance for the implementation of high quality care and education and offered support for educators across all professional practices. Early childhood educators also experienced the regulations as increasing their status within the community.

This sense of empowerment was reflected in the personal dimension. The early childhood educators expressed passion and commitment to their profession particularly in relation to the positive outcomes for children, which is in keeping with identified characteristics of teachers (Moyles, 2001). The early childhood educators noted that the regulations went a long way to ensuring that the safety and security of children across the early childhood sector was increased. Additionally, they noted that the regulations assisted in providing equality across the sector for those children enrolled in licensed contexts.

### 5.3.2 Category 2: Complicating administration.

Early childhood educators revealed that their administrative tasks were complicated by the implementation of regulations in Category 2. There is a trend noted worldwide that "teachers are spending more time at work, as well as more time at home working on teacher-related activities" and associated with this is the concern that this trend has led to "high levels of stress and a negative work-life balance for the teacher" (Williamson & Myhill, 2008, p. 27). The lived experience of the early childhood educators participating in this study reflects this trend, with the early childhood

educators reporting that the main cause of these shifting work practices was due to the increased amount of administration required. They perceived the amount of administration to be more substantial than previously experienced. This burgeoning amount of administration is seen to complicate the professional practices of the early childhood educators.

Early childhood educators understood that administrative tasks were part of the practices associated with the profession (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003) and that keeping on top of paperwork was thought to be a "key element of good teaching" (Bullough et al., 2014, p. 60). Their experience of administration resulting from regulations, however, was one of being overwhelmed. The quantity of paperwork, form completion and document preparation were experienced as complicating the administrative practices of the profession. Ball (2003) noted that "the production of information" was an important component at the centre of regulation reform (p. 220). Such things as appraisal meetings, annual reviews, report writing, publication of results, promotion applications, inspections and peer reviews are forms of information collected continuously, recorded and published by the regulatory authority (Ball, 2003). Experiences of administrative tasks, identified in this study as being burdensome, reflect similarities to the findings of Fenech (2006) and Bown and Sumsion (2007). Fenech highlighted early childhood educators' dissatisfaction with the administrative burden created by the excessive paperwork associated with accounting for quality under the previous regulations and quality assurance system. Bown and Sumsion noted that administrative demands were reported by early childhood educators as dominating their work day and creating feelings of mistrust. In comparison, the early childhood educators in this study cited such things as development of centre policy and centre information as creating excessive administrative work loads. An objective of the NQF was to reduce the unnecessary administrative burden resulting from the varied documentation required across the multiple jurisdictions (ACECQA, 2015). This was to be achieved by introducing one system Australia wide. Whilst the implementation of one administration system was touted to significantly reduce the administrative burden the findings from this study indicate that this issue remains unresolved.

Agbenyega & Klibthong (2012) identified confidence, a sense of entitlement, knowledge of the education system, useful social networks and feelings of being capable of seizing the initiative as being essential elements of cultural capital necessary to negotiate the system. These elements were not evident in the collective utterances of the participants in this study. Instead, early childhood educators felt incapable of managing the amount of work because of the burden of administration rendering these elements of their cultural capital negligible. The loss of these previously held beliefs about their capabilities complicated their view of dealing with the administrative workload. This in turn led to a loss of confidence in their abilities as educators.

The breadth and depth of the administration required was overwhelming, placing excessive demands on their time and the early childhood educators talked about feeling confused. This confusion arose from the early childhood educators being unsure about what these aspects of their work would be most valued and how to prioritise this. This regulatory demand for the collection of evidence was viewed as demeaning their professional knowledge and expertise (Bradbury, 2012). The early childhood educators expressed uncertainty about exactly what was required, and the reasons for particular actions. Feeling overwhelmed and confused led to feelings of self-doubt and personal anxiety. They did not feel comfortable discussing their personal self-doubt and anxiety with their colleagues; therefore, they were left to internalise these emotions. Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid, and Shacklock (2000) note that responses such as these to the demands for administration can engender individual feelings of guilt, shame and envy thus introducing a substantial emotional element to the professional practices of the early childhood educator.

Experiences associated with emotional elements were taxing for the early childhood educators making the task of meeting the regulations even more difficult. When experiencing stress and emotional exhaustion one's ability to work is hindered, making it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand (Colley, 2006; Kokkinos, 2007; Mann, 2004; Noble, 2009). According to Kokkinos (2007), emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being "emotionally overextended" and of experiencing a "strong reduction of one's emotional resources" (p. 230). Early childhood educators' discussions around feeling emotionally exhausted and being unable to cope

represented symptoms of burnout. Kokkinos describes burnout as "a negative affective response occurring as a result of chronic work stress" and is recognised through the facets of "emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and lack pf personal accomplishment" (p. 229). Being emotionally taxed, at a time when burdensome amounts of administrative tasks were to be undertaken, complicated the professional practices of the early childhood educators. Experiencing the debilitating impact of emotional exhaustion, whilst dealing with the impact of regulation, compounded the early childhood educators' situation. They talked about leaving the profession because they could not see how they could keep going, or cutting back to part-time, because they viewed this as being more manageable. A part-time context is viewed as providing the opportunity to regain a sense of equilibrium, control and renewed confidence in their ability as a teacher (Ball, 2003). Going part-time was seen as a way to provide more time to carry out the administrative tasks, not to provide time away from the workplace. Early childhood educators, who were already working part-time, talked about continuing to work on their non-working days and still not being able to complete the tasks.

One reason behind the increased demand for administration arises from what Ball (2003) called "the law of contradiction" (p. 221). The regulations arising from the implementation of the National Quality Framework placed additional demands on the early childhood educators through the introduction of a new curriculum which promoted alternate ways of interacting with the children. Ball (2003) referred to these expectations as "first order activities" (p. 221). The required implementation of these new "first order activities immediately necessitated an increase in second order activities" (Ball, 2003, p. 221), which include tasks such as early childhood educators familiarising themselves and their staff with the curriculum, monitoring and recording the implementation of the curriculum, and developing appropriate reporting strategies to demonstrate curriculum implementation as required by the regulatory bodies. The time and effort involved in carrying out the second order activities consumes so much energy that the amount of remaining energy available for the actual implementation of the curriculum with the children and across the early childhood education site (first order activities) is significantly reduced (Ball, 2003).

The early childhood educators carried out the implementation of the regulations as directed despite the considerable reservations they held. They talked about undertaking processes that would be perceived as complying with the new regulations whilst being strategic and pragmatic. One strategy was to use shortcuts so as to survive in the system but still meet the requirements of the regulations. According to Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009), the main attitude displayed by teachers when faced with changing regulations is one of obedience. They go on to say that teachers viewed taking this approach as being a survival tactic particularly when not all aspects of the regulations were considered necessary. These acts of compromise and pragmatic choices, however, carried a sense of inauthenticity for the early childhood educators adding to their feelings of resentment. They viewed the process of responding to regulations as one of "playing the game" as they produced the paperwork and the evidence required to satisfy the governing bodies (Ball, 2003, p. 222). They experienced pressure to undertake regulation processes that did not add value to their professional practices.

The early childhood educators held an internalised view of what was a standard of good teaching and what a good early childhood educator looked like and elected not to abandon it under the pressure of administration (Osgood, 2006a). The early childhood educators elected to manage the impact of regulation whilst continuing to be a good early childhood educator. The motivation was their desire to maintain good teaching practices. Their moral imperative was to provide the best possible educational opportunities for the children and their desire to live up to the expectations held by themselves and their colleagues (Bartlett, 2004; Löfdahl & Pérez Prieto, 2009). Early childhood educators did not want to let go of their held views because to do so would mean a lowering of their professional standards or a redefinition of what a good early childhood educator looked like (Bartlett, 2004). Early childhood educators were motivated in their profession by the personal satisfaction gained from working with children and the ability to live up to the idea of good teaching. Failing to undertake and complete all of the required work would be perceived as letting people down, "thereby shirking a moral obligation and sacrificing an essential source of reward" (Bartlett, 2004, p. 578). As this option was unacceptable for the early childhood educators, they elected to commit to the long working hours required to meet the administrative demands of the regulations.

Early childhood educators noted that a provision of support by organisations in the form of additional off class time or non-contact time would assist in the management of the burden of administrative tasks. Across the range of early childhood educators' contexts relating to this study, the provision of non-contact time varied and inequality was evident. This inequality caused distress for those early childhood educators who received little to no non-contact time and feelings of guilt for those early childhood educators who received some non-contact allowances; however, the collective noted that regardless of the amount allocated to individual early childhood educators, the time away from face-to-face work was not adequate for the designated tasks.

Much of the administration was considered unimportant and irrelevant and the early childhood educators viewed the time invested as being disproportionate to the benefits for the children (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). Administration demands to develop policy that was not relevant to their sites, like a bus policy when they did not have a bus, or that would be general to all centres, like hand washing policies, created frustration. In addition, the early childhood educators reported that some requirements were unclear as to what was expected.

### 5.3.2.1  Category 2: Professional and personal dimensions.

Dimensions of variation are themes that traverse each category of description offering a further expansion of awareness. In this study, professional and personal dimensions were identified. The substantial number of administrative tasks associated with the implementation of the regulations was experienced as a "role intensification" (Valli & Buese, 2007, p. 523) and was represented as a significant imposition on the early childhood educators professionally. The balance within their working life was unsettled by tasks that were important to the early childhood educators being eroded to make space for the increased administrative demands. Early childhood educators viewed their working life as being busy and the implementation of the regulations added increased complexity to their profession. The obligation to make changes was deemed as being in conflict with their professional philosophies.

The balance of their work life experience was also significantly disturbed. A balanced work life approach is considered important for a successful productive

professional (Rodd, 2013). The early childhood educators noted substantial alterations to their work life balance with large amounts of time being required to complete the administration. They discussed how this time demand led to the diminishing of family and personal life.

### 5.3.3 Category 3: Interrupting core business.

The early childhood educators viewed their core business as working with children, facilitating their learning and development as indicated by the statement made by P02, "after all, that is what we are here for isn't it". They held the view that everything they did was to this end.

Research demonstrates that children have the greatest opportunity to reach their full potential when having access to high quality early learning environments (Ackerman, 2006). The early childhood educators in this study were aware of the importance of delivering high quality early childhood education and care. High quality learning environments are determined by the types of activities children participate in, the interactions children have with other children and, most importantly, the interactions children have with their teachers (Abbott-Shim, Lambert, & McCarty, 2000). The early childhood educators talked about the time it took to develop appropriate activities based on quality interactions with the children and their families. The essence of core business for early childhood educators involved the development of relationships with people through interactions, particularly with the children under their care (Nolan, Taket, & Stagnitti, 2014; Tayler et al., 2008). This understanding was reflected by the early childhood educators in this study as they invested heavily in developing the types of relationships with the children that would serve to provide a high quality early childhood education experience. Relationships are central to the educators' daily experience to the extent that the children's learning is embodied within the relationships (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; Day, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2009; Nias, 1996; Sumsion, 2002; Tayler et al., 2008). In the work context, the early childhood educators interacted and developed relationships with large numbers of children who were frequently energetic, spontaneous and preoccupied with their own interests. Nias (1996) also notes that "the social context of teachers work regularly requires them to demonstrate a capacity to control the effervescent mixture and to direct it into culturally approved channels" (p. 3). This relational involvement with

the children resulted in the early childhood educators investing their 'selves' in their work; committing personally and emotionally (p. 299). The early childhood educators saw this as the core business of their profession.

The early childhood educators extracted self-esteem and fulfilment through engagement in the workplace. The early childhood educators experienced a sense of fulfilment when they sensed they had been effective in assisting the children to engage in learning and development. They experienced a boost to their self-esteem when they had successfully managed the complex demands of dealing with children and their families and keeping pace with their needs. The early childhood educators also experienced a rise in self-esteem when they sensed they were acting consistently with their beliefs and values (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; Day, 2004; Nias, 1996).

Kelchtermans (2007) noted that when acting in ways that do not reflect their beliefs, teachers did not feel good about themselves and this can occur when directed to act in particular ways as the result of regulations imposed by overarching organisations. The early childhood educators reported that at times the implementation of some regulations went against their professional beliefs causing them to feel uncomfortable. When directed to work in ways where there was misalignment between their beliefs and values, early childhood educators experienced a loss of autonomy in their work. The importance of early childhood educators retaining autonomy in their work is noted by Robson and Fumoto (2009) who write, "a sense of autonomy and ownership of learning has long been seen as an important condition for the successful support of young children's development" (p. 43). Choices made around programming and planning flow freely and comfortably from the early childhood educators' understandings and collection of ideas; they would "just know what to do" reflecting their "ways of being, knowing and doing" (Noble & McIlveen, 2012). The juxtaposition of their personal and professional agency and pedagogical power alongside the perceived narrowing of legitimate ways of working within the regulations meant that the early childhood educators were required to consciously consider and organise approaches unfamiliar to their usual professional practices. Dearnley and Elfer (2007) reported that when early childhood educators were forced to reframe personal experience, beliefs and values to fit with regulatory expectations it "often involve[d] ... discomfort and upset" (p. 277).

This process added additional stress to the working day from two perspectives. Firstly, because early childhood educators did not necessarily believe in what they were doing, they felt a lack of authenticity had crept into their work creating feelings of discomfort and guilt. Secondly, as a result of their tertiary training (cultural capital), be it either at a TAFE diploma level or a university degree level, the early childhood educators had committed significant time to developing their personal philosophy, beliefs and values. Through continual reflection around their professional practices, they had developed their own ways of being, knowing and doing particularly in relation to their workplace, children and families. In their view, the decision-making process they undertook to develop and enact the required programming and planning were efficient and effective. The early childhood educators could make judgements, and associated decisions about children's learning and development, confidently and efficiently knowing these decisions were based on solid philosophical grounding. The regulations associated with the National Quality Framework disrupted this decision-making process by presenting beliefs and values that did not necessarily fit with those of the early childhood educators. This reflects the findings, presented by Bown and Sumsion in 2007, of the early childhood educators' experiences working under the previous system. Bown and Sumsion (2007) suggest that regulations appeared to undermine early childhood educators' confidence in their professional judgement, and to "impinge ... on their professional freedom, integrity and passion for teaching" (p. 30). Consequently, the early childhood educators needed to commit additional time to the deliberate and laborious task of decision making to develop appropriate programming and planning under the new regime. Their previous ways of being, knowing and doing, tailored for their context, were impacted by this disjuncture.

As discussed in Chapter 2 Bourdieu's set of thinking tools of habitus, capital, field and practice (Bourdieu, 1989) provides a lens for deeper understandings (Wacquant, 2008); in this case deeper understanding the early childhood educators' core business. Using Bourdieu's view of habitus, Fenech et al. (2010) describe the habitus of early childhood in the following way:

> 'Habitus' in this context refers to the values, dispositions, discourses, rules and
> ways of behaving that constitute and reflect the cultural histories of early

childhood education. Collectively, these establish the parameters for what is deemed professionally acceptable. (p. 89)

The authors note professional habitus is shaped by knowledge, expertise and technology relating to early childhood education and care and is a key characteristic of professional practice in the field of early childhood.

The development of the National Quality Framework and associated regulations took place at a systemic level with consideration of the particular practices relevant to that systemic level and which, according to Rawolle and Lingard (2008), "are productive of a certain policy habitus" (p. 738). This occurred outside of the early childhood educators' immediate field. The regulations were then implemented within the early childhood educators' field, which had different practices and habitus. The misalignment of practices between the systemic field and the early childhood educators' field placed pressure on the early childhood educators to reshape their knowledge and practices. The early childhood educators experienced these changes as a disruption to their existing professional habitus.

The Bourdieu thinking tool of cultural capital is relevant to this study. As indicated previously, academic qualifications held by the early childhood educators make up a portion of the cultural capital in their possession (Klibthong, 2012). Other competencies making up the early childhood educators' cultural capital include knowing the means of communication and dominant discourse of knowledge, possessing the ability to strategically engage in the profession and having the means to provide agency for the children (Klibthong, 2012). The early childhood educators valued this cultural capital recognising that it supported them in appropriately conducting their profession. Possession of the appropriate cultural capital enabled the early childhood educators to respond to the core business of working with children. Through a process of internalised decoding (Terreni, 2014), built up over time through engagement with tertiary education, professional development, children and other stakeholders within the industry, early childhood educators continued to increase their cultural capital. Keeping up with contemporary information and research was also consider essential.

As a result of the implementation of the regulations, adaption to their cultural capital was required. The early childhood educators were required to learn new terminology, discourse and knowledge in relation to many aspects of the regulation. To acquire these new understandings, a significant amount of professional development was required and much of this was undertaken during out of work hours. An example of new knowledge was the understanding and implementation of the new curriculum (the Early Years Learning Framework) and the associated documentation required to provide the evidence of its implementation. Robson and Futomo (2009) noted that an impact of the implementation of a new curriculum would be the cost of time and ingenuity in thinking about how to most effectively support children's learning.

In this study, the early childhood educators, in their role as educational leader, were expected to provide in-service for the staff around the Early Years Learning Framework to ensure the continued support for children's learning. This meant a commitment of many hours for preparation and presentation. Accompanied with this was the expectation from the staff that they (the early childhood educators) would have all of the answers in relation to applying the framework. The early childhood educators were aware that their colleagues looked to them for guidance and mentoring in the enactment of the new curriculum. This added significant stress when the early childhood educators perceived that they fell short in this task in the eyes of their colleagues. Additionally, when talking about providing written evidence of the enactment of the Early Years Learning Framework, early childhood educators expressed concern over using the correct terminology and noted the excess time and conscious thought required to undertake the task.

To discuss the relationship between people's practices and the context, that is, the institution's values and rules in which these practices occur, the thinking tool of field is valuable. Changes in the field required changes in the early childhood educators' dispositions and practices. Responsive learning relationships strengthened as educators and children learn together, were at the core of the early childhood educators' practices. According to ACECQA (2013a), educators are more likely to be responsive, purposeful and thoughtful when professional practices allow them to direct their full attention to their work with children, and when they do not have to attend simultaneously to other tasks (p. 107). Early childhood educators admitted

feeling distracted when working with children and staff, feeling the need to double check that they were using the correct terminology, focusing on the children's learning according to the Early Years Learning Framework and meeting all the requirements. The early childhood educators were aware that they were not fully focused on their core business creating feelings of disappointment in themselves as professionals.

According to Reay (2004), change to habitus, field and capital "continues to operate long after the objective conditions of its emergence have been dislodged" (p. 440). The experience of the change, resulting from the implementation of the new regulations, will not be diminished in the short term for the early childhood educators. The impact of the regulations on their perceived core business will continue adding feelings of fear, frustration, guilt, anxiety and anger when they know that they are not teaching well (Ball, 2003). The early childhood educators recognised this and recognised it as a cause behind their loss of passion for the profession. They questioned their ability to continue working under these changed conditions once they had lost their passion for the job.

### 5.3.3.1 Category 3: Professional and personal dimensions.

The professional and personal dimension identified in the participants' structure of awareness represent further layers of awareness. The early childhood educators' professional priority was to provide high quality education and care for the children attending their early childhood context. The early childhood educators understood that when children experienced quality education and care they were more likely to have success throughout their school life (Burchinal et al., 2002; Ingvarson, Elliott, Kleinhenz, & McKenzie, 2006). It was also understood that constructive interactions with children that informed judgements regarding children's learning and development were necessary for quality education and care (Burchinal et al., 2010). The early childhood educators identified the provision of quality early childhood education and care as their core business. Professionally they were troubled because of the encroachment of administrative tasks into their core business space that reduced their opportunities to provide their preferred level of quality of education and care.

The interruption to their ability to carry out the core business of their profession resulted in feelings of guilt, dissatisfaction at a pedagogical level and loss of job satisfaction (Ball, 2003; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006). This represents emotional involvement in professional practices and therefore a personal dimension in relation to this study. Ball (2003) noted that teachers who experienced these feelings often faced a "values schizophrenia" where they were torn between continuing as they had in the past and meeting the requirements imposed by the new regulation regime (p. 122). The early childhood educators in this study expressed these notions.

### 5.3.4   Category 4: Being accountable.

The early childhood educators' experience of the impact of regulation is seen as being accountable. Accountability, as a construct, is justified on the "rational and democratic grounds" that the people who spend taxpayers' money, that is, educators, should be accountable to the public (Shore & Wright, 1999). Grieshaber (2002) notes that in recent years there has seen an escalating presence of the audit society in childcare settings globally. This has raised concerns about the detrimental impact that new waves of accountability have on early childhood professionals (Grieshaber, 2002; Power, 1999, 2000). Educators are expected to be familiar with, and be able to implement, multiple regulations that are planned by others, but for which they are held accountable (Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010; Robert-Holmes, 2015). This was reflected by the early childhood educators when they talk about feeling that they are accountable for all practices evident within the service. Early childhood educators report that, the National Quality Standard comprises a wide range of elements for application across a service. Associated with this is the responsibility of successfully implementing all elements on a daily basis. Early childhood educators experienced this process as their being held accountable for all aspects of the service.

Phillips et al. (2000) notes that government accountability systems in early childhood education and care settings focus on "structural dimensions, such as teacher qualifications, group sizes and staff-child ratios" and "process dimensions, such as staff-child relationships, children's learning experiences and staff-parent relationships" (p. 476). The early childhood educators note that the accountability expectations, emerging as a result of the regulations associated with the National Quality Framework, reflect these government accountability systems. The

implementation of structural dimensions is evident through the requirement of correct staff-child ratios and appropriate staff qualifications. Accountability through process dimensions, such as development of the centre Quality Improvement Plan through discussion and collaboration with the parent body, is also evident.

Being accountable necessitated that the early childhood educators enforce requirements that were at times unfavourable or unachievable. When organising rosters to meet the designated staff-child ratios, longer working hours where created for some staff. The staff who were impacted did not always desire this. The expectation to harness parent responses to the centres' Quality Improvement Plan was unachievable at times. Parents were not always willing to respond, making it difficult to meet the accountability requirement of demonstrating parent engagement.

Osgood (2006a) argues that in the face of new regulations, educators experience a loss of autonomy as they respond to the new criteria of accountability. The early childhood educators in this study felt that autonomy over their practices was being replaced with excessive responsibility. They no longer considered that they were able to make decisions based on their knowledge and beliefs whilst being asked to take the responsibility for decisions imposed upon them through the regulations. Research demonstrates that educator beliefs about what children should experience and know play an important role in the quality of the children's learning experiences (Robert-Holmes, 2015; Vartuli, 1999).

The early childhood educators talked about the increased responsibility associated with meeting the accountability criteria and the stress associated with this responsibility. For the early childhood educators, the responsibility had legal ramifications, placing them, in their view, in uncertain and vulnerable positions. Fenech, Sumsion, and Goodfellow (2008) noted that through regulation "government bodies transferred the risk of responsibility to individual centres and educators" (p. 42). This vulnerability and lack of autonomy made the early childhood educators' profession appear untenable as evidenced by the early childhood educators when they talked about not being sure if they could continue in the profession and not being able to see the profession as being attractive to others.

The early childhood educators experienced an increase in workload as they responded to aspects of their profession relating to "technical competence" as required by regulation (Osgood, 2006b, p. 188). For example, regular practices entrenched in the daily running of a centre were taken for granted and the early childhood educators generally did not explain or provide evidence of these practices. The regulations however required them to record these practices. Despite carrying out these technical tasks, the early childhood educators expressed resentment at having to perform aspects of the regulations as they were viewed as being time wasting and irrelevant. This articulation of their lived experience represented a "passive resistance", "wherein an overt opposition to masculinist neo-liberal policy reforms … is evident, but so too are feelings of powerlessness and fatalistic resignation" (Osgood, 2006a p. 7). Ball (2003) describes this action of responding to seemingly irrelevant regulations as educators embodying or performing given policy that they neither believe in nor feel able to resist.

The need to respond to technical competencies created tension for early childhood educators as they endeavoured to achieve a balance between personal professional beliefs and provision of organisational representation. Early childhood educators were concerned that the professional practices that they valued would not be captured by, or valued within, the representation as required via the accountability processes. Professional practices that may fail to be captured included the beliefs and values they held that guided their actions; the energy, passion and commitment they felt for their profession; and the knowledge and skills they drew upon "to act in considered and professional ways" (Goodfellow, 2003, p. 49). They were concerned that the need to meet these accountability processes may misrepresent and highjack their practice. Vartuli (1999) noted that early childhood educator decisions were "often rooted in a form of personal practical knowledge rather than technical knowledge" (p. 491) and therefore not necessarily recognised under this regulatory regime. Goodfellow (2003) suggested that "the underpinnings of professional practice lay within a practical wisdom" held by early childhood educators and that this wisdom tended to be unrecognised and remained undervalued (p. 49). As suggested by Goodfellow (2003), the early childhood educators in this study felt that the professional practices they valued, as highly relevant in early childhood settings, would not be recognised in the search for technical competencies.

A further tension existed between the representation processes and "authentic and purposeful relationships" (Ball, 2003, p. 223). The need to respond to technical competencies that were not valued by early childhood educators impacted upon relationships with staff. Staff held beliefs and values around what was important in early childhood education and care, developed through their studies and work experience in centres with children and other stakeholders (Fenech, Harrison, Press, & Sumsion, 2010). A misalignment between what was valued and what was expected was experienced. Some requirements were perceived as being inauthentic. This lack of authenticity promoted questioning by staff leading to some resistance on their behalf to engage with the process. This resistance was particularly noticeable where staff held the belief that it was the centre director's or early childhood teacher's role to meet the requirement. The development of documentation for centre assessment was one such example. Staff did not view this as their responsibility. Strained relationships were reported as early childhood educators endeavoured to encourage reluctant staff to become more involved in centre documentation. In many cases the resistance was such that the production of appropriate documentation fell to the early childhood educator.

The perceived lack of autonomy, and an accountability process that focused on technical competencies, created feelings of loss of agency by the early childhood educators. A sense of agency is achieved when a person feels they are in control of the things happening around them and when they feel they can have an influence over an event (Touhill, 2013). According to Noble and Henderson (2008), for agency to be facilitated within a context, a "balancing of power relations" along with the presence of particular characteristics is essential (p. 50). The characteristics that are significant for privileging agency are (1) interactions and relationships, (2) rights and responsibilities, (3) choice, (4) belongingness and (5) connectedness (Noble & Henderson, 2008). The fact that few of these characteristics emerged from the data offers some explanation as to the loss of agency experienced by the early childhood educators.

The early childhood educators discussed the concept of being accountable as having someone looking over their shoulder continually. This evokes an image of the panopticon mechanism as discussed by Foucault (Edwards, 2003). Edwards (2003)

describes the panoptic mechanism as "a powerful tool of subjectification that utilises an invisible gaze to exact compliance or other forms of behaviour from those subjected to the gaze" (p. 99). The surveillance procedures of the gaze were explicit for the early childhood educators through centre assessment, and implicit through the required record keeping. The early childhood educators experienced a desire to ignore the gaze of the regulations but recognised that they would be letting others down and so completed them as expected. The assessment processes experienced by the early childhood educators render them (the early childhood educators) vulnerable to their own self-control, and they therefore enacted surveillance on behalf of the regulatory body (Holligan, 1999).

Osgood (2006a) describes the surveillance of education arising as a result of government policy to be a "regulatory gaze" (p. 10). In this study when considering the conceptions presented by the early childhood educators around accountability, through the lens of Osgood's (2006a) discussion of the "regulatory gaze" (p. 10), it can be interpreted that early childhood educators were disempowered under the regulatory gaze of the policy reform (p. 5). The "regulatory gaze" (p. 10) created by the regulations ensured that the early childhood educators undertook tasks that they deemed time wasting and irrelevant. Additionally, the expectations by parents, stakeholders and associated community members that the centre would achieve a successful rating compelled the early childhood educators to undertake all necessary tasks and assume all necessary responsibility despite their feelings of vulnerability and inauthenticity. Early childhood educators became preoccupied "with satisfying dominant and externally imposed constructions" and felt "constrained by demands for technicist practice" (Osgood, 2006a, p. 5) whilst experiencing increasing perceived levels of responsibility, which left little time to engage in the core business of their profession.

In response to the regulatory gaze produced by the regulations, the early childhood educators undertook the task of meeting the accountability requirements; however, they talked about the uncertainty around deciphering what was required of them to meet the requirements. Shore and Wright (1999) noted that systems of accountability were reported as being "slippery and opaque" (p. 570). From the early childhood educators' perspective, the regulatory requirements were unclear and they

experienced frustration at being told that what they had produced was too much and not necessary. They had committed a considerable number of hours to the task. That time could have been employed more usefully elsewhere. Additionally, they had encouraged and coerced their staff to develop documentation that was deemed unnecessary by the visiting assessors. The early childhood educators reported that the requirements needed to be more clearly and appropriately expressed.

Ball (2000) discussed such experience as being more than subjected to the regulatory gaze; "it is not the possible certainty of always being seen that is the issue, as in the panopticon, it is the uncertainty and instability of being judged in different ways, by different means, through different agents" (p. 2). The experience of not knowing what was expected introduced feelings of uncertainty and instability for the early childhood educators because of the different ways and means now being utilised to monitor the enactment of the National Quality Framework at a centre. The early childhood educators experienced these different ways of being judged through the regulations as a constant pressure to record and document and as a continual presence of accountability. The early childhood educators expressed feelings of being unclear about what was expected, and they questioned continually whether they were doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others and were constantly looking for ways to improve things. This different way of experiencing regulation is related to performativity which is described as "a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change" (Ball, 2000, p. 1). In the context of this study the view is taken that, the early childhood educators are subjected to a performative gaze (Barney, 2010; Pejsa, Mutlu, & Gleicher, 2013). This experience of regulation under the performative gaze exposes the educators' inability to avoid their positioning by others in the dominant "institutional story" of the work context (Nuttall, 2006, p. 140). The performance of the centre serves as measures of quality in the eyes of the regulatory body and the educators are positioned, by stakeholders, to achieve a successful rating for the centre.

### 5.3.4.1 Category 4: Professional and personal dimensions.

Two dimension of variations, professional and personal, were identified across the five categories of description adding greater depth to the early childhood educators'

awareness. Accountability was fore fronted in the early childhood educators' perceptions of the impact of regulation on their professional practices. Demands emerging from the new regulation regime saw early childhood educators responding to quality assurance processes as encapsulated in documents such as Quality Improvement Plan. The process was time consuming and experienced as a regulatory gaze (Osgood, 2006a). The pressure for accountability raised questions for the early childhood educators as to whom they were accountable (Kilderry, 2015). The early childhood educators experienced being under the gaze from many different quarters: central governing bodies associated early childhood organisations (i.e., Creche and Kindergarten), management committees, primary schools, parents and media. Accountability was also viewed as troubling their professional practices. The early childhood educators perceived that the accountability process was removing the autonomy they held in relation to running their centres and working with the staff and children (Barblett, 2000; Bradbury, 2014). The regulations were also experienced as being accountable for additional aspects within their contexts, for example, the staff and management committees. Such entities were to be compliant with the regulations and it was the early childhood educators' responsibility to ensure that this happened. This was viewed as a "role expansion" (Valli & Buese, 2007, p. 534) and created feelings of being overwhelmed.

Associated with the accountability requirements of the regulations was responsibility. Early childhood educators felt that the responsibility weighed heavily upon them personally. Early childhood educators were unclear about their legal position in the accountability process and this created feelings of insecurity and vulnerability.

### 5.3.5   Category 5: Scrutiny of performance.

In the final category, the early childhood educators viewed the impact of regulation as scrutiny of performance. The early childhood educators judged that their professional practices were under scrutiny, that they were being judged in terms of quality and their "performance" would impact the overall rating for their centre. They noted that their professional judgement and authenticity were being replaced with notions of "impression and performance" (Bradbury, 2012, p. 181) under the regulatory system. The early childhood educators felt that they needed to focus on

altering, adapting or recreating their previous performance to meet the regulation requirements rather than demonstrate their professional capabilities.

The early childhood educators found their professional practices challenged by a performative approach of judgement arising from the regulations. They reported experiencing close examination of their programming, planning and teaching episodes by the authorised officer. Kilderry (2014) supports the notion that educator accountability in early childhood education relates to educator performance and practice expectations. Education reform has been a worldwide phenomenon and has involved a change in "monitoring systems" and "production of information" within education management systems (Ball, 2003 p. 216). To encapsulate these changes governments have developed and implemented overarching frameworks and, in the case of this study, the Australian Federal Government implemented the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (Education Council, 2014). The changed approaches resulting from reform have introduced new and different ways of judging educators which Ball (2003) relates as "performativity" (p. 216). According to Ball (2003) performativity is a mode of regulation that employs comparison and judgement as a means of control. Ball goes on to say that the performance of an individual, in an organisation, is taken as the indication of the quality of the organisation, placing intensive responsibility on the individual. The interview data, viewed phenomenographically, reveal that the collective group of early childhood educators experienced the impact of regulation from this performative perspective.

It is inevitable that education reform will bring about change. Governments, being the implementers of education reform, are complicit in negotiating this improvement through change (Levin, 2010). Governments utilise "regulations and acts of parliament to attempt to change behaviour by detailing how the regulated parties should act" (Kilderry, 2014, p. 246). The early childhood educators were aware that change was inevitable as a result of the National Quality Framework but experienced feelings of resentment with the perceived lack of respect demonstrated for their existing professional practices. They held the view that their existing professional practices demonstrated that they were "good teachers" (Ball, 2000), but they experienced pressure to "remake" themselves in a new and different image

(Bradbury, 2012, p. 178). According to Ball (2003), this pressure to remake themselves is exerted through the performativity approach of regulation instituted through contemporary education reform. Bradbury (2012) notes that discussion around performativity "concentrates upon the power of neo-liberal technologies to 'remake' teachers as different types of professionals, to discipline the parameters of their understandings of what being a 'good' teacher can be" (p. 178). To meet the regulatory requirements, what the early childhood educators did to be a good teacher was lost in the complications of what was needed to comply.

Linked with this awareness that their professional practices required justification, the early childhood educators reflected upon colleagues with less experience than themselves. They wondered how less experienced educators would manage under these performance expectations of the regulations and felt that many of the necessary skills that they viewed as essential for facilitating children's learning and development would be lost. They sensed less experienced educators would be in a weakened performance position and may well submit to becoming "whatever it seems necessary to become" in order to survive (Ball, 2003, p. 222). In their view the ways of being, knowing and doing, early childhood education would change and lose its autonomy and authenticity, thus offering little incentive for people to enter into or stay in the profession. Ball (2003) reported that in the UK the regime of performativity was seen to "drive increasing numbers of teachers out of the education system" because of the perceived "inauthenticity and meaninglessness" becoming "increasingly an everyday experience for all" (p. 222). The early childhood educators observed that this may also be the case in the Australian context as a result of the National Quality Framework.

The early childhood educators talked about judgement of their performance occurring through the detailed documentation they were expected to prepare and provide around their programming and planning. Documentation such as this, required to be presented in this specific way, represents a "form of very immediate surveillance" (Ball, 2003, p. 219). The early childhood educators discussed frustration at having to provide evidence around their programming and planning as if "we are first year university students explaining the reasons behind our decision making during a professional experience practicum" (P06). This requirement, for the

educator to demonstrate the decision-making process around programming, had already been proven through their studies and work experience, according to the early childhood educators, and represented the emergence of a "low trust" environment (Ball, 2003, p. 219) between the assessing bodies and those being assessed. The early childhood educators talked about this experience of performance scrutiny as making them feel disrespected and distrusted.

The early childhood educators felt under pressure when gathering information about the children and the service to meet the point in time regulation requirements. The regulations required evidence of educator and child performances, therefore applying force on the educator to extract the needed information at that time, rather than when the information was revealed by the child. The educators reflected that that their relations with the children were altered by the reforms, finding that they were focused "at the children rather than with them" (Ball, 2003, p. 222). One educator talked about finding herself wanting to continually point out the learning to the child, so that she could complete the documentation, rather than wait for the child to achieve the learning in their own time through their own experiences (P03). This manifested pressure was in direct conflict with their beliefs and values about early childhood education and care.

The majority of the regulatory requirements in the National Quality Framework seek information relating to evidenced-based observation, quality measures, and comparisons on a broad scale. The opportunity to discuss the human side of the service was noted by the early childhood educators. The educators commit emotionally to their work and the performativity style of the regulations provided limited agency for this to be recognised. The early childhood educators also talked about the difficulty of revealing their centre to the assessors because of the lack of avenues available to reflect the 'human' element of the setting. For example, there were limited possibilities to report how proud they felt when they noticed a collaborative interaction occurring between two children, knowing that the work carried out at the centre facilitated the children's abilities to achieve this. Duhn and Grieshaber (2016) describe the National Quality Standard (NQS) in Australia (ACECQA, 2013b) as being a "DONA-like measurement of quality" (DONA being "dictatorship of no alternatives") (Duhn & Grieshaber, 2016, p. 55). The lack of

opportunity to demonstrate the emotional and personal commitment of the centre staff created frustration.

Competition is a significant facet arising from this new mode of regulation (Ball, 2000). Competition between centres is afforded through the release of the ratings on the ACECQA website. Additionally, ACECQA publishes news releases about those centres that achieve significant ratings. Parents and community can view the ratings and pass judgement on a centre based on the rating without setting foot in the establishment. The early childhood educators talked about the ratings not adequately representing what the building was like, or that the centre had lovely caring staff (P12). The competitiveness arising from the published ratings pressures centres to create something new or special or find a point of difference from other centres. The early childhood educators found they were spending unavailable time on trying to create that point of difference for their centre. Reputation becomes everything for centres in this new ratings regime and this, more than ever, placed their personal performance under scrutiny.

The early childhood educators noted that, the ratings did not adequately represent the achievements of the centre leading to misjudgements about the centre. For a centre to receive a rating for one quality area, all elements and standards within that quality area had to achieve the same rating (ACECQA, 2016a). For example, if four of the five standards in a quality area were rated as Meeting National Quality Standard, but the fifth was rated as Working Towards, the whole quality area would be rated Working Towards National Quality Standard (Guide to Assessment & Rating Services) (ACECQA, 2016a). This rating gave the impression that the centre was only functioning at the lower quality area of Working Towards when, in fact, for the majority of the standards the centre was Meeting National Quality Standard. People viewing this rating on the website may not view the centre in a positive light even though in essence the centre was achieving Meeting National Quality Standard in the majority of the standards.

The overriding concern for the early childhood educators was the perception that their individual performance as an educator would ultimately influence the final rating awarded to the centre. The implementation of the regulations had had a significant impact upon their ability to perform. The early childhood educators talked

about "having the eyes of parents and the staff upon them" (P13) as they worked through the regulatory process. The early childhood educators informed the parents about the National Quality Framework via newsletters, parent meetings and foyer displays. They were, however, regularly highjacked by media presentations, which, at times, sensationalised the regulations creating disquiet amongst parents. At times, the early childhood educators found themselves placed on the spot being unable to provide appropriate information. In their view, when this occurred, they were delivering an inadequate performance. Staff were aware, to varying degrees, of the expectations associated with the regulations, and looked to the leadership of the early childhood educators to progress through the process as smoothly as possible. This additional scrutiny, requiring them to perform in the centre arena, added to the pressure of the experience. The early childhood educators feared they would let their colleagues and the centre down by being unable to deliver an adequate performance as required by the regulations. They talked about experiencing self-doubt on many levels, even in their own teaching, which previously they had had confidence with. The experience was reported as being shattering for some.

### *5.3.5.1 Category 5: Professional and personal dimensions.*

Dimension of variations are themes that run through each category indicating a further expansion of awareness. At the professional level, the early childhood educators experienced the regulations as a close examination of their professional practices. The early childhood educators held the view that their professional practices had developed out of a combination of tertiary study, ongoing professional learning and development and extensive work experience over a number of years and this close examination resulting from the regulations was experienced as an unwelcome scrutiny. They experienced a devaluation of their professional knowledge and abilities leading to "a sense of professional inadequacy" (Darby, 2008, p. 1163). There was uncertainty around what was expected, and guilt associated with actions that served to meet the regulations but went against their personal beliefs and values. No part of their professional career was free of close examination, leaving them feeling exposed and vulnerable.

At a personal level, the experience of being scrutinised created feelings of discomfort, anxiety and consternation. The early childhood educators experienced

significant emotional strain as they managed the expectations radiating from the regulations. These expectations extended into their personal lives as they noted that their very moral purposes of teaching and learning were being investigated (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). Deeply held beliefs were challenged, and unseated, through the experience of regulatory reform.

## 5.4 Relationship between the Categories of Description

The relationship between the categories of description, as presented in the outcome space in Chapter 4, represents an increasingly sophisticated understanding or awareness, by the group of participants, of the impact of regulations on their profession. In this study, the higher level categories encapsulate the lower level categories (Walsh, 2000). Categories of description are the representation of the collective view of the group of participants in the study. The focus of the data collection and analysis was the relationship between the early childhood educators and the phenomenon of regulation. The increasing awareness in this study of the phenomenon, the impact of regulations on the profession, became evident through the data analysis process, development of the categories of description and dimensions of variation and the construction of the outcome space. The differences between the categories were highlighted through a process of focusing on the differences between the sets of data within the categories (Walsh, 2000). Individual early childhood educators were not necessarily aware that their experiences represented an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the experience of regulation. That is, the individual has an awareness of some of the experiences, but it is in revealing the collective awareness that the range of qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon is realised.

The initial layer of understandings relating to the impact of regulations, revealed in Category 1, was experienced as an awareness of what the regulations actually say and what the regulations can actually do. At this layer, the early childhood educators viewed the regulations as guiding, directing and initiating practices that were perceived as making their job easier. The regulations were perceived as providing instructions on how to play the game and they believed they understood the changes to the field (Bourdieu, 1989) and the consequential repercussions for their profession.

As the early childhood educators became physically, mentally and emotionally involved in the implementation of the regulations their awareness altered. As they became more engaged with the implementation of the regulations, the extent of the administration was revealed. As represented in Category 2, the early childhood educators held the view that the enactment of the regulations required the production of copious amounts of documentation and supporting evidence. These were to be prepared at crucial points throughout the day, week and year. Whilst the early childhood educators still held with the conception that the regulations would offer support for children, staff and stakeholders, they also reported much of the administrative documentation was unnecessary and they resented the need to produce it. The continual demand to provide documentation and undertake administrative tasks created an encroachment into their core business of working with children.

That the time and effort needed to complete the administrative tasks were eroding their core business indicated a further level of awareness of the impact of regulations on their profession. They experienced a need to change how they managed their day. As indicated in their conceptions of Category 3, early childhood educators placed a high value on working with children. The administrative demands of the regulations created a need for the early childhood educators to readjust and recalculate their professional practices relating to their core business. Time needed to be reallocated away from their core business of preparing and working with children and this demand created frustration and resentment for the early childhood educators.

Category 4 revealed a deeper awareness of the phenomenon under study. Through the consideration of what the regulations offered, how they were enacted and the adjustment required to implement them stemmed the awareness of the implications for the early childhood educators of the accountability associated with the regulations. It was understood that the quality assurance of the centre, as a consequence of the roles they held within the centre, was the responsibility of the early childhood educators (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). However, the new regulatory regime introduced additional and varied aspects for which the early childhood educators were now responsible. They felt the changes were significantly high in number and not clearly expressed. They experienced pressure to comprehend and enact the changes in the expected time. The conception was that they were

legally responsible for the successful implementation of the regulations and this created feelings of vulnerability for the early childhood educators. This level of awareness of the created angst.

From the initial level of focus on the content of the regulations, represented by Category 1, the early childhood educators moved through a complex hierarchy of understandings to arrive at a position of awareness that the regulations were acting upon them personally; on the self that is them (Nias, 1989, Zembylas, 2003, Rodgers & Scott, 2008). The awareness that their performance was being scrutinised by external persons indicated a realisation that they are being acted upon by an outside entity. Within this environment, they experienced uncertainty about their knowledge, value and beliefs. Was what they did good enough? The perceived judgement of their ways of being, knowing and doing early childhood led to a crisis of faith in their professional practices and decision-making. The doubt created in their minds by the perceived scrutiny of their performance led to the questioning of their ability to remain in the profession.

As stated in the first paragraph of this section, the individual early childhood educators were not necessarily cognisant that their experiences represented this increasingly sophisticated awareness of the impact of regulation on their profession. The increasing awareness became evident through the analysis of the relationship between the participants and the phenomenon as represented by the collective view in the categories of description. The research analysis process focused on the similarities and differences between the data of the group resulting in the discovery of the group's increasingly sophisticated awareness of the impact of regulation on their profession.

## 5.5 Dimensions of Variation: An Extended Awareness

The five categories of description describing the early childhood educators' experience of the impact of the regulations, arising from the implementation of the National Quality Framework, on their profession were presented in Chapter 4 and discussed above. Two dimensions were also discovered. The two dimensions represent the differing ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997) and are referred to as dimensions of variation. These dimensions of variation uncover

further layers of awareness that are recognisable as common themes running through each category of description. The explanation of dimensions of variation as an outcome of phenomenographic research is provided in Chapter 3 and the dimensions of variation discovered in the data in this study are presented in Chapter 4. The two dimensions that emerged were a professional dimension and a personal dimension.

The common theme evident across all categories of description, arising from the early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation, was revealed as professional and personal dimensions. Tension in relation to these dimensions were evident in the early childhood educators' conceptions. Tension, in the context of this study, is taken to mean pressure points that were revealed through the ways the early childhood educators conceived the impact of the regulations and described their relationship within it that indicated a need for broader debates and deeper deconstruction. The tensions revealed in the data became apparent through the presence of "inconsistencies and opposing views" (O'Gorman, 2007, p. 209) in the early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of the regulations. Barnacle (2005) notes that during the data collection stage the same phenomenon can be "described in multiple and occasionally conflicting ways" (p. 50) by the interviewee. This, according to Barnacle (2005), indicates the complexity of the phenomenon. The tensions in this study emerged as a result of the early childhood educators' efforts to reconcile the professional and personal dimensions. The tensions occur 'across' the two dimensions, 'within' the dimensions and 'between' the two dimensions.

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field (Grenfell, 2008) provide effective thinking tools for understanding the tension that exists across the two dimensions for the early childhood educators. Habitus is used to define the internalised, unconscious dispositions people develop through immersion in the lived cultural positions they inhabit (Zipin & Brennan, 2003). A person's primary habitus is developed during childhood and their career choice or profession is closely associated with the primary habitus. Changes that occur in the field, for example the implementation of new regulations as has occurred in the early childhood field, exert forces that can lead to substantial shifts in the norms of the field. To accommodate change it becomes necessary for people to make changes to their disposition and this is referred to as a

secondary habitus. Where forces in the field embody practices that are too uncomfortable, tensions arise between the primary and secondary habitus (Grenfell & James, 2004).

In this study, the implementation of the regulations imposes new norms and values into the spaces and processes of the early childhood field imposing different agendas and expectations viewed as being incompatible with the exiting dispositions of the inhabitants of that field. For the early childhood educators, the new regulatory regime presents a secondary habitus to be scaffolded onto the current dynamic primary habitus. The new regulatory framework presents as a force in their field that is experienced as dissonant with their habitus. This was a pivotal moment for the early childhood educators as they experienced change in their professional practices. The tension is evidence of the disruption the early childhood educators experience as they attempt to accommodate a secondary habitus associated with these changes into their primary habitus (their values and beliefs). The new regulatory framework impacts significantly on their personal dimensions, established within their primary habitus from a young age, and their professional dimensions, presenting as a secondary habitus that was accommodated into their primary habitus over time.

On a day-to-day basis early childhood educators also experienced tensions 'within' and 'between' the two dimensions. This arose through attempting to balance the professional dimension and the personal dimension under the new regime. This experience of tension, within and between the dimensions, was understood by the early childhood educators, and very clearly articulated across the five categories of description.

Intensification of the job, and encroachment of the performative gaze, emerged as major factors that created tensions 'within' the dimensions and 'between' the dimensions for the early childhood educators. Tensions arose as they struggled to reconcile the impact of these factors on the professional and personal dimensions. Intensification of the job challenged the early childhood educators as they experienced an increase in the number of tasks to be accomplished without an equivalent increase in sufficient resources or time. Within the professional dimension the early childhood educators experienced "deprofessionalisation" (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, p. 48) as they felt their professional practices were being

overtaken by the need to enact decisions and carry out tasks prescribed by other people. They experienced "de-skilling" (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, p. 48) as they shifted their mindfulness and time allocation away from their core business to completing the tasks required by others. Between the two dimensions, troubling of the work life balance created tension. Increased professional practices manifested in an encroachment of the early childhood educators' work life into their home and family life. The early childhood educators' approach to maintaining their status as competent educator within the intensified environment was to move time allocated for their personal life to their professional life. According to Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008), educators work to manage "new demands in order to maintain their social recognition as a competent educator … a recognition that is a central aspect of their professional identity" (p. 48). It was necessary to the early childhood educators that they retain the respect of the staff at the centre, the centre stakeholders, their colleagues in the wider early childhood sector and the community by accomplishing the prescribed professional tasks regardless of the toll taken within and between the professional and personal dimensions.

The performative gaze generated significant tension within and between the professional and personal dimensions. The performative gaze embodies the focus of the gazer toward a specific target (Pejsa et al., 2013). In the case of this study, the gaze enabled by the regulations focuses towards the early childhood educators. Within the professional dimension, the early childhood educators experienced the persistent scrutiny of their administration performance, their management performance, their leadership performance and their pedagogical performance (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003). Based on the intensification of their job, the early childhood educators faced the strain of managing the attribution of sufficient professional application to each performance. The emotional contribution, extracted to manage these performances, was experienced in a highly personal manner (Ball, 2003) producing a strain between the two dimensions. According to Ball (2003) stresses such as these are "often internalized and set the care of the self against duty to others" (p. 216). Under the performative gaze, the early childhood educators persevered with their expected performance. Dealing with the tension existing between the professional and personal dimensions, however, was experienced as intense personal stress, discomfort and disillusionment.

222

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided discussion around the findings of Chapter 4. The categories of description and dimensions of variation have been interrogated in relation to the literature relevant to this study.

Five conceptions of the impact of regulations were identified in the early childhood educators' structures of awareness. These conceptions reveal a deepening realisation of the impact of regulations, transitioning from viewing regulations as an external entity to experiencing regulations internally as their being, knowing and doing early childhood education is challenged.

The qualitatively different ways early childhood educators experience regulation are significant for gaining a deeper understanding about the impact the implementation of regulation has on educators. The implications associated with this study are discussed in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 6.   CONCLUSION

## 6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 the purpose of this study, to discover the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators conceptualise the impact of regulation on their profession, was presented. Chapter 2 consisted of a review of the relevant literature. Phenomenography was the selected research approach and the justification, outline and overview of the method were provided in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 provided a detailed account of the research findings with respect to the early childhood educators' experience of regulation. The findings were explained in the outcome space as referential and structural components associated with five categories of description and two dimensions of variation. In Chapter 5 a discussion of the conceptions, held by 25 early childhood educators in relation to the impact of regulation, was presented. These conceptions reflected a deepening understanding of the impact of regulation on their personal and professional worlds.

In this chapter, the contribution this study makes to the early childhood field and the phenomenographic field will be examined. The application of a phenomenographic approach for its effectiveness in answering the research question will be reviewed, followed by a discussion around the implications of the research for field. Limitations of the study will be acknowledged. Suggestions around further opportunities for research and recommendations for the future are provided followed by a chapter conclusion.

## 6.2  Contributions of the Study

This research contributes to the fields of early childhood research and phenomenographic research. This study focuses specifically on the implementation of regulation in the early childhood education field as opposed to regulation that is applied to schools or tertiary contexts. The National Quality Framework is particular to the early childhood education field in Australia and can therefore be experienced only by inhabitants of that field. As a result of this, the research contributes insights specific to the early childhood research field.

The methodological elaboration, as explained in Chapter 3 and created for the data collection and data analysis processes for this study, contributes to the phenomenographic research field. The methodological elaboration offers alternate approaches within the phenomenographical research approach. Additionally, the use of phenomenography to investigate issues relevant to the early childhood field broadens the scope of phenomenography as a research methodology. These contributions will be discussed further below.

### 6.2.1 Early childhood field contribution.

This research contributes to the ongoing debate around regulation implementation in the education field generally and in the early childhood field specifically. This study investigated the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators conceptualise the impact of regulations on their profession. The study was carried out immediately following the introduction of the National Quality Framework to the Australian early childhood sector. At the time, no other published research into the impact of regulation resulting from this particular policy implementation was available, making this study timely and significant.

This study, occurring at the time of the implementation of the National Quality Framework, is significant because it adds to the research available in the literature around the impact of regulations on early childhood educators. This research revealed that the early childhood educators expressed support for the National Quality Framework acknowledging the benefits it provides in terms of equity for stakeholders Australia wide (evidenced through Category 1); however, they also expressed significant dissatisfaction with the lived experience of the impact of regulations. Across Categories 2 - 5 the lived experience of the impact of regulation upon their profession was discussed as significant stress resulting from increased administration, diminished opportunities to work with the children, loss of autonomy and performance scrutiny. For the participants, the implementation of the regulations was considered significant, rapid and overwhelming. As has been noted in this study these changes have been imposed upon the early childhood education and care workforce via technologies of policy and regulation (Ball, 2000). The burden of regulation was prominent throughout the data in this study and was presented by the early childhood educators as creating barriers for success in their profession.

A noteworthy impact of regulatory change reported in the literature prior to this study was the high burnout levels of staff with substantial numbers of early childhood educators leaving the sector (Productivity Commission, 2011). This impact was corroborated by the findings in this study. The early childhood educators in this study demonstrated symptoms of burnout and talked about the possibility of leaving the profession. Reducing their employment commitment (i.e. going part-time) was a step that a number of the early childhood educators planned to take in the next year following the interview. This continuing trend of the impact of regulations prompting an exodus from the profession, and therefore the loss of significant experience and leadership, indicates that the experience of imposed regulatory change is still an area of concern requiring management by the stakeholders of, and in, the field.

This study has demonstrated that early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation on their profession in a variety of different ways. The early childhood educators conceive that their profession is impacted by regulation and that variation exists in the way this phenomenon is experienced. Whilst the findings of this study are specific in time, they may stimulate further discussion with regard to regulatory change in the early childhood field.

### 6.2.2 Methodological contribution.

Phenomenography was the adopted research approach for this study. A methodological elaboration across the data collection processes was developed for this study in order to ensure connectedness to the real world experiences of early childhood educators. The enhancement to the usual data collection processes of semi-structured interviews in phenomenography saw each participant construct an arts-based plate that depicted their lived experience of regulation as an early childhood educator. Such an elaboration acted as an anchor for the participants and the researcher throughout the interviews and conversations with each participant were deepened as they related their comments to various aspects of their arts-based plates.

Initially, the methodological elaboration was developed in response to concerns expressed relating to the effectiveness of interviews as a solo data collection technique (Bahn & Barratt-Pugh, 2011), alongside the identified need to privilege

contextual understandings in order to build agency for participants. Therefore, the data collection process was conducted in two stages. The first was the development, by the participants, of an arts-inspired plate and the second was the semi-structured interviews using the arts-inspired plates as an anchor.

Whilst the most common technique for generating data in phenomenography is the semi-structured interview, they often involve discussion and questioning in response to information provided in the interview alone. The semi-structured interviews are flexible, with open-ended questions and the chance to explore issues that arise spontaneously (Berg, 2009) and provide a "verbatim depiction of speech" representing the participants real world (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, p. 1273). However, it has been noted, that interviews may not always be the most appropriate format through which to collect data (Bowden, 2005). For some participants discourse may not be the most appropriate way to express their lived experience and they may even struggle to explain the essence of their experiences or indeed be willing and/or able to unpack their revelations spontaneously. The quality of the data collected also relies upon the questioning and probing conducted by the interviewer and this necessitates perceptive skills on their behalf. As a phenomenographer the researcher aimed to ensure that she created the optimum conditions for each participant so that they may reveal as much of their lived experience as possible and potentially even expose possibly previously unacknowledged experiences or understandings. This process required a significant level of expertise in terms of being aware of what the participant was revealing and responding appropriately with probing questions within the interview based on the information provided at that point in time. It has been noted in the literature that a novice phenomenographer may struggle to successfully illicit the depth of understanding of the lived experience of a phenomenon (Bowden, 2005) and so following critical reflection upon these possible limitations of interviews as a single data collection technique in phenomenography, it was decided to elaborate upon the methodology. It was essential that the design of the elaboration be authentic to the context of the early childhood educators and their practice contexts.

By engaging in collaborative critical reflection (Henderson & Noble, 2015), the decision to include creation in the arts as a stage in the data collection process was

reached. A methodological elaboration incorporating a data generation process involving two stages was devised. In the first stage, the participants engaged in the creation of a plate of their own choosing in their own time unimpeded by the presence or interruption of the researcher. This space provided the participant with the opportunity to reflect upon, express and represent their individual lived experiences of the phenomenon under study through the creation of an arts-inspired plate. The second stage of the data collection in this study saw the significant contribution that the arts-inspired plate made to enrich the interview process.

The interview commenced with discussion of or around the arts-inspired plate and throughout the interview reference was made to the plate by either the participant or the researcher as the need or opportunity arose. As such, the arts-inspired plate provided inspiration and conduits for expression as acknowledged in the arts based research literature (Knowles & Coles, 2008). In this study, the piece of created art was discussed in relation to how it was created, the transformation of understanding that developed as a result of creation, as well as to exposing what the final piece represented. Throughout the interviews and the following data analysis process, it became evident that the arts-inspired plate promoted deeper and wider explanations by the participants and at the same time impacted the researcher's understandings in the same way. From the participants perspective this was revealed through comments made during the interview relating to their arts-inspired plate. Comments included, "While I was making my plate I realised …" (P21), "You can see here by the amount of colour …" (P01) and "As I hammered the nails in I felt the ends poking into my body just like the regulations do." (P18). From the researcher's perspective, the arts-inspired plate provided a focus for the interview and inspiration for questioning and acknowledgements that encouraged further elaboration on behalf of the participant.

During the data analysis process, reviewing the arts-inspired plates in parallel with the associated transcripts enabled greater clarity of understanding as there was time to step back from both data collections and reflect upon the awareness demonstrated by the participant. The inclusion of the arts-inspired plate provided significant support in the discovery of the focus, field and fringe of the participant's awareness. In essence, this dual data collection, analysis and continual critical reflection between plates and transcripts became a process of triangulation for the researcher, enabling

interpretation across the visual and dialectical discourse throughout the study. As confirmed in the research literature, to establish validity and reliability within this study the methodological elaboration allowed the researcher to confirm that data from each participant across the two sources. In this thesis, the phenomenographic methodological elaboration has been described clearly and accurately across the research design, data collection and analysis as well as in the presentation of the findings. The description illustrates the unique contribution that such a contextually relevant additional data source can make in terms of increased understandings of the participants experiences and connecting and re-connecting the researcher to the researched. This elaboration makes a unique contribution to the methodological approach of phenomenography.

### 6.2.3    Research field contribution.

The intent of research is to bring new awareness or new knowledge to a topic. Phenomenography was developed in Sweden in the 1970s as a research approach to investigate experiences of learning. Since its inception phenomenographic research approaches have been developed across a variety of contexts such as engineering, business, nursing and ICT and for a variety of purposes. In this study, new ways of experiencing workplace regulatory regime were revealed demonstrating the appropriateness of the continued application of phenomenography across fields outside of learning. To date, the number of researchers who have applied phenomenography to the field of early childhood remains limited. The outcomes of this project, promotes phenomenography as relevant to research in the early childhood field.

Phenomenography is distinctive in its ability to reveal and uncover relevant, and sometimes closely held, experiences relating to a particular phenomenon. The findings of the research project demonstrated that through the use of phenomenography the lived experiences of the early childhood educators were made visible. The lived experiences of the participants in relation to the identified phenomenon were discovered and described. The phenomenon itself was not explained, but rather, how the participants experienced it. The insights revealed through this phenomenographic approach were presented as a collective meaning of the group experience. In using the second order perspective of phenomenography the

early childhood educators' utterances were gathered, analysed and presented in a format that ensured their voices were heard; voices possibly rendered silent by other methods. Phenomenography provided the possibility for the participants to collectively describe their understandings of the impact of regulation and have these understandings presented in their own words rather than those of a third party.

 No studies to date, using the phenomenographic research approach to explore this phenomenon in relation to these participants, have been undertaken. This study provides an alternate model of application of phenomenography to research therefore adding diverse perspectives to the research field

## 6.3 Phenomenography as a Research Approach

The aim of this study was to discover and describe the group of early childhood educators' experiences of the impact of regulation on their profession. This study was not an attempt to explain the regulations or to provide suggestions for implementing regulations. It was also not the remit of this study to explore or describe the range of experiences or the individual interpretations of the regulations for each individual in the group. Instead, it was the collective early childhood educators' understandings of the impact of regulation from a second order perspective that was sought.

The intent of phenomenography is to elicit and describe variations in the ways that a group of people conceive or understand a particular phenomenon in their world. Phenomenography presents the collective voice of the participants. Hearing the collective voice of a group of people concerning a phenomenon provides a perspective of genuine experiences that can remain hidden or unspoken. Revealing a lived experience of a phenomenon by uttering the unspoken, can increase understandings of the agency and the inhibitions encumbered within the phenomenon. Phenomenography was therefore selected as the most appropriate methodological research approach to use to achieve the aims of this study.

The phenomenographical research design undertaken in this study was outlined in Chapter 3. A discussion around the suitability of phenomenography as an approach to achieve the aims of this study will require a brief revisiting of the main points of this research design. The data were collected for this study across two stages. Stage

one involved the creation of an arts-inspired plate and stage two consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews using the arts-inspired plate as a prompt and anchor throughout. The relationship between the participants and the phenomenon was explored through the data collection and analysis process and a distinct number of qualitatively different ways of conceptualising the phenomenon were revealed. These different ways of understanding a phenomenon were represented as five different categories of description. Two dimensions of variation revealing deeper understandings also emerged. The categories of description are logically related to one another and, along with the dimensions of variation, this structured set is the outcome space (Akerlind, 2005c). The outcome space provides a way of looking at and describing the range of possible ways the early childhood educators conceptualise the phenomenon of the impact of regulation on their profession holistically.

This study, as indicated above, has provided an extensive insight into the lived experiences of the group of early childhood educator participants in relation to the impact of regulation on their profession. The aim of this study, which was to discover qualitatively different ways that early childhood educators experience the impact of regulation on their profession, has therefore been met. As a result, it is also a validation of phenomenography as the appropriate methodological research approach for this study. Phenomenography was an appropriate research tool to collect and analyse the data, and reveal the collective voice of the participants in relation to the phenomenon under study.

## 6.4 Implications of the Study

As presented above this study offers further understandings of the impact of regulatory regimes within the early childhood education sector. By highlighting the experiences of the early childhood educators in relation to the impact of regulation on their profession, this study provides a means for contributing to the discussion around regulatory implementation.

The research revealed that the volume of compliance resulting from the regulations is inhibiting the ongoing professional commitment of the early childhood educators. A lighter regulatory touch, offering a more gradual approach to change, is suggested.

The introduction of new regulations implemented over an extended period of time allowing for familiarisation and adjustments on behalf of both the early childhood workforce and governing bodies offers opportunities for smoother, less stressful transitions to changed regulatory environments

Nutbrown (2012) noted that growth in overall knowledge provides early childhood educators with the skills and confidence to adequately perform the technicist requirements to meet the regulations whilst also facilitating children's learning in a manner reflective of their own values and beliefs. The researcher of this study also notes that good quality ongoing professional development offers early childhood educators the opportunity to build upon their existing knowledge base and keep up-to-date with relevant research, practices and initiatives. Early childhood educators engaging in ongoing professional development may experience a growth in knowledge and understanding around working with children within a regulatory framework. Knowledge growth has the possibility of enhancing the confidence of the early childhood educator, which in turn may lead to greater advocacy for the children, themselves, their staff and their community. It is the view of the researcher that ongoing professional development offered for early childhood educators in a manner that privileges a sustainable life work balance has the possibility of providing opportunities for knowledge growth that in turn may lead to the successful management of the demands of the regulatory regime.

It was noted, by the participants in this study, that through collaboration with colleagues, either individually or in groups, increased understanding around knowing how to interact with and do the regulations provided confidence in managing the onerous task. The encouragement of collegial collaboration leads to strong networks and social links, which in turn become places of learning and support within professional communities. Collaborative critical reflection (Henderson & Noble, 2015) is a process through which discussion of shared concerns and collegial problem solving may occur. Facilitation of opportunities for early childhood educators to engage in informed collaborative critical reflection offers the possibility of reducing the burden of regulations.

It is hoped that the findings in this study potentially promote reflection around approaches to regulation implementation and the resulting impact on early childhood

educators in contemporary contexts. It is important to create an early childhood education and care context where compliance can be achieved without loss of autonomy or engagement with core business. Sadly, what emerges from the data is that early childhood educators seldom have the opportunity, time or space to step back and reflect so as to view the regulation process from a more manageable perspective.

## 6.5 Limitations of the Study

In keeping with the presentation of a research project, the possible limitations of this study will be discussed. The implementation of the National Quality Framework was a particular event that occurred at a particular time in a particular context. As such, this study saw this is a pivotal moment where the educators experienced change in their practice and themselves. The National Quality Framework was introduced into the Australian early childhood sector on 1 January 2012. Regulations were associated with the National Quality Framework and the interest of this study was the ways in which a group of early childhood educators conceived of the phenomenon of the impact of these regulations on their profession. The aim of this study was to investigate what were the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation (resulting from the National Quality Framework) on their profession. To achieve this a phenomenographic approach was taken to enact the investigation. As with most research approaches phenomenography takes a particular stance for data generation, analysis and presentation. Phenomenography, for example, does not permit the identification of how many, or what proportion of, early childhood educators fit into each category of description. The use of an alternate research approach may enable the development of different information and outcomes in relation to the topic.

The participants in this study were drawn from the southwest corner of Queensland, albeit from across a number of different contexts. The study revealed the collective descriptions of the early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their profession from this particular group. The supervision of implementation of the National Quality Framework is the responsibility of ACECQA, who in turn delegates the task to the regulatory bodies in each state in Australia. There is a variety of different organisations who have been awarded the role of regulatory body

across the states of Australia and it cannot be assumed that every organisation approaches the implementation of the task in exactly the same way. It therefore follows that early childhood educators from other locations and contexts around the state or Australia may have had different experiences and therefore understandings of the impact of regulations on their profession. As a consequence of this, the outcomes of this study cannot be viewed as a complete representation of all of the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation on their profession.

As discussed in the study, particular early childhood educators undertaking designated roles within early childhood services were approached for the study. The early childhood educators fulfilled the role of either centre director or early childhood teacher (as classified under ACECQA). The researcher did not interview staff who were not in these roles or who fulfilled other designated roles within an early childhood centre. This further signifies the need for caution when generalising the results for all staff in all early childhood centres.

The research study was undertaken in response to a particular event and the participants were interviewed at a particular point in time. Throughout the study, these two anchor points have been acknowledged. Phenomenography as a research approach seeks the lived experience of people at a particular point in time and as such, it is not assumed that if the study were repeated identical results would be produced. Additionally, the interviews took place soon after the introduction of the NQF. In a report on research conducted with providers of education and care, developed by ACECQA (2013), it was noted that a portion of the administrative burden was driven by the transition from the previous system to the NQF. Whilst participants in this study did not articulate this point, it may be a pertinent factor. Participants may have experienced stress resulting from the process of transitioning across systems. It is therefore acknowledged that the same phenomenon may be understood differently if the study were conducted at a different time and in a different context.

Phenomenography as a research approach requires the interviewer be adept at asking appropriate probing questions in situ. The phenomenographic approach limits the use of a fully structured interview protocol because of the need for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions that are responsive to the information provided by the interviewee during the interview session (Bucks & Oakes, 2011). All of the possible questions the researcher may need to ask cannot be conceived or generated during the pre-interview preparation period because of the unknown nature of the contents of the interviewees' responses. The process of undertaking pilot interviews assists the interviewer to become accustomed to developing appropriate questions in situ so as to probe the interviewee for deeper understandings. A failure to adequately design and conduct the pilot interview process may significantly impact upon the ability of the researcher to successfully probe the participant's understandings during the main interview process. Recommendations for future research, arising from the recognition of the limitations of this study, are presented in the following section. Additional recommendations, not specifically noted as limitations of this study, but arising as further possibilities as a result of this study are also included.

## 6.6 Suggestion for Future Research

This study has demonstrated that early childhood educators understand the impact of regulation on their profession in a variety of different ways. This study has found that early childhood educators conceive that their profession is impacted by regulation and that variation exists in the way this phenomenon is experienced. Further investigations could build on this study and contribute to the ongoing conversation around the impact of regulation on the early childhood sector in particular and the education sector more broadly.

Further research into regulation implementation would benefit from the additional understandings of the challenges facing educators. A number of perspectives for investigation arise from the discussion around the limitations of this study and are presented below. Recommendations for further investigations, not emanating from the limitations of this study, are also offered.

Recommendation 1: Investigation of early childhood educators' conceptions from different contexts.

It was noted above that the participants in this study were sourced from southeast Queensland early childhood contexts. It was also noted that a variety of regulatory bodies across Australia are tasked with the implementation of the National Quality Framework. Investigating the conceptions of early childhood educators in relation to the implementation of regulations from alternate contexts would broaden the findings base.

Recommendation 2: Investigation of understandings expressed by other staff members across early childhood sectors.

The participants in this study were either centre directors or classified early childhood teachers. There are a number of designated roles within the early childhood sector and investigations relating to the impact of regulations from the perspective of other staff may provide broader evidence of the effects of such regulation.

Recommendation 3: Investigation of early childhood educators' conceptions further along the timeline.

The National Quality Framework was implemented on 1 January 2012. The interviews were conducted from May to December 2013 – approximately 18 months after the implementation. Inquiries into the experiences of early childhood educators four years or more from the implementation date would undoubtedly provide new and alternate perspectives on the implementation of regulation in the sector.

Recommendation 4: Investigation of understandings expressed by other early childhood educator stakeholders.

Investigations relating to regulation implementation across the literature tends to focus on those tasked with implementing the regulations, ignoring others who inhabit the periphery. In the early childhood context there are a number of stakeholders who are closely involved with centres, but appear to exist outside the central arena. For example, parents and guardians are regularly closely involved with their centre as they take on positions on management committees, fundraising committees, working

bee committees and parent rosters. The experiences of stakeholders such as these in relation to the impact of regulations would provide other views not yet sought.

Recommendation 5: Cultivate additional collaborative approaches for data generation in phenomenographic studies.

As has been presented in this study, interviews as a form of data collection in phenomenography may be inhibitive for some participants. The aim of phenomenographic research is to discover the qualitatively different ways people experience a phenomenon. The use of the arts-inspired plate in this study facilitated the whole interview process and the analysis procedure that followed. The success of this methodological elaboration suggests additional collaborate techniques would value add to the phenomenographic approach.

Recommendation 6: Use the arts as data collection processes in conjunction with other data collection methods.

The use of the arts-inspired plate in this study enabled the researcher to focus closely on the information provided by the participant and ask appropriate questions that aided in revealing significant data. This experience suggests that pairing the use of the arts as a data generation approach with alternate research approaches may also offer the opportunity to gain more in-depth data.

Recommendation 7:  Investigation of conceptions of early childhood educators' working in centres with different management structures.

It was noted above that the participants in this study were sourced from a variety of southeast Queensland early childhood contexts. The management of the centre was not a consideration when building the participant list.  Investigating the conceptions of early childhood educators from contexts with different management structures would broaden the findings base.

## 6.7 Conclusion

The phenomenon of regulatory impact was investigated through this study. The regulation in focus in this study occurred as a result of the implementation of the National Quality Framework. The National Quality Framework was introduced to the

early childhood sector on 1 January 2012. The qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understood the impact of regulation on their profession was discovered. This thesis provides an account of the investigation.

Phenomenography was the research approach selected to conduct the investigation. Through the use of the phenomenographic approach, 25 early childhood educators were interviewed concerning their experiences of the implementation of regulations associated with the National Quality Framework. The early childhood educators' descriptions were analysed and five categories of description and two dimensions of variation were discovered. In keeping with phenomenography, the categories of description and the dimensions of variation were presented in an outcome space in Chapter 4. The qualitatively different ways early childhood educators understood the impact of regulation were:

> Category 1: The impact of regulation was experienced as enabling guardianship

> Category 2: The impact of regulation was experienced as complicating administration

> Category 3: The impact of regulation was experienced as interrupting core business

> Category 4: The impact of regulation was experienced as being accountable

> Category 5: The impact of regulation was experienced as scrutiny of performance.

Two dimensions of variation offering a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the collective group evident in each category were discovered:

> 1. professional dimension
> 2. personal dimension.

Phenomenography seeks to explore variation in the ways people conceive a phenomenon in their world (Marton, 1986). Phenomenography presents the collective voice of the participants, therefore having the potential to reveal genuine experiences that may otherwise remain hidden or unspoken.

The data collection technique utilised in this study was enhanced by a methodological elaboration. The participants in this study were asked to create an arts-inspired plate prior to the interview and to bring it with them to the interview. The arts-inspired plate was referred to throughout the interview. This methodological elaboration provides a comprehensive framework that could broaden the ways researchers work in phenomenography across a variety of contexts.

It is hoped that through the findings presented in this study further discussion around broad workforce development within changing regulatory contexts will be stimulated. The inclusion of discussion around supported professional development, more gradual regulatory implementation and encouragement of collaborative critical reflections is suggested in this study. In conclusion, this present study adds to the body of knowledge around the impact of regulation and directly addresses the empirical studies investigating early childhood educators' experiences of the impact of regulation on their profession.

# REFERENCES

Abbott-Shim, M., Lambert, R., & McCarty, F. (2000). Structural model of Head Start classroom quality. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 15*(1), 115-134. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(99)00037

Ackerman, D. (2004). States' efforts in improving the qualifications of early care and education teachers. *Educational Policy, 18*(2), 311-337. doi:10.1177/0895904803262145

Ackerman, D. (2005). Getting teachers from here to there: Examining issues related to an early care and education teacher policy. *Early Childhood Research and Practice, 7*(1). Retrieved from http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v7n1/ackerman.html

Ackerman, D. (2006). The costs of being a childcare teacher: Revisiting the problem of low wages. *Educational Policy, 20*(1), 85-112. doi:10.1177/0895904805285283

Agbenyega, J., & Klibthong, S. (2012). Transforming selves for inclusive practice: Experiences of early childhood preservice teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(5), 66-77. doi:10.14221/ajte.2012v37n5.2

Akerlind, G. (2005a) Learning about phenomenography: Interviewing, data analysis and the qualitative research paradigm. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 63-73). Melbourne Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Åkerlind, G. (2005b). Phenomenographic methods: A case illustration. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 103-127). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Akerlind, G. (2005c) Ways of experiencing being a university researcher. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 145-155). Melbourne Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Akerlind, G., Bowden, J., & Green, P. (2005). Learning to do phenomenography: Reflective discussion. In J. Bowden & P. Green, (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 74-102). Melbourne Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Alvestad, M., Duncan, J., & Berge, A. (2009). New Zealand ECE teachers talk about Te Whāriki. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, 6*(1), 3-19. http://www.teacherswork.ac.nz/journal/volume6_issue1/alvestad.pdf

Andersson, E., Willman, A., Sjostrom-Strand, A., & Borglin, G. (2015). Registered nurses' description of caring: A phenomenographic interview study. *BioMed Central Nursing, 14*(16), 1-10. doi:10.1186/s12912-015-0067-9

Apple, P., & McMullen, M. (2007). Envisioning the impact of decisions made about early childhood professional development systems by different constituent groups. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 8*(3), 255-264. doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.3.255

Arndt, S., & Tesar, M. (2016). A more-than-~~social~~ movement: The post-human condition of quality in the early years. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 17*(1), 16-25. doi:10.1177/1463949115627896

Arthur, L., Beecher, B., Death, E., Dockett, S., & Farmer, S. (2015). P*rogramming and planning in early childhood settings* (6th ed.). Melbourne, Victoria: Cengage Learning.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L., & Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed.). Belmot, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Ashworth, P., & Lucas, U. (1998): What is the 'world' of phenomenography? *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 42(*4), 415-431. doi:10.1080/0031383980420407

Ashworth, P., & Lucas, U. (2000): Achieving empathy and engagement: A
    practical approach to the design, conduct and reporting of
    phenomenographic research. *Studies in Higher Education, 25*(3), 295-308.
    doi:10.1080/713696153

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2011a). *Education
    and Care Services National Regulations* [Explanatory Statement].
    Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Author. Retrieved from
    http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/updates/explanatorystatements/education
    _national_regulations_es.pdf

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2011b). *Guide to
    the National Quality Framework*. Sydney, New South Wales: ACECQA.

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2013a). *Guide to
    the National Quality Framework*. Retrieved from
    http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/national-quality-
    framework-resource-kit

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2013b). *Guide to
    the National Quality Standard*. Retrieved from
    http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/the-national-
    quality-standard

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2014). *Guide to the
    Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care
    Services National Regulations 2011*. Retrieved from
    http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-regulations

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2015). *Report on
    National Quality Framework and regulatory burden: Wave III*. Retrieved
    from
    http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/Reports/ACECQA_NQF_Regulatory_Burd
    en_Wave_III.pdf

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2016a*). Assessment and ratings.* Retrieved from http://www.acecqa.gov.au/assessments-and-ratings

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2016b). *National Law and Regulations*. Retrieved from http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-regulations

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2016c). *National Standards*. Retrieved from http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/the-national-quality-standard

Australian Government Fair Work (2016). *Hours of work*. Retrieved from https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/hours-of-work

Bahn, S., & Barratt-Pugh, L. (2011). Getting reticent young male participants to talk: Using artefact-mediated interviews to promote discursive interaction. *Qualitative Social Work, 12*(2), 186-199. doi:10.1177/1473325011420501

Baldock, P., Fitzgerald, D., & Kay, J. (2009). *Understanding early years policy.* (2nd ed.). London, England: Sage.

Ball, S. (1997). Good school/bad school: Paradox and fabrication. *British Journal of the Sociology of Education, 18*(3), 317-336.

Ball, S. (2000). Performativities and fabrications in the education economy: Towards the performative society. *Australian Educational Researcher, 27*(2), 1-24.

Ball. S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(2), 215-228. doi:10.1080/0268093022000043065

Ball, S. (2006). *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Ballet, K., & Kelchtermans, G. (2008). Workload and willingness to change: Disentangling the experience of intensification. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 40*(1), 47-67. doi:10.1080/00220270701516463

Ballet, K., & Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Struggling with workload: Primary teachers' experience of intensification. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25,* 1150-1157. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.012

Ballet, K., Kelchtermans, G., & Loughran, J. (2006). Beyond intensification towards a scholarship of practice: Analysing changes in teachers' work lives. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 12*(2), 209-229. doi:10.1080/13450600500467415

Banks, G. (2001). *Challenges for Australia in Regulatory Reform.* Proceedings at the Regulation Reform Management and Scrutiny of Legislation, New South Wales State Parliament, Sydney. Retrieved from www.pc.gov.au

Banks, G. (2009, February 4). *Evidence-based policy making: What is it? How do we get it?* (ANU Public Lecture Series, presented at ANZSOG), Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. Retrieved from www.pc.gov.au

Banks, G. (2010, April). *Advancing Australia's 'Human Capital Agenda'.* Paper presented at The 4th Ian Little Lecture, Melbourne, Victoria. Retrieved from http://www.pc.gov.au/news-media/speeches/advancing-human-capital/advancing-human-capital.pdf

Barber, H., Cohrssen, C., & Church, A. (2014). Meeting the Australian National Quality Standards: A case study of the professional learning needs of early childhood educators. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 39*(4), 21-27. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Barblett, L. (2000). *What counts as accountability? Towards an accountability framework for the pre-primary.* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia.

Barnacle, R. (2005). Interpreting interpretation: A phenomenological perspective on phenomenography. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 47-55). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Barnard, A., McCosker, H., & Gerber, R. (1999). Phenomenography: A qualitative research approach for exploring understanding in health care. *Qualitative Health Research*, *9*(2), 212-226. doi:10.1177/104973299129121794

Barnett, W. (2002). Early childhood education. In A. Molnar (Ed.), *School reform proposals: The research evidence* (pp. 1-26). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/school-reform-proposals-the-research-evidence

Barnett, W. (2003). Better teachers, better preschools: Student achievement linked to teacher qualifications. *NIEER Preschool Policy Matters, 2*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED480818

Barnett, W. & Ackerman, D. (2006). Costs, benefits, and long-term effects of early care and education programs: Recommendations and cautions for community developers. *Community Development, 37*(2), 86-100. doi:10.1080/15575330609490209

Barney, K. (2010). Gendering Aboriginalism: A performative gaze on Indigenous Australian Women. *Cultural Studies Review, 16*(1), 212-239. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcus20/current

Barry, D. (1996). Artful inquiry: A symbolic constructivist approach to social science research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 2*(4), 411-438. doi:10.1177/107780049600200403

Bartlett, L. (2004). Expanding teacher work roles: A resource for retention or a recipe for overwork. *Journal of Education Policy, 19*(5), 565-582. doi:10.1080/0268093042000269144

Bates, A. (2013). Transcending systems thinking in education reform: Implications for policy-makers and school leaders. *Journal of Education Policy, 28*(1), 38-54. doi:10.1080/02680939.2012.684249

Beck, J. (2008). Governmental professionalism: Re-professionalising or de-professionalising teachers in England? *British Journal of Educational Studies, 56*(2), 119-143. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8527.2008.00401.x

Bennett, J. (2003). Starting strong: The persistent division between care and education. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 1*(1), 21-48. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/ecra/1/1

Bennett, J. (2007, February). *Vision into practice: Making quality a reality in the lives of young children*. Paper presented as the Centre for Early Childhood Development & Education International Conference, Dublin, Ireland. Retrieved from http://www.cecde.ie/english/pdf/Vision%20into%20Practice/Bennett.pdf

Bennett, J. (2008). *Early childhood services in the OECD countries: Review of the literature and current policy in the early childhood field* (Innocenti Working Paper No. 2008-01). Florence, Italy: UNICEF

Berg, B. (2009). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Biersteker, L., Dawes, A., Hendricks, L., & Tredoux, C. (2016). Centre-based early childhood care and education program quality: A South African study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 36*, 334-344. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.01.004

Blundell, R., Costa Dias, M., Costas, M., & Shaw, J. (2016). Female labor supply, human capital, and welfare reform. *Econometrica, 84*(5), 1705-1753. doi:10.3982/ECTA11576

Booth, S. (1997). On phenomenography, learning and teaching. *Higher Education Research and Development, 16* (20), 135-158. doi:10.1080/0729436970160203

Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory, 7*(1), 14-25. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/202060

Bowden, J. (2000). The nature of phenomenographic research. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 1-18). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Bowden, J. (2005). Reflections on the phenomenographic team research project. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 11-31*).* Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Bowden, J., & Walsh, E. (Eds.). (2000) *Phenomenography*. Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Bowman, B., Donovan, M. S., & Burns, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers.* Washington, DC: National Research Council.

Bown, K., & Sumsion, J. (2007). Voices from the other side of the fence: Early childhood teachers' experiences with mandatory regulatory requirements. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 8*(1), 30-49. doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.1.30

Bown, K., & Sumsion, J. (2016). Generating visionary policy for early childhood education and care: Politicians' and early childhood sector advocate/activists' perspectives. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 17*(2), 192-209. doi: 10.1177/1463949116641511

Bradbeer, J., Healey, M., & Kneale, P. (2004). Undergraduate geographers' understandings of geography, learning and teaching: A phenomenographic study. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 28*(1), 17-34. doi:10.1080/0309826042000198611

Bradbury, A. (2012). "I feel absolutely incompetent": Professionalism, policy and early childhood teachers. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 13*(3), 175-186. doi:10.2304/ciec.2012.13.3.175

Bradbury, A. (2014). Early childhood assessment: Observation, teacher "knowledge" and the production of attainment data in early years settings. *Comparative Education, 50*, 322-339. doi:10.1080/03050068.2014.921371

Braun, A., Maguire, M., & Ball, S. (2010). Policy enactments in the UK secondary school: Examining policy, practice and school positioning. *Journal of Education Policy, 25*(4), 547-560. doi:10.1080/02680931003698544

Brennan, D. (1998). *The Politics of Australian Child Care.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Brennan, D. (2007). The ABC of child care politics. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 42*(2), 213-225.

Brennan D. (ed.) (2008). *Building an international research collaboration in early childhood education and care: Background materials for a workshop funded by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY).* Sydney, New South Wales: Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW. Retrieved from https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/SPRCFile/2009_Report13_09_Early Childhood_Education_and_Care.pdf

Brennan, D., & Adamson, E. (2014). Early childhood education and care policy. In J. Bowes, R. Grace, & K. Hodge (Eds.), *Children, families and communities: contexts and consequences* (4th ed.) (pp. 255-270). South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.

Briell, J., Elen, J., Depaepe, F., & Clarebout, G. (2010). The exploration of drawings as a tool to gain entry to students' epistemological beliefs. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology, 8*(21), 655-688. Retrieved from http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=293122002011

Britto, P., Cerezo, A., & Ogbunugafor, C. (2008). How evidence can be used to inform policy: A case study of early childhood evidence-based policy development. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 40*(2), 101-118. doi:10.1007/BF03165842

Britto, P., & Ulkuer, N. (2012). Child development in developing countries: Child rights and policy implications. *Child Development, 83*(1), 92-103. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01672.x

Britto, P., Yoshikawa, H., & Boller, K. (2011). Quality of early childhood development programs in global contexts: Rationale for investment, conceptual framework and implications for equity. *Social Policy Reports of the Society for Research in Child Development, 25*(2), 3-23. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED519240

Brown, W. (2003). Neoliberalism and the end of liberal democracy. *Theory & Event, 7*(1), 1-14. doi:10.1353/tae.2003.0020

Bruce, C. (1997). *The seven faces of information literacy*. Adelaide, South Australia: Auslib Press.

Bruce, C. (1998). The phenomenon of information literacy. *Higher Education Research & Development, 17(*1), 25-43. doi:10.1080/0729436980170102

Bruce, K. & Ahmed, A. (2014). *Conceptions of professionalism: Meaningful standards of financial planning*. Surrey, England: Gower.

Bryant, S. (2014). *Queensland teachers' conceptions of creativity: A phenomenographic investigation* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland.

Bryant, D., Burchinal, M., Lau, L., & Sparling, J. (1994). Family and classroom correlates of Head Start children's developmental outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 9*(3-4), 289-309. http://www.sciencedirect.com

Bucks, G., & Oakes, W. C. (2011, June), *Phenomenography as a tool for investigating understanding of computing concepts.* Paper presented at 2011 Annual Conference & Exposition, Vancouver, BC. https://peer.asee.org/18485

Bullough Jr, R., Hall-Kenyon, K., MacKay, K., & Marshall, E. (2014). Head Start and the intensification of teaching in early childhood education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 37*, 55-63. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2013.09.006

Burchinal, M., Cryer, D., Clifford, R., & Howes, C. (2002). Caregiver training and classroom quality in child care centers. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(1), 2-11. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hads20

Burchinal, M., Roberts, J., Riggins, R., Zeisel, S., Neebe, E., & Bryant, D. (2000). Relating quality of center-based child care to early cognitive and language development longitudinally. *Child Development, 71*(2) 339-357. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cdev.2000.71.issue-2/issuetoc

Burchinal, M., Vandergift, N., Pianta, R., & Mashburn, A. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low-income children in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*, 166-176. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.10.004

Burger, K. (2010). How does early childhood care and education affect cognitive development? An international review of the effects of early interventions for children from different social backgrounds. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*, 40-165. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.11.001

Burger, K. (2012). *Early childhood care and education and equality of opportunity: Theoretical and empirical perspectives on current social challenges* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Freiburg, Freiburg im Breisgau, Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany.

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. London, England: Heinemann.

Butler-Kisber, L. (2002). Artful portrayals in qualitative inquiry: The road to found poetry and beyond. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 48*(3), 229-239. Retrieved from http://ajer.journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/ajer/article/view/328/320

Callaghan, G. (2005). Accessing habitus: Relating structure and agency through focus group research. *Sociological Research Online, 10*(*3*). Retrieved from http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/3/callaghan.html

Carneiro, P., & Heckman, J. (2003). *Human capital policy*. (IZA DP No. 821). Retrieved from www.iza.org

Castle, K., & Ethridge, E. (2003). Urgently needed: Autonomous early childhood teacher educators. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 24*(2), 111-118. doi: 10.1080/1090102030240207.

Catterall, J. (2005). Conversation and silence: Transfer of learning through the arts. *Journal of Learning Through the Arts, 1*(1), 1-12. Retrieved from http://escholarship.org/uc/item/6fk8t8xp

Centre on the Developing Child. (2007). *A science-based framework for early childhood policy: Using evidence to improve outcomes in learning, behavior, and health for vulnerable children.* Retrieved from http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Centre on the Developing Child. (2011). *Building the brain's air traffic control system: How early experiences shape the development of executive function.* Working Paper No. 11. Retrieved from http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Cheeseman, S., & Torr, J. (2009). From ideology to productivity: Reforming early childhood education and care in Australia. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 3*(1), 61-74. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/2288-6729-3-1-61

Cherry, N. (2005). Phenomenography as seen by an action researcher. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Ed.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 56-62). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press

Cleveland, G., & Hyatt, D. (2002). Child care workers' wages: New evidence on returns to education, experience, job tenure and auspice. *Journal of Population Economics, 15*(3), 575-597. doi: 10.1007/s001480100106

Cochran-Smith, M., Feiman-Nemser, S., McIntyre, D., & Demers, K. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts*. London, England: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed). London, England: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed). London, England: Routledge.

Cole, A., & Knowles, J. (2001). *Lives in context: The art of life history research.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Colley, H. (2006). Learning to labour with feeling: Class, gender and emotion in childcare education and training. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 7*(1), 15-29. doi: 10.2304/ciec.2006.7.1.15

Colmer, K., & Cornish, R. (2010). The Gowrie Story, *Reflections*, 39, 11-13. Retrieved from http://gowrievictoria.org.au/app/uploads/2016/02/reflections_winter.issue39.pdf

Comber, B., & Nixon, H. (2009). Teachers' work and pedagogy in an era of accountability. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *30*(3), 333-345. doi: 10.1080/01596300903037069

Commonwealth of Australia. House of Representatives. (2013). Early Years Quality Fund Special Account Bill Second Reading: Kate Ellis, MP. (Official Hansard). Retrieved from http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansardr%2F2664e920-4f1e-4c71-99c4-5a88ac43e482%2F0008%22

Cope, C. (2002). Educationally critical aspects of the concept of an information system. *Informing Science*, 5 (2), 67-79. Retrieved from http://inform.nu/Articles/Vol5/v5n2p067-078.pdf

Cope, C. (2004). Ensuring validity and reliability in phenomenographic research using the analytical framework of a structure of awareness. *Qualitative Research Journal, 4*(2), 5-18.

Council of Australian Governments. (2009a). *Investing in the early years: National early childhood development strategy.* Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Council of Australian Governments. (2009b). *National partnership agreement on the national quality agenda for early childhood education and care.* Retrieved from http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/nqf/nationalpartnershipagreementnqa.pdf

Cousin, G. (2009). *Researching learning in higher education: An introduction to contemporary methods and approaches*. London, England: SEDA & Routledge.

Creswell, J. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Crosswell, L., & Elliott, B. (2004, December). *Committed teachers, passionate teachers: The dimension of passion associated with teacher commitment and engagement*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of Australian Association for Research in Education, Melbourne, Victoria.

Cunha, F., & Heckman, J. (2007). The technology of skill formation. *American Economic Review, 97*(2), 31-47. doi:10.1257/aer.97.2.31

Currie, J. (2009). Healthy, wealthy, and wise: Socioeconomic status, poor health in childhood, and human capital development. *Journal of Economic Literature, 47*(1), 87-122. doi:10.1257/jel.47.1.

Dahlberg, G. (2016). An ethico-aesthetic paradigm as an alternative discourse to the quality assurance discourse. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 17*(1), 124-133. doi:10.1177/1463949115627910

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007*). Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Languages of evaluation* (2nd ed.). London, England: Falmer Press.

Dahlgren, L., & Fallsberg, M. (1991). Phenomenography as a qualitative approach in social pharmacy research. *Journal of Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 8*(4), 150-156.

Dall'Alba, G. (2000). Reflections on some faces of phenomenography. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh, (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 83-101). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Dalli, C. (2008). Pedagogy, knowledge and collaboration: Towards a ground- up perspective on professionalism. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 16*(2), 171-185. doi:10.1080/13502930802141600

Darby, A, (2008). Teachers' emotions in the reconstruction of professional self-understanding. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*, 1160-1172. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2007.02.001

Davey, G. (2009). Using Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explore narratives of transition. *Educational Research Journal, 8*(2), 276-284. doi:10.2304/eerj.2009.8.2.276

Davies, B. & Bansel, P. (2007). Neoliberalism and education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20*(3), 247-259. doi:10.1080/09518390701281751

Davies, S., & Trinidad, S. (2013). Australian early childhood educators: From government policy to university practice. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 34*(1), 73-79. doi: 10.1080/10901027.2013.758539.

Day, C. (2004). *A passion for teaching*. London, England: Routledge Falmer.

Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2007). Variations in the conditions for teachers' professional learning and development: Sustaining commitment and effectiveness over a career. *Oxford Review of Education, 33*(4), 423-443. doi:10.1080/03054980701450746

Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. *British Educational Research Journal, 32*(4), 601-616. doi:10.1080/01411920600775316.

Day, C., & Smethem, L. (2009). The effects of reform: Have teachers really lost their sense of professionalism? *Journal of Educational Change, 10*, 141-157. doi:10.1007/s10833-009-9110-5.

Dearing, E., McCartney, K., & Taylor, B. (2009). Does higher quality early child care promote low-income children's math and reading achievement in middle childhood? *Child Development, 80*(5), 1329-1349. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01336.x

Dearnley, K., & Elfer, P. (2007). Nurseries and emotional well-being: Evaluating an emotionally containing model of professional development. *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development, 27* (3), 267-279. doi:10.1080/09575140701594418

Degen, G. (2010). *A phenomenographic study exploring nursing education and practice* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, Unites States of America.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009a). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Commonwealth of Australia.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009b). *Supporting the development of young children in Australia: 2009: A snapshot.* Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Commonwealth of Australia.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009c). *Towards a national quality framework for early childhood education and care:* Report of the Expert Advisory Panel on Quality Early Childhood Education and Care. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Commonwealth of Australia.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2010a). *Educators belonging, being and becoming: Educators' guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Commonwealth of Australia.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2010b). *Information paper on the Education and Care Services National Law and*

*the proposed National Regulations*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Author.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2011). Universal access to early childhood education: Questions and answers for providers of early childhood education and child care services. Retrieved from http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/ECUA/ Documents/UA_EC

Dickinson, D. (2006). Toward a toolkit approach to describing classroom quality. *Early Education and Development, 17*(1), 177-202.

Duhn, I. (2010). "The centre is my business": Neo-liberal politics, privatisation and discourses of professionalism in New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 11*, 46-60. doi:10.2304/ciec.2010.11.1.49

Duhn, I. (2015). Making agency matter: Rethinking infant and toddler agency in educational discourse. *Discourse, 36*(6), 920-931. doi:10.1080/01596306.2014.918535

Duhn, I., & Grieshaber, S. (2016). Imagining otherwise: A (brief) Darwinian encounter with quality standards. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 17*(1), 54-64. doi:10.1177/1463949115627901

Duncan, J. (2004). Misplacing the teacher? New Zealand early childhood teachers and early childhood education policy reforms, 1984-96. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 5*(2), 160-177. doi:10.2304/ciec.2004.5.2.4

Dunkin, R. (2000). Using phenomenography to study organisational change. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh, (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 137-152). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Early Childhood Development Steering Committee. (2009). Regulation impact statement for early childhood education and care quality reforms. COAG Consultation RIS. Retrieved from http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/docs/RIS _for_early_childhood_development.doc

Early, D., Maxwell, K., Burchinal, M., Alva, S., Bender, R., Bryant, D., … Will, N. (2007).  Teachers' education, classroom quality, and young children's academic skills: Results from seven studies of preschool programs. *Child Development, 78*(2), 558-580. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01014.x

Ebbeck, M., & Waniganayake, M. (2003). *Early childhood professionals leading today and tomorrow.* Sydney, New South Wales: MacLennan & Petty.

*Education and Care Services National Regulations 2016* (NSW). Available from http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653/chap4/part 4.4/div1/reg.118

Education Council. (2014). Regulation Impact Statement for proposed options for changes to the National Quality Framework. Retrieved from http://www.deloitteacceseconomics.com.au/uploads/File/FINAL%20Edu cation%20Council%20-%20Consultation%20RIS%20for%20NQF.pdf

Edwards, J. (2003). The policy panoptic of "mutual obligations". *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 4*(1), 97-116. Retrieved from http://www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/index.php/EDEQ/issue/archive

Edwards, S., & Nuttall, J. (Eds). (2009). *Professional Learning in Early Childhood Settings*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.

Elliott, A. (2006). *Early childhood education: Pathways to quality and equity for all children*. Melbourne, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Engward, H., & Davis, G. (2015). Being reflexive in qualitative grounded theory: Discussion and application of a model of reflexivity. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 71*(7), 1530–1538. doi:10.1111/jan.12653

Entwistle, N. (1997). Introduction: Phenomenography in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *16*, 127-134.

Ewing, R. (2010). *The arts and Australian education: Realising potential*. Melbourne, Victoria: ACER Press.

Ewing, R., & Hughes, J. (2008). Arts-informed inquiry in teacher education: Contesting the myths. *European Educational Research Journal, 7*(4), 512-522. doi:10.2304/eerj.2008.7.4.512

Ewing, R., & Smith, D. (2004). Locating new epiphanies. In A. Cole, L. Neilsen, J.G. Knowles, & T. Luciani (Eds.), *Provoked by art:Theorizing arts-informed research* (pp 147-158). Halifax, NS: Backalong Books.

Farrell, L. (2010). Pierre Bourdieu on European identity: Theories of habitus & cultural capital. In C. Dowd (Ed.), *Social and Political Review* (pp. 107-116). Dublin, Ireland: Trinity College.

Fenech, M. (2006). The impact of regulatory environments on early childhood professional practice and job satisfaction: A review of conflicting discourses. *Australian Journal of Early childhood, 31* (2), 49-57. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Fenech, M. (2011). An analysis of the conceptualization of "quality" in early childhood education and care empirical research: Promoting "blind spots" as foci for future research. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 12*(2), 102-117. doi:10.2304/ciec.2011.12.2.102

Fenech, M., Giugni, M., & Bown, K. (2012). A critical analysis of the National Quality Framework: Mobilising for a vision for children beyond minimum standards. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 37*(4), 5-14. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Fenech, M., Harrison, L., Press, F., & Sumsion, J. (2010). Contributors to quality long day care: Findings from six case study centres. A summary report compiled from the Investigating Quality research study. Charles Sturt and Macquarie Universities. Retrieved from http://ccccnsw.org.au/pdf/contributors-to-quality-ldc-six-case-study-report.pdf

Fenech, M., Robertson, G., Sumsion, J., & Goodfellow, J. (2007). Working by the rules: Early childhood professionals' perceptions of regulatory

requirements. *Early Child Development and Care, 177(1)*, 93-106. doi:10.1080/03004430500329122.

Fenech, M., & Sumsion, J. (2007). Early childhood teachers and regulation: Complicating power relations using a Foucauldian lens. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 8,* 109-122. doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.2.109

Fenech, M., Sumsion, J., & Goodfellow, J. (2008). Regulation and risk: Early childhood education and care services as sites where the "laugh of Foucault" resounds. *Journal of Education Policy*, 23(1), 35-48. doi:10.1080/02680930701754039

Fenech, M., Sumsion, J., Robertson, G., & Goodfellow, J. (2008). The regulatory environment: A source of job (dis)satisfaction for early childhood professionals? *Early Child Development and Care, 178*(1), 1-14. doi:10.1080/03004430600597222

Fenech, M., Sumsion, J., & Shepherd, W. (2010). Promoting early childhood teacher professionalism in the Australian context: The place of resistance. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 11*, 89-105. doi:10.2304/ciec.2010.11.1.89

Fink, D. (2001). Two solitudes: Policy makers and policy implementers. In M. Fielding (Ed.), *Taking education really seriously: Four years hard labour* (pp. 225-237). London, England: RoutledgeFalmer

Fink, D. (2003). The law of unintended consequences: The "real" cost of top-down reform. *Journal of Educational Change, 4*(2), 105-128.

Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research, 2*(2), 209-230. doi:10.117/146879410200200205

Finley, S. (2003) Arts-based Inquiry in QI: Seven years from crisis to guerrilla warfare, *Qualitative Inquiry, 9*(2), 281-296. doi:10.1177/1077800402250965

Finley, S., & Knowles, J. (1995). Researcher as artist/artist as researcher.
*Qualitative Inquiry, 1*(1), 110-142.

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.). London,
England: Sage.

Fordham, L. (2015). *Qualitative study of the early years education program
(EYEP:Q).* Melbourne, Victoria: Children's Protection Unit.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. London:
Allan Lane.

Francis, H. (1996). Advancing phenomenography: questions of method. In G.
Dall'Alba and B. Hasselgren (Eds.), *Reflections on phenomenography:
Toward a methodology?* (pp. 35-47). Goteborg, Sweden: Acta
Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

Frostenson, M. (2015). Three forms of professional autonomy: De-
professionalisation of teachers in a new light. *Nordic Journal of Studies in
Educational Policy, 2*, 20-29. doi:10.3402/nstep.v1.28464

Gee, P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses (2nd
ed.)*.London, England: Routledge Farmer.

Gialamas, A., Mittinty, M., Sawyer, M., Zubrick, S., & Lynch, J. (2014). Child
care quality and children's cognitive and socio-emotional development:
An Australian longitudinal study. *Early Child Development & Care,
184*(7), 977-997. doi:10.1080/03004430.2013.847835

Gibbons, A. (2007). Playing the ruins: The philosophy of care in early childhood
education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood,* 8(2), 123-132.
doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.2.123

Gibson, M. (2013). I want to educate school-age children: Producing early
childhood teacher professional identities. *Contemporary Issues in Early
Childhood, 14* (2), 127-137. doi:10.2304/ciec.2013.14.2.127

Gibson, M. (2016). Contexts, policy and frameworks of early childhood and care. In J. Ailwood, W. Boyd, & M. Theobald (Eds.), *Understanding early childhood education and care in Australia: Practices and perspectives* (pp. 121-140). Sydney, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Gibson, M., McArdle, F., & Hatcher, C. (2015). Governing child care in neoliberal times: Discursive constructions of children as economic units and early childhood educators as investment brokers. *Global Studies of Childhood, 3*(3), 322-332. doi:10.1177/2043610615597149

Gibson, W. (2010). Qualitative research as a method of inquiry in education. In D. Hartas, *Educational research and inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (pp. 54-64). London, England: Continuum International.

Giorgi, A. (1999). A phenomenological perspective on some phenomenographic results on learning. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 30(2), 68-84.

Goodfellow, J. (2003). Practical wisdom in professional practice: The person in the process. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 4*(1), 48-63. doi:10.2304/ciec.2003.4.1.6

Gormley, W. (2000). Early childhood education and care regulation: A comparative perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research, 33*, 55-74. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com

Govender, I. (2006). *Learning to program, learning to teach programming: Pre- and in-service teachers' experiences of an object-oriented language* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

Grant, L, Yeandle, S., & Buckner, L. (2005). Working below potential: Women and part-time work (Working Paper Series No. 40). Manchester, England: Equal Opportunities Commission. Retrieved from www.eoc.org.uk/research

Green, P. (2005). A rigorous journey into phenomenography: From a naturalistic inquirer viewpoint. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 32-48). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Green, N., & Nolan, A. (2011). Preparing the Australian early childhood workforce for rural and remote settings: A review of the literature. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(12), 83-96. doi:10.14221/ajte.2011v36n12.3

Grenfell, M. (2008). *Pierre Bourdieu key concepts*. London, England: Acumen. Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/lib/unisouthernqld/doc

Grenfell, M., & James, D. (2004). Changing in the field-changing the field: Bourdieu and the methodological practice of educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 25*(4), 507-523. doi:10.1080/0142569042000026989

Grieshaber, S. (2000). Regulating the early childhood field. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 25*(2), 1-6. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Grieshaber, S. (2002). A national system of childcare accreditation: quality assurance or a technique of normalization? In G.S. Cannella & J.L. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Kidworld: childhood studies, global perspectives, and education* (pp. 161-180). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Grieshaber, S. (2010) Departures from tradition: The early years learning framework for Australia. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 4*(2), pp. 33-44. doi:10.1007/2288-6729-4-2-33

Grieshaber, S., & Graham, L. (2017). Equity and educators enacting The Australian Early Years Learning Framework. *Critical Studies in Education, 58*(1), 89-103. doi: 10.1080/17508487.2015.1126328

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.)*, Handbook of qualitative research* (1st ed.) (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gurwitsch, A. (1964). *The field of consciousness*. Pittsburgh, USA: Duquense University Press.

Hale-Jinks, C., Knopf, H., & Kemple, K. (2006). Tackling teacher turnover in childcare: Understanding causes and consequences, identifying solutions. *Childhood Education, 82*(4), 219-226. doi:10.1080/00094056.2006.10522826

Halfon, N., Schulman, E., & Hochstein, M. (2001). Brain development in early childhood. In N. Halfon, E. Shulman, & M. Hochstein (Eds.), *Building community systems for young children* (pp. 1-24). Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities.

Hall, C. (2004). Theorising changes in teachers' work. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 32.* Retrieved from http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/noma/theorising.change.html

Harding, T. (2008). *Parent home educators: Teaching children at home: A phenomenographic study*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education 2008 International Education Research Conference, 30th November-4th December 2008, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. Retrieved from http://www.aare.edu.au/08pap/har08557.pdf

Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14* (8), 835-854. doi:/10.1016/S0742-051X(98)00025-0

Hargreaves, A. (2005). Educational change takes ages: Life, career and generational factors in teachers' emotional responses to educational change. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 967-983. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.007

Hargreaves, A. Earl, L., Moore, S., & Manning S. (2001). *Learning to change: Teaching beyond subjects and standards*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies, 17*(1), 13-26. doi:10.1080/14725860220137345

Harris, L. (2011). Phenomenographic perspectives on the structure of conceptions: The origins, purposes, strengths, and limitations of the what/how and referential/structural frameworks. *Educational Research Review, 6*, 109-124. doi:10.1016/j.edurev.2011.01.002

Harrison, L., & Murray, E. (2012). Interconnections among family, childcare, and education. In J. Bowes, R. Grace, & K. Hodge (Eds.), *Children, families and communities: Contexts and consequences* (4th ed., pp. 117-141). South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford.

Harrison, L., Sumsion, J., Press, F., Wong, S., Fordham, L., & Goodfellow, J. (2011). *A shared early childhood development research agenda: Key research gaps 2010–2015*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia: Australia, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Retrieved May 4, 2017, from https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/area?command= record&id=214

Harwood, D., Klopper, A., Osanyin, A., & Vanderlee, M. (2013). "It's more than care": Early childhood educators' concepts of professionalism. *Early Years, 33*(1), 4-17. doi:10.1080/09575146.2012.667394

Hasselgren, B., & Beach, D. (1997). Phenomenography: A "good-for-nothing brother" of phenomenology? Outline of an analysis. *Higher Education Research & Development, 16*(2), 191-202. doi:10.1080/0729436970160206

Hatch, J., & Grieshaber, S. (2002) Child observation and accountability in early childhood education: Perspectives from Australia and the United States. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 29*(4), 227-231.

Hatch, J., Grieshaber, S., Halliwell, G., & Walsh, K. (2001). Child observation in Australia and the USA: A cross-national analysis. *Early Child Development and Care, 169*(1), 39-56. Retrieved from https://eprints.qut.edu.au

Hawkins, K. (2016). Relationships between staff, children and families. In J. Ailwood, W. Boyd, & M. Theobald (Eds.), *Understanding early childhood education and care in Australia: Practices and perspectives* (pp. 231-251). Sydney, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin

Heckman, J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science 312*(5782), 1900-1902. doi: 10.1126/science.1128898

Heckman, J. (2011). The economics of inequality: The value of early childhood education. *American Educator, 35*(Spring), 31-35. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ920516

Heckman, J. (2014). Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, strengthen the economy. Heckman. Accessed January 2016 from https://heckmanequation.org/resource/invest-in-early-childhood-development-reduce-deficits-strengthen-the-economy/

Heckman, J., & Krueger, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Inequality in America: What role for human capital policies?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Heckman, J., & Masterov, D. (2007). The productivity argument for investing in young children. *Review of Agricultural Economics, 29*(3), 446-493. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9353.2007.00359.x

Heckman, J., Stixrud, J., & Urzua, S. (2006). The effects of cognitive and noncognitive abilities on labour market outcomes and social behaviour. *Journal of Labour Economics, 24*(3), 411-482.

Hegewisch, A., & Gornick, J. (2011). The impact of work-family policies on women's employment: a review of research from OECD countries.

*Community, Work & Family, 14*(2), 119-138.
doi:10.1080/13668803.2011.571395

Helburn, S. (Ed.). (1995). *Cost, quality and child outcomes in childcare centres*.
(Technical Report). Denver, CO: Colorado University, Department of
Economics.

Henderson, R., & Noble, K. (2015). *Professional learning, induction and critical
reflection: Building workforce capacity in education.* Basingstoke,
England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hill, D. (2005). Globalisation and its educational discontents: Neoliberalisation
and its impacts on education workers' rights, pay and conditions.
*International Studies in Sociology of Education, 15*(1), 257-288.
doi:10.1080/09620210500200143

Hodgkin, R., & Newell, P. (2007). *Implementation handbook for the Convention
on the Rights of the Child.* Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations
Children's Fund.

Holligan, C. (1999). Discipline and normalisation in the nursery: The
Foucauldian Gaze. *Scottish Educational Review, 31*(2), 137-48. Retrieved
from http://www.ser.stir.ac.uk/pdf/73.pdf

Honig, S., & Hirallal, A. (1998). Which counts more for excellence in childcare
staff: Years in service, education level or ECE coursework? *Early Child
Development and Care, 145*(1), 31-46. doi:10.1080/0300443981450103

Houston, S. (2002). Reflecting on habitus, field and capital: Towards a culturally
sensitive social work. *Journal of Social Work, 2*(2), 149-167.
doi:10.1177/146801730200200203

Hotz, J., & Xiao, M. (2011). The impact of regulations on the supply and quality
of care in child-care markets. *American Economic Review, 101*(5), 1775-
1805. doi:10.1257/aer.101.5.1775

Howes, C. (1997). Children's experiences in center-based child care as a function of teacher background and adult:child ratio. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 43*, 404-425.

Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Pianta R., Bryant, D., Early, D., Clifford, R., & Barbarin, O. (2008). Ready to learn? Children's pre-academic achievement in prekindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23*, 27-50. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.05.002

Howes, C., Hamilton, C. E., & Phillipsen, L. C. (1998). Stability and continuity of child-caregiver and child-peer relationships. *Child Development, 69*(2), 418-426.

Howes, C., James, J., & Ritchie, S. (2003). Pathways to effective teaching. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 18*, 104-120. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(03)00008-5

Howes, C., Phillips, D., & Whitebook, M. (1992). Thresholds of quality: Implications for the social development of children in center-based child care. *Child Development, 63*, 449-460.

Hughes, C. (2003). An introduction to qualitative research. Retrieved from http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/hughes/researchproces s/an_introduction_to_qualitative_research.docx

Hunter, I. (1994). *Rethinking the school: Subjectivity, bureaucracy, criticism*. St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Huss, E., & Cwikel, J. (2005). Researching creations: Applying arts based research to Bedouin women's drawings. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 4*(4), 1-16. Retrieved from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/4_4/pdf/huss.pdf

Ingvarson, L., Elliott, A., Kleinhenz, E., & McKenzie, P. (2006). *Teacher education accreditation: A review of national and international trends and practices.* Australian Council for Educational Research. Retrieved from http://research.acer.edu.au/teacher_education/1

Ireland, J. (2011). *Inquiry teaching in primary science: A phenomenographic study* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland.

Irvin, L. (2005). Creating categories of description using phenomenographic data: an example of analytical process. In B. A. Knight, B. Walker-Gibbs, & A. G. Harrison (Eds.), *Researching educational capital in a technological age* (pp. 101-120). Teneriffe, Queensland: Post Pressed. Retrieved from http://hdl.cqu.edu.au/10018/18891

Irvine, R. (2006). *Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Queensland. http://hdl.cqu.edu.au/10018/19238

Irvine, S., & Farrell, A. (2013). Are we there yet? Early years reform in Queensland: Stakeholder perspectives on the introduction of funded preschool programs in long day care services. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 45*, 221-236. doi:10.1007/s13158-013-0087-0

Irvine, S., & Price, J. (2014). Professional conversations: A collaborative approach to support policy implementation, professional learning and practice change in ECEC. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 39*(3), 85-93. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Jackson, E. (1996). Work conditions in long day care in the era of accreditation. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 21*(2), 17-20.

James, D. (2011). Beginning with Bourdieu in educational research. *British Educational Research Association online resource.* Retrieved from https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/beginning-with-bourdieu-in-educational-research

Jaumotte, F. (2003). Female labour force participation: Past trends and main determinants in OECD countries. *OECD Economics Department Working Paper* (No. 376). OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/082872464507

Johansson, B., Marton, F., & Svensson, L. (1985). An approach to describing learning as change between qualitatively different conceptions. In A.L. Pines & L.H.T. West (Eds.), *Cognitive structure and conceptual change* (pp. 233-258). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Johansson, T., Svensson, L., Anderberg, E., & Alvegard, C. (2006). *Pedagogical reports: A phenomenographic view of the interplay between language use and learning*. Lund, Sweden: Lund University.

Karila, K. (2008). A Finnish viewpoint on professionalism in early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 16*(2), 210-223. doi:10.1080/13502930802141634

Kelchtermans, G. (2005). Teachers' emotions in educational reforms: Self-understanding, vulnerable commitment and micropolitical literacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 995-1006. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.009

Kelchtermans, G. (2007). Macropolitics caught up in micropolitics: The case of the policy on quality control in Flanders. *Journal of Education Policy, 22*, 471-491. doi:10.1080/02680930701390669

Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: Self-understanding, vulnerability and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching, 15*(2), 257-272. doi:10.1080/13540600902875332

Kilderry, A. (2014). Teachers in early childhood policy. *Journal of Education Policy, 29,* 242–262. doi:10.1080/02680939.2013.817612.

Kilderry, A. (2015). The intensification of performativity in early childhood education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 47*(5), 633-652. doi:10.1080/00220272.2015.1052850

Kirlin, J. (1996). What government must do well: Creating value for society. *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory, 6*(1), 161-185.

Klibthong, S. (2012). Re-imagining inclusive education for young children: A kaleidoscope of Bourdieuian theorization. *International Education Studies, 5*(4), 71-79. doi:10.5539/ies.v5n4p71

Knowles, J., & Cole, A. (2008). *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Knudsen, E., Heckman, J., Cameron, J., & Shonkoff, J. (2006). Economic, neurobiological, and behavioral perspectives on building America's future workforce. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 103*(27), 10155-10162. doi:10.1073/pnas.0600888103

Kokkinos, C. (2007). Job stressors, personality and burnout in primary school teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 77*, 229-243. doi:10.1348/000709905X90344

Kuisma, M., & Sandberg, A. (2008). Preschool teachers' and student preschool teachers' thoughts about professionalism in Sweden. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 16*(2), 186-195. doi:10.1080/13502930802141618

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kvale, S. (2006). Dominance through interviews and dialogues. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(3), 480-500. doi:10.1177/1077800406286235

Lambert, R., McCarthy, C., O'Donnell, M., & Wang, C. (2009). Measuring elementary teacher stress and coping in the classroom: Validity evidence for the classroom appraisal of resources and demands. *Psychology in the Schools, 46*(10), 973-988. doi:10.1002/pits

La Paro, K., Pianta, R., & Stuhlman, M. (2004). The classroom assessment scoring system: Findings from the pre-kindergarten year. *The Elementary School Journal, 104*(5), 409-426. doi:10.1086/499760

Lee, J., & Walsh, D. (2005). Quality in early childhood programs? Underlying values. *Early Education & Development, 16* (4), 449-468.

Lee, R., & Brotheridge, C. (2011), Words from the heart speak to the heart: A study of deep acting, faking and hiding among child care workers. *Career Development International*, 16(4), 401-420. doi:10.1108/13620431111158805

Legard, R., Keegan, J., & Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. In Ritchie J, Lewis J (Eds.). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 139-169). London, England: Sage Publications.

Leitch, R. (2006). Limitations of language: developing arts-based creative narrative in stories of teachers' identities. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 12*(5), 549-569. doi:10.1080/13540600600832270

Levin, B. (2010). Governments and education reform: some lessons from the last 50 years. *Journal of Education Policy, 25*(6), 739-747. doi:10.1080/02680939.2010.523793

Liebenberg, L. (2009). The visual image as discussion point: Increasing validity in boundary crossing research. *Qualitative Research, 9*(4), 441-467. doi:10.1177/1468794109337877

Light, R., & Kirk, D. (2001). Australian cultural capital - Rugby's social meaning: Physical assets, social advantage and independent schools. *Culture, Sport, Society, 4*(3), 81-98. doi:10.1080/713999839

Lin, H. (2011). A phenomenographic study investigating consumers' conceptions of marketing in Taiwan. *African Journal of Business Management, 5*(17), 7216-7223. Retrieved from http://www.academicjournals.org/AJBM

Lingard, B. (2006). Globalisation, the research imagination and deparochialising the study of education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 4*(2), 287-302. doi: 10.1080/14767720600752734

Lingard, B. (2010). Policy borrowing, policy learning: Testing times in Australian schooling. *Critical Studies in Education, 51*(2), 129-147. doi:10.1080/17508481003731026

Löfdahl, A., & Pérez Prieto, H. (2009). Institutional narratives within the performative preschool in Sweden: 'If we write that we're no good, that's not good publicity!' *Early Years, 29*, 261-270. doi:10.1080/09575140903161438

Logan, H., Press, F., & Sumsion, J. (2012). The quality imperative: Tracing the rise of 'quality' in Australian early childhood education and care policy. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 37*(3), 4-13. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Logan, H., Press, F., & Sumsion, J. (2016). The shaping of Australian early childhood education and care: What can we learn from a critical juncture? *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 41*(1), 64-71. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Logan, H., Sumsion, J., & Press, F. (2013). The Child Care Act 1972: A critical juncture in Australian ECEC and the emergence of 'quality'. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 38*(4), 84-91. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Logan, H., Sumsion, J., & Press, F. (2015). The Council of Australian Government reforms [2007-2013]: A critical juncture in Australian early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy? *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 9*(8), 1-16. doi:10.1186/s40723-015-0011-1

Love, J., Harrison, L., Sagi-Schwartz, A., van IJzendoorn, M., Ross,C., Ungerer, J., … Chazan-Cohen, R. (2003). Child care quality matters: How conclusions may vary with context. *Child Development, 74*(4), 1021-1033. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00584

Macfarlane, K., & Lakhani, A. (2015). Performativity, propriety and productivity: The unintended consequences of investing in the Early Years. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 16*(2), 179-191. doi:10.1177/1463949115585441

Mack, L. (2010). The philosophical underpinnings of educational research. *Polyglossia, 19*, 5-11. Retrieved from http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/modules/publication/index.php?content_id=70&lang=english

Mackenzie, N., & Knipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in Educational Research*, 16(2), 193-205. Retrieved from http://www.iier.org.au/iier16/mackenzie.html

Maloney, C., & Barblett, L. (2002). Proving quality or improving quality: Who's minding the shop? *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 27(1)*, 14-17. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Manlove, E., & Guzell, J. (1997). Intention to leave, anticipated reasons for leaving, and 12 month turnover of child care staff. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 12,* 145-167.

Mann, L. (2006). *Ways of experiencing sustainable design in engineering: a phenomenographic investigation* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland.

Mann, L. (2009). Critical features of phenomenography. Retrieved from http://aaee-scholar.pbworks.com/w/page/1177079/Research%20Method%20-%20Phenomenograph

Mann, L., Dall'Alba, G., & Radcliffe, D. (2007, June). *Using phenomenography to investigate different ways of experiencing sustainable design*. Paper presented at the ASEE 2007 Annual Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Mann, S. (2004) "People-work": Emotion management, stress and coping. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 32*(2), 205-221. doi:10.1080/0369880410001692247

Mannay, D. (2010). Making the familiar strange: Can visual research methods render the familiar setting more perceptible? *Qualitative Research, 10*(1), 91-111. doi:10.1177/1468794109348684

Manning-Morton, (2006). The personal is professional: Professionalism and the birth to threes practitioner. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 7*(1), 42-52. doi:10.2304/ciec.2006.7.1.42

Marshall, J. (2007). Image as insight: Visual images in practice-based research. *Studies in Art Education, 49*(1), 23-41.

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography: Describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science, 10*(2), 177-200.

Marton, F. (1986). Phenomenography: A research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought, 21*(3), 28-49.

Marton, F. (1994). Phenomenography. In T. Husen & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Education* (2nd ed.), (pp. 4424-4429). London, England: Pergamon.

Marton, F. (2000). The structure of awareness. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 102-116). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and Awareness.* Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Marton, F., & Pang, M. (2008). The idea of phenomenography and the pedagogy of conceptual change. In S. Vosniadou (Ed.), *International handbook on research of conceptual change* (pp. 533-559). London, England: Routledge.

Marton, F., & Pong, W. (2005). On the unit of description in phenomenography. *Higher Education Research and Development, 24*(4), 335-348.

Marton, F., & Svensson, L. (1979). Conceptions of research in student learning. *Higher Education, 8*(4), 471-486. doi:10.1007/BF01680537

Marynowski-Traczyk, D. (2015). *Emergency Department Registered Nurses' conceptions of recovery for mental health consumers: A phenomenographic study* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia. Retrieved from http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4438

Mathers, S., Eisenstadt, N., Sylva, K., Soukakou, E., & Ereky-Stevens, K. (2014). *Sound foundations: A review of the research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three: Implications for policy and practice*. London, England: The Sutton Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.rch.org.au/uploaded Files/Main/Content/ccch/PCI_Report_Sound-Foundations.pdf

Mayer, D., Mitchell J., Macdonald, D., & Bell, B. (2005). Professional standards for teachers: A case study of professional learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 33*(2), 159-179. doi: 10.1080/13598660500121977

McCain, M., Mustard, J., & Shanker, S. (2007). *Early years study 2: Putting science into action*. Toronto, Ontario: Council for Early Childhood Development.

McIntosh, G., & Phillips, J. (2002). Commonwealth support for childcare [eBrief]. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Retrieved from http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Par liamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/childcaresupport

McIntyre, M. (2004). Ethics and Aesthetics: The goodness of arts-informed research. In A.L. Cole, L. Neilsen, J.G. Knowles, & T.C. Luciani (Eds.), *Provoked by Art: theorizing arts-informed research* (pp. 251-261). Nova Scotia, Canada: Backalong Books.

McMullen, M. (1998). The beliefs and practices of early childhood educators in the U.S.: Does specialized preparation make a difference in adoption of best practices? *International Journal of Early Childhood Education, 18*(3), 5-30.

Meijer, P., Verloop, N., & Beijaard, D. (2002). Multi-method triangulation in a qualitative study on teachers' practical knowledge: An attempt to increase internal validity. *Quality & Quantity, 36*, 145-167.

Meloni, G. (2010). Enabling regulatory reform. In OECD, *Making reform happen: Lessons from OECD countries,* (pp. 239-267). Paris, France: OECD.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.

Michael, M. (2009). Doors to knowhow: Arts-Based Research practice in pedagogical inquiry. In S. Blenkinsop (Ed.), *The imagination in education: Extending the boundaries of theory and practice* (pp. 112-127). Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars.

Millei, Z. & Jones, A. (2014). The Australian early childhood curriculum and a cosmopolitan imaginary. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 46*, 63-79. doi:10.1007/s13158-014-0100-2

Millei, Z., & Joronen, M. (2015). The (bio)politicization of neuroscience in Australian early years policies: Fostering brain-resources as human capital. *Journal of Education Policy, 31*(4), 389-404. doi:10.1080/02680939.2016.1148780

Millei, Z., & Sumsion, J. (2011). The 'work' of community in Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework of Australia. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 12*(1), 71-85. doi:10.2304/ciec.2011.12.1.71

Miller, M., & Petriwskyj, A. (2013). New directions in intercultural early education in Australia. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 45*(2), 251-266. doi:10.1007/s13158-013-0091-4

Milner, H. (2013). *Policy reforms and de-professionalization of teaching*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Centre. Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/policy-reforms-deprofessionalization

Moore, A., & Clarke, M. (2016). Cruel optimism': teacher attachment to professionalism in an era of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy, 31*(5), 666-677. doi:10.1080/02680939.2016.1160293

Moore, T. (2008). Towards an early years learning framework for Australia. CCCH Working Paper 4 (August 2008). Parkville, Victoria: Centre for Community Child Health.

Morse, J., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *1*(2), 1-19.

Moss, P. (2005). Section I: Theoretical examinations of quality: Making the narrative of quality stutter. *Early Education and Development, 16*(4), 405-420. doi:10.1207/s15566935eed1604_2

Moss, P. (2006). Structures, understandings and discourses: Possibilities for re-envisioning the early childhood worker. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 7*(1), 30-41. doi:10.2304/ciec.2006.7.1.30

Moss, P. (2010). We cannot continue as we are: The educator in an education for survival. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 11*(1), 8-19. doi:10.2304/ciec.2010.11.1.8

Moss, P. (2016). Why can't we get beyond quality? *Contemporary Issues in Early childhood, 17*(1), 8-15. doi:10.1177/1463949115627895

Moss, P. & Cameron, C. (2002). *Care work in Europe: Current understandings and future directions* (WP6). London, England: Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education University of London.

Moss, P., & Dahlberg. G. (2008). Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Languages of evaluation. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, 5*(1), 3-12. Retrieved from http://www.teacherswork.ac.nz/journal/volume5_issue1/moss.pdf

Moyles, J. (2001). Passion, paradox and professionalism in early years education. *Early Years, 21*(2), 81-95. doi:10.1080/09575140124792

Myers, R. (2000). Financing early childhood education and care services. *International Journal of Educational Research 33*(1), 75-94. doi:10.1016/S0883-0355(99)00044-0

Mustard, F. (2007). *Investing in the Early Years: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do*. Adelaide, South Australia: Government of South Australia.

Neuman, W. (2003). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (5ᵗʰ ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Nias, J. (1989). Teaching and the self. In M.L. Holly & C.S. Mcloughlin (Eds.), *Perspectives on teacher professional development* (pp. 155-173). London, England: The Falmer Press.

Nias, J. (1996). Thinking about feeling: The emotions in teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 26*(3), 293-306.

Noble, K. (2005). *Early childhood education and care: Parent conceptions of ECEC services and choice of services* (Unpublished doctoral thesis) Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland.

Noble, K. (2009). *Understanding workplace bullying in early childhood education contexts: Safeguard the workplace to address burnout and stress*. Saarbrucken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr Muller.

Noble, K., & Henderson, R. (2008). Engaging with images and stories: Using a learning approach to develop agency of beginning "At-Risk" pre-service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 33*(1). 46-61. doi:10.14221/ajte.2008v33n1.4

Noble, K., & Henderson, R. (2011). The promotion of "character" and its relationship to retention in higher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(3), 79-91. doi:10.14221/ajte.2011v36n3.3

Noble, K., & McIlveen, P. (2012). Being, knowing, and doing: A model for reflexivity in social constructionist practices. In P. McIlveen, & D. E. Schultheiss (Eds.), *Social constructionism in vocational psychology and career development* (pp. 105-114). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.

Noddings, N. (2001). The care tradition: Beyond "add women and stir". *Theory into Practice, 40*(1), 29-34. doi: 0040-5841/2001

Nolan, A., Taket, A., & Stagnitti, K. (2014). Supporting resilience in early years classrooms: The role of the teacher. *Teachers & Teaching, 20*(5), 595-608. doi:10.1080/13540602.2014.937955

Novinger, S., & O'Brien, L. (2003). Beyond "boring, meaningless shit" in the academy: Early childhood teacher educators under the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 4*(1), 3-31. doi:10.2304/ciec.2003.4.1.4

Nutbrown, C. (2012). *Foundations for quality: The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications*. Final Report. Accessed March 28, 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175463/Nutbrown-Review.pdf

Nuttall, J. (2006). Listening to Ngaire: Teacher negotiation of the personal and the institutional in childcare. *Teachers and Teaching Theory and Practice, 12* (2), 139-150. doi: 10.1080/13450600500467316

Nuttall, J., Thomas, L., & Wood, E. (2014). Travelling policy reforms reconfiguring the work of early childhood educators in Australia. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 12*(3), 358-372. doi:10.1080/14767724.2014.916199

Oberhuemer, P. (2005). Conceptualising the early childhood pedagogue: Policy approaches and issues of professionalism. *European Early Childhood Research Journal, 13*(1), 5–16. doi:10.1080/13502930585209521

O'Gorman, L. (2007). *An even better start? Parent conceptions of the preparatory year in a non-government school in Queensland* (Unpublished doctoral thesis) Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland.

Oliver, D., Serovich, J., & Mason, T. (2005). Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research. *Social Forces*. 84(2), 1273-1289. doi:10.1353/sof.2006.0023

Olsen, W. (2004). Triangulation in social research: Qualitative and quantitative methods can really be mixed. In M. Holborn, *Development in sociology* (pp. 1-30). Ormskirk, England: Causeway Press.

Omarova, S. (2012). Bankers, bureaucrats, and guardians: Toward tripartism in financial services regulation. *Cornell Law Faculty Publications*. Paper 1010. Retrieved from http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/facpub/1010

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2001). *Starting trong: Early childhood education and care*. Paris, France: OECD.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care.* Paris, France: OECD.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2010). *Reviews of regulatory reform Australia 2010: Towards a seamless national economy*. Retrieved from http://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia_report_final.pdf

Orgill, M. (2002). *Phenomenograpy*. Retrieved from http://www.minds.may.ie/~dez/phenom.html

Ornek, F. (2008). An overview of a theoretical framework of phenomenography in qualitative education research: An example from physics education research. *Asia-Pacific Forum on Science Learning and Teaching, 9* (2). Retrieved from http://www.ied.edu.hk/apfslt/v9_issue2/ornek/ornek2.htm

Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 695-705. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/8

Ortlipp, M., Arthur, L., & Woodrow. (2011). Discourses of the Early Years Learning Framework:  constructing the early childhood professional. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 12*(1), 56-70. doi:10.2304/ciec.2011.12.1.56

Osborne, A. (2011). *The value of information literacy: conceptions of BSC nursing students at a UK university* (Unpublished doctoral thesis) The University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, England.

Osgood, J. (2004). Time to get down to business?: The responses of early years practitioners to entrepreneurial approaches to professionalism. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 2*(1), 5-24. doi:10.1177/1476718X0421001

Osgood, J. (2006a). Deconstructing professionalism in early childhood education: Resisting the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 7*(1), 5-14. doi:10.2304/ciec.2006.7.1.5

Osgood, J. (2006b). Professionalism and performativity: The feminist challenge facing early years practitioners. *Early* Years 26 (2), 187-199. doi:10.1080/09575140600759997

Osgood, J. (2009). Childcare workforce reform in England and "the early years professional": A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy*, 24, 733-751. doi:10.1080/02680930903244557

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2005). The meanings embedded within childcare regulations: A historical analysis. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 6*(1), 41-53. doi:10.2304/ciec.2005.6.1.8

Pang, M. (2003). Two faces of variation: On continuity in the phenomenographic movement. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 47(*2), 145-156. doi:10.1080/00313830308612

Pascal, C., & Bertram, T. (2013). *The impact of early education as a strategy in countering socio-economic disadvantage: Research paper for Ofsted's "Access and achievement in education 2013 review"*. London, England: Centre for Research in Early Childhood.

Peisner-Feinberg, E., Burchinal, M., Clifford, R., Culkin, M., Howes, C., Kagan, S., & Yazejian, N. (2001). The relationship of preschool child-care quality to children's cognitive and social development trajectories through second grade. *Child Development, 72*(5), 1534-1553. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00364

Peisner-Feinberg, E., Burchinal, M., Clifford, R., Yazejian, N., Culkin, M., Zelazo, J., Howes, C., Byler, P., Kagan, S., & Rustici, J. (1999). *The children of the cost, quality, and outcomes study go to school*. (Technical Report). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Pejsa, T., Mutlu, B., & Gleicher, M. (2013). Stylized and performative gaze for character animation. *Computer Graphics Forum, 32*(2). Retrieved from http://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~tpejsa/files/13-EG-StylizedGaze.pdf

Penn, H. (2007). Childcare market management: How the United Kingdom Government has reshaped its role in developing early childhood education and care. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 8*(3), 192-207. doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.3.192

Penn, H., & Lloyd, E. (2007). Richness or rigour? A discussion of systematic reviews and evidence-based policy in early childhood. *Contemporary Issues in early childhood, 8*(1), 1-18. doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.1.3

Phillips, B. (2014). *Child care affordability in Australia*. (AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report Issue 35). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling

Phillips, D., Howes, C., & Whitebook, M. (1991). Child care as an adult work environment. *Journal of Social Issues, 47*(2), 49-70. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.1991.tb00287.x

Phillips, D., Mekos, D., Scarr, S., McCartney, K., & Abbott-Shim, M. (2000). Within and beyond the classroom door: Assessing quality in child care centres. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 15*(4), 475-496. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/08852006/15/4

Phillipsen, L., Burchinal, M., Howes, C., & Cryer, D. (1997). The prediction of process quality from structural features of child care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 12(3)*, 281-303. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/08852006/12/3

Pianta, R., Barnett, W., Burchinal, M., & Thornburg, K. (2009). The effects of preschool education: What we know, how public policy is or is not aligned with the evidence base, and what we need to know. *Psychological Science, 10*(2), 49-88. doi:10.1177/1529100610381908

Porter, S. (2007). Validity, trustworthiness and rigour: Reasserting realism in qualitative research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 60*(1), 79-86. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04360.x.

Power, M. (1999). *The audit society: Rituals of verification*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Power, M. (2000). The audit society - second thoughts. *International Journal of Auditing. 4*(1)*,* 111-119. doi:10.1111/1099-1123.00306

Press, F. (2006). *What about the kids? Improving the experiences of infants and young children in a changing world*. Sydney, New South Wales: Commission for Children and Young People.

Press, F., & Hayes, A. (2000). *OECD thematic review of early childhood education and care policy: Australian background report.* Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and Department of Family and Community Services, Commonwealth of Australia.

Press, F., & Wong, S. (2015). *As the twig bends: A celebration of 120 years of early education*. Sydney, New South Wales: Sydney KU Children's Services.

Press, F., & Woodrow, C. (2005). Commodification, corporatisation and children's spaces. *Australian Journal of Education, 49*(3), 278-297. doi:10.1177/000494410504900305

Press, F., & Woodrow, C. (2009). The giant in the playground: Investigating the reach and implications of the corporatisation of child care provision. In D. King & G. Meagher (Eds.), *Paid care in Australia: Politics, profits, practices* (pp. 231-252). Sydney, New South Wales: Sydney University Press [open access]. Retrieved from https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/4140

Productivity Commission. (2011). *Early childhood development workforce* (Research Report). Melbourne, Victoria: Commonwealth of Australia. http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/education-workforce-early-childhood/report

Productivity Commission. (2014). *Childcare and early childhood learning* (Inquiry Report No. 73). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Commonwealth of Australia. http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/childcare/report

Prosser, J., & Loxley, A. (2008). Introducing visual methods. (Methods Review Papers no.010). *ESRC National Centre for Research Methods*. Retrieved from http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/420/1/MethodsReviewPaperNCRM-010.pdf

Prosser, M. (2000). Using phenomenographic research methodology in the context of research in teaching and learning. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh

(Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 34-46). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT
University Press.

Radich, J. (2012). *Staffing for quality*. NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 32 2012.
Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/wp-
content/uploads/2012/05/NQS_PLP_E-Newsletter_No32.pdf

Ranson, S. (2003). Public accountability in the age of neo- liberal governance.
*Journal of Education Policy, 18*(5), 459-480.
doi:10.1080/0268093032000124848

Rawolle, S., & Lingard, B. (2008). The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and
researching education policy. *Journal of Education Policy, 23*(6), 729-741.
doi: 10.1080/02680930802262700

Reed, M. (2012). What do we mean by quality and quality improvement? In M.
Reed and N. Canning (Eds*.). Implementing quality improvement and
change in the early years* (pp, 9-23). London, England: Sage Publications.

Reay, D. (2004). It's all becoming a habitus: Beyond the habitual use of habitus in
educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 25*(4),
431-444. doi: 10.1080/0142569042000236934

Reay, D., Crozier, G., & Clayton, J. (2009). "Strangers in paradise"? Working-
class students in elite university. *Sociology, 43*(6). 1103-1121.
doi:10.1177/0038038509345700

Richardson, J. (1999). The concepts and methods of phenomenographic research.
*Review of Educational Research, 69*(1)*,* 53-82. Retrieved from
http://rer.aera.net

Richter, L. (2004). *The importance of caregiver-child interactions for the survival
and healthy development of young children: A review*. Geneva,
Switzerland: Department of Child and Adolescent Health and
Development, World Health Organisation.

Rizvi, F. (2006). Imagination and the globalization of educational policy research. *Globalization, Societies and Education, 4*(2), 193-205. doi:10.1080/14767720600752551

Robert-Holmes, G. (2015). The "datafication" of early years pedagogy: "If the teaching is good, the data should be good and if there's bad teaching, there is bad data". *Journal of Education Policy, 30*, 302–315. doi:10.1080/02680939.2014.924561

Robinson, S. (2015), Decentralisation, managerialism and accountability: Professional loss in an Australian education bureaucracy. *Journal of Education Policy*, *(30)*4, 468-482. doi:10.1080/02680939.2015.1025241

Robson, S., & Fumoto, H. (2009). Practitioners' experiences of personal ownership and autonomy in their support for young children's thinking, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 10(1), 43-54. doi:10.2304/ciec.2009.10.1.43

Rodd, J. (1999). The impact of government regulations on early childhood services: Perceptions of early childhood professionals in the south west of England. *Early Child Development and Care, 153(*1), 19-31. doi:10.1080/0300443991530102

Rodd, J. (2013). *Leadership in early childhood: The pathway to professionalism* (4th ed.). Sydney, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Rodgers, C., & Scott, K. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. McIntyre and K. Demers (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions and changing contexts* (pp. 732-755). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Rowe, K., Tainton, J., & Taylor, D. (2006). Key features of the Quality Improvement Accreditation System (QIAS) administered by the National

Childcare Accreditation Council (Australia). Retrieved from
http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/reports/

Rudd, K. (2011). The global education challenge [Speech]. Retrieved from
http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2011/kr_sp_111026a.html

Rudd, K., & Gillard, J. (2008). *Quality education: The case for an education
revolution in our schools*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory:
Commonwealth of Australia.

Rudd, K., & Macklin, (2007). *New directions for early childhood education:
Universal access to early learning for four year olds*. Canberra, Australian
Capital Territory: Australian Labor Party.

Rudd, K., & Smith, S. (2007). *The Australian economy needs an education
revolution: New directions paper*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory:
Australian Labor Party.

Säljö, R. (1988). Learning in education settings: Methods of inquiry. In P.
Ramsden (Ed.), *Improving learning: New perspectives* (pp. 32-48).
London, England: Kogan Page.

Sandberg, J. (1997). Are phenomenographic results reliable? *Higher Education
Research & Development, 16*(2), 203-212.
doi:10.1080/0729436970160207

Sandberg, J. (2005). How do we justify knowledge produced within interpretive
approaches? *Organizational Research Methods, 8*(1), 41-68.
doi:10.1177/1094428104272000

Sands, R., & Roer-Strier, D. (2006). Using data triangulation of mother and
daughter interviews to enhance research about families. *Qualitative Social
Work, 5*(2), 237-260. doi:10.1177/1473325006064260

Saracho, O., & Spodek, B. (2007). Early childhood teachers' preparation and the
quality of program outcomes. *Early Child Development and Care, 177*(1),
71-91. doi:10.1080/03004430500317366

Schmidt, M., & Datnow, A. (2005). Teachers' sense-making about comprehensive school reform: The influence of emotions. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 949-965. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.006

Schmidtchen, D. (2009). *The wealth of a nation: Preparing Australia's human capital for 2030*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: The Kokoda Foundation.

Schouteden, W., Verburgh, A., & Elen, J. (2010, August). *The use of drawings to access lecturers conceptions' of research: An added value?* Paper presented at European Conference on Educational Research 2010, Helsinki, Finland. Retrieved from www.srhe.ac.uk/conference2010/abstracts/0086.pdf

Seale, C. & Silverman, D. (1997). Ensuring rigour in qualitative research. *European Journal of Public Health, 7*, 379-384. Retrieved from http://eurpub.oxfordjournals.org/

Sendall, M. (2009). *Conceptions of school based youth health nursing: A phenomenographic study* (Unpublished doctoral thesis) Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland.

Sheridan, S., & Samuelsson, I. (2001). Children's conceptions of participation and influence in pre-school: A perspective on pedagogical quality. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 2*(2), 169-194. doi:10.2304/ciec.2001.2.2.4

Sherman, R., & Webb, R (Eds.). (1988). *Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods*. London, England: Routledge Farmer.

Shonkoff, J. (2010). Building a new biodevelopmental framework to guide the future of early childhood policy. *Child Development, 81*(1), 357-367. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01399.x.

Shonkoff, J. (2011). Protecting brains, not simply stimulating minds. *Science, 333*(6045), 982-983. doi:100.1126/science.1206014

Shonkoff, J., & Phillips, D. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods*: *The science of early childhood development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Shore, C., & Wright, S. (1999). Audit culture and anthropology: Neo-liberalism in British higher education. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 5*(4), 557-575. doi:10.2307/2661148

Shore, R. (2001). *A tale of two hemispheres: brain research, policy and politics.* In proceedings of Excellence for Children, AECA Biennial Conference, Australian Early Childhood Association, Sydney.

Shreeve, A. (2008). *Transitions: Variation in tutors' experience of practice and teaching relations in art and design* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), Lancaster University, Lancaster, England.

Sims, M. (2013, March). Professional recognition. *Rattler, 105*, 20-21. Retrieved from http://search.informit.com.au/document

Sims, M., Forrest, R., Semann, A., & Slattery, C. (2015). Conceptions of early childhood leadership: driving new professionalism? *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 18*(2), 149-166, doi:10.1080/13603124.2014.962101

Sims, M., Hutchins, T., & Dimovich, C. (2002). Juniors minding junior: The experiences of junior childcare workers. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 3*(1), 117-131. doi:10.2304/ciec.2002.3.1.2

Sims, M., & Waniganayake, M. (2015). The performance of compliance in early childhood: Neoliberalism and nice ladies. *Global Studies of Childhood, 5*(3), 333-345. doi:10.1177/2043610615597154

Sin, S. (2010). Considerations of quality in phenomenographic research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 9*(4), 305-319. doi:10.1177/160940691000900401

Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Siraj-Blatchford, J. (2001). An ethnographic approach to researching young children's learning. In G. MacNaughton, S. Rolfe, & I. Siraj-Blatchford (Ed.), *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice* (pp.193-207). Birmingham, England: Open University Press.

Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R., & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years* (Research Report 356). London, England: Department for Education and Skills.

Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Taggart, B., Sammons, P., Melhuish, E., & Elliot, K. (2003). *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project*: *Intensive case studies of practice across the Foundation Stage* (Technical Paper 10). London, England: Institute of Education, University of London.

Sjostrom, B., & Dahlgren, L. (2002). Applying phenomenography in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 40*(3), 339-345. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.2002.02375.x

Smyth, J., Dow, A., Hattam, R., Reid, A., & Shacklock, G. (2000). *Teachers' work in a globalising economy*. London, England: Falmer Press.

Sosinsky, L., Lord, H., & Zigler, E. (2007). For-profit/nonprofit quality differences in center-based child care quality: Results from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 28*(5-6), 390-410. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01933973/28/5-6

Speed, C. (2008). *Sustainable dwelling: A phenomenography of house, home and place* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria.

Stamouli, I., & Huggard, M. (2007). *Phenomenography as a tool for understanding our students.* Proceedings of the International Symposium

for Engineering Education, (pp. 181-186). Dublin City University, Ireland. Retrieved from http://doras.dcu.ie/447/1/Stamouli-huggard_ISEE07.pdf

Stein, H. (2003). The inner world of workplaces accessing this world through poetry, narrative literature, music, and visual art. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 55*(2), 84–93. doi:10.1037/1061-4087.55.2.84

Stenfors-Hayes, T., Hult, H., & Dahlgren, M. A. (2013). A phenomenographic approach to research in medical education. *Medical Education, 47*(3), 261–270. doi:10.1111/medu.12101

Stoddard, C., & Kuhn, P. (2008). Incentives and effort in the public sector: Have US education reforms increased teachers' work hours? *Economics of Education Review, 27*, 1-13. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2006.07.012

Stoodley, I. (2009). *IT professionals' experience of ethics and its implications for IT education* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland.

Stronach, I. (2010). *Globalizing education, educating the local: How method made us mad*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Stronach I., Corbin, B., McNamara, O., Stark, S., & Warne, T. (2002). Towards an uncertain politics of professionalism: Teacher and nurse identity influx. *Journal of Educational Policy 17*(1), 109-138. doi:10.1080/02680930110100081

Sullivan, G. (2005). *Art practice as research: Inquiry in the visual arts*. Thousand Oaks, CAL: Sage Publications

Sumsion, J. (2002). Becoming, being and unbecoming an early childhood educator: A phenomenological case study of teacher attrition. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *18*(7), 869-885. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/0742051X/18/7

Sumsion, J. (2006). From Whitlam to economic rationalism and beyond: A conceptual framework for political activism in children's services. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 31*(1), 1-9. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Sumsion, J., & Barnes, S. (2010). Images of early childhood educators in belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia. *Hong Kong Journal of Early Childhood*, 8(2), 34-43.

Sumsion, J., Barnes, S., Cheeseman, S., Harrison, L., Kennedy, A., & Stonehouse, A. (2009). Insider perspectives on developing Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 34*(4), 4-13. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Sylva, K. (2010). Introduction: Why EPPE? In K. Sylva, E. Melhuish, P. Sammons, I. Siraj-Blatchford, & B. Taggart (Eds.), *Early childhood matters: Evidence from the effective pre-school and primary education project* (pp.1-7). Abingdon, England: Routledge.

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). *The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from pre-school to end of key stage 1*. Nottingham, United Kingdom: Department for Education and Skills.

Sylva, K., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Sammons, P., Melhuish, E., Elliot, K., & Totsika, V. (2006). Capturing quality in early childhood through environmental rating scales. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 21*, 76-92. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.01.003

Taggart, G. (2011). Don't we care? The ethics and emotional labour of early years professionalism. *Early Years, 31*(1), 85-95. doi:10.1080/09575146.2010.536948

Tatto, M. (2006). Education reform and the global regulation of teachers' education, development and work: A cross-cultural analysis. *International*

Journal of Educational Research, 45, 231-241.
doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2007.02.003

Tayler, C. (2011). Changing policy, changing culture: Steps toward early learning
quality improvement in Australia. International Journal of Early
Childhood, 43(3), 211-225. doi:10.1007/s13158-011-004309.

Tayler, C. (2016). Reforming Australian early childhood education and care
provision (2009–2015). Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 41(2),
27-31. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Tayler, C., Cloney, D., Thorpe, K., & Wilson, C. (2008). Early childhood
intervention programs: Towards a cost-benefit analysis for Australia.
Melbourne, Victoria: MCEETYA Secretariat.

Tayler, C., Ishimine, K., Cloney, D., Cleveland, G., & Thorpe, K. (2013). The
quality of early childhood education and care services in Australia.
Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 38(2), 13-21. Retrieved from
http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Tayler, C., Wills, M., Hayden, J., & Wilson, C. (2006). A review of the approach
to setting national standards and assuring the quality of care in Australian
childcare services. Brisbane, Australia: Centre for Learning Innovation,
Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from
www.communities.qld.gov.au/childcare/publications/documents/pdf/natio
nal-cc-standards-review.pdf

Terreni, L. (2014). It's a matter of distinction: Bourdieu, art museums, and young
children attending early childhood services in New Zealand. Art in Early
Childhood, 1(3), 1-10. Retrieved from
http://artinearlychildhood.org/journals/2014/ARTEC_2014_Research_Jour
nal_1_Article_3_Terreni.pdf

Theobald, M., & Busch, G. (2016). Key ideas, research and challenges in early
childhood education and care. In J. Ailwood, W. Boyd, & M. Theobald
(Eds.), Understanding early childhood education and care in Australia:

*Practices and perspectives* (pp. 95-120). Sydney, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Thibodeau, J., & MacRae, J. (1997). Breast cancer survival: A phenomenological inquiry. *Advances in Nursing Science, 19* (4), 65-75.

Thorpe, K. Millear, P., & Petriwskyi, A. (2012). Can a childcare practicum encourage degree qualified staff to enter the childcare workforce? *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 13*(4), 317-327. doi:10.2304/ciec.2012.13.4.317

Tight, M. (2015). Phenomenography: the development and application of an innovative research design in higher education research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology.* 1-20. doi:10.1080/13645579.2015.1010284

Touhill, L. (2013). Promoting independence and agency. *National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program, 64*. 1-4. Retrieved from http://www.ecrh.edu.au/resources#/resource-search?pageNumber=3 &category=E-newsletter

Towns, D. (2014). *Kindergarten teaching and pre-school education*. Retrieved from http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0335b.htm

Trigwell, K. (2000). A phenomenographic interview on phenomenography. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 62-82). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. (n.d.). United Nations conventions on the rights of the child. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30198.html

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. (2016). Early childhood education and care. Retrieved from http://en.unesco.org/themes/early-childhood-care-and-education

Urban, M., (2008). Dealing with uncertainty: Challenges and possibilities for the early childhood profession. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal 16*(2), 135-152. doi:10.1080/13502930802141584

Valli, L., & Buese, D. (2007). The changing roles of teachers in an era of high-stakes accountability. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(3), 519-558. doi:0.3102/0002831207306859

Vandell, D., & Wolfe, B. (2000). *Child care quality: Does it matter and does it need to be improved?* Washington, D.C.: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/child-care-quality-does-it-matter-and-does-it-need-be-improved-full-report

Van Maanen, J. (1979). *Qualitative methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Vartuli, S. (1999). How early childhood teacher beliefs vary across grade level. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 14*(4), 489-514.

Wacquant, L. (2008). Pierre Bourdieu. In R. Stones (Ed.), *Key sociological thinkers* (2nd ed.) (pp 261-277). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian.

Walsh, E. (2000). Phenomenographic analysis of interview transcripts. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 19-34). Melbourne, Victoria: RMIT University Press.

Waniganayake, M., Cheeseman, S., Fenech, M., Hadley, F., & Shepherd, W. (2012). *Leadership: Contexts and complexities in early childhood education*. South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.

Watson, L. (2006). *Pathways to a profession: Education and training in early childhood education and care, Australia*. Barton, Australian Capital Territory: Commonwealth of Australia.

Webb, P. (2011). The evolution of accountability. *Journal of Education Policy, 26*(6), 735-756. doi:10.1080/02680939.2011.587539

Webb, J., Schirato, T., & Danaher, G. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu.* Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Weber, S. (2008). Visual images in research. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples and issues* (pp. 41-53). London, England: Sage.

Wenestram, C. (1984). Qualitative age-related differences in the meaning of the word "death" to children. *Death Education, 8*(5-6), 333-347.

White, L. (2011). The internationalization of early childhood education and care issues: Framing gender justice and child well-being. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions, 24*(2), 285-309. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0491.2011.01520.x

Whitebook, M., Howes, C., & Phillips, D. (1998). *Worthy work, unlivable wages: The National Child Care Staffing Study.* Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce.

Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy work, still unliveable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study.* Berkley, CA: Centre for the study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkley.

Whitebook, M., & Sakai, L. (2003). Turnover begets turnover: An examination of job and occupational stability among child care centre staff. *Early Childhood Research Quality, 18*(3), 273-293. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/08852006/18/3

Williamson, J., & Myhill, M. (2008). Under "constant bombardment": Work intensification and the teachers' role. In D. Johnson & R. Maclean (Ed.), *Teaching: Professionalization, development and leadership* (pp. 25-43). New York, NY: Springer

Winter, P. (2010). *Engaging families in the early childhood development story.* Carlton South, Victoria: Education Services Australia

Wong, S. (2006). Looking back and moving forward: Historicising the social construction of early childhood education and care as national work. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 8*(2), 144-156. doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.2.144

Woodhead, M. (2006). Changing perspectives on early childhood: Theory, research and policy. *International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, 4*(2) pp. 1-43. Retrieved from http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/resources/journal.html

Woodrow, C (2007). W(h)ither the early childhood teacher? Tensions for early childhood professional identity between the policy landscape and the politics of teacher regulation. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 8(3), 233-243. doi:10.2304/ciec.2007.8.3.233

Woodrow, C. (2008): Discourses of professional identity in early childhood: Movements in Australia. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *16(*2), 269-280. doi:10.1080/13502930802141675

Woodrow, C., & Press, F. (2007). (Re)positioning the child in the policy/politics of early childhood. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 39*(3), 312-325. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00328.x

Yates, C. (2013). *Informed for health: Exploring variation in ways of experiencing health information literacy* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland.

Yates, C., Partridge, H., & Bruce, C. (2012). Exploring information experiences through phenomenography. *Library and Information Research*, *36*(112), 96-119. Retrieved from http://www.cilipjournals.org.uk/lir

Zembylas, M. (2003): Emotions and teacher identity: A poststructural perspective. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and practice, 9*(3), 213-238. doi:10.1080/13540600309378

Zipin, L., & Brennan, M. (2003). The suppression of ethical dispositions through managerial governmentality: A habitus crisis in Australian higher

education. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 6*(4), 351-370. doi:10.1080/1360312032000150742

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Initial email contact

Email One Script: Initial contact with early childhood educators.

Dear

My name is Michelle Turner and I am a lecturer in early childhood education at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba. I am currently undertaking my PHD and am seeking participants for my research project.

My topic is - Uttering the unspoken: Early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their professional identity.

For my study, I would like to interview early childhood educators to discover how they understand the impact of the implementation of the National Quality Framework on their profession. Participation will involve 2 steps.

Step one - I would like educators to create a visual representation (created anyway – photograph, drawing, collage etc) to represent how they understand the impact of regulation on their profession (see examples attached).

Step two - will be an interview at a location of your choice, to be recorded. The interview will be semi-structured which means we will have a discussion around the topic. The visual representation will serve as a stimulus for this discussion. This discussion should take about 1 hour. I have attached my Participation Information Sheet and Consent form for your perusal.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.
Thank you
Michelle Turner
Lecturer (Early Childhood)
School of Teacher Education and Early Childhood | Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts University of Southern Queensland | Toowoomba | Queensland | 4350 | Australia
 Ph: +61 7 4631 1202
Email: michelle.turner@usq.edu.au

## Appendix B: Phone script

Phone Script for Thesis

Thank you for talking with me this morning and agreeing to be a participant in my PhD study.

As explained in my email I am a lecturer in Early Childhood at USQ here in Toowoomba and am currently undertaking a PhD. I have received my Ethics Approval from the university (USQ) and consideration of the impact on the participant in a PhD project is a priority for them – so my topic and method has been well vetted.

My topic is - Uttering the unspoken: Early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their profession.

In essence, I would like to interview early childhood educators to discover how they understand regulation in the early childhood education and care setting, and then how they understand the impact the implementation of the National Quality Framework on their profession.

My research question is - What are the qualitatively different ways early childhood educators conceptualise the impact of regulation on their profession?

I am seeking your experience of regulation as a result of the introduction of the National Quality Framework.

Participation will involve 2 steps.

Initially, I would like the educators to create a visual representation (anything, created anyway) to represent how you understand the impact of regulation. Please bring this with you to the interview.  As you create your visual representation, which I am calling an arts-inspired plate, please consider these 2 questions

1. What do you understand regulation to be?
2. How has regulation impacted upon your profession?

The second step will then be an interview. The interview will be recorded. The format will be a semi-structured interview, which is a discussion around the topic lead by these two questions. The visual representation (which I am calling an arts-inspired plate) will serve as a stimulus for the discussion.

Let me know any dates you will be available – weekdays or weekends. I am happy to meet you at a site that suits you ie the kindy, somewhere here at uni or even a coffee shop. Where ever you would feel most comfortable

I will email my PhD information sheet and consent form for you to complete. Please either email these back to me or bring them with you to the interview.

I look forward to meeting up with you.

# Appendix C: Human ethics approval

31 July 2013

Ms Michelle Turner
C/- Faculty of Education
University of Southern Queensland

Dear Michelle

The Chair of the USQ Fast Track Human Research Ethics Committee (FTHREC) recently reviewed your responses to the FTHREC's conditions placed upon the ethical approval for the below project. Your proposal now meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and full ethics approval has been granted.

| Approval No. | **H13REA158** |
|---|---|
| Project Title | Uttering the unspoken: Early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their professional identity |
| Approval date | 31 July 2013 |
| Expiry date | 31 July 2015 |
| FTHREC Decision | **Approved** |

The standard conditions of this approval are:

(a) conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC
(b) advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project
(c) make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes
(d) provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval
(e) provide a 'final report' when the project is complete
(f) advise in writing if the project has been discontinued.

For (c) to (e) forms are available on the USQ ethics website: http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethicsbio/human

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement (2007)* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your project. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

**Annmaree Jackson**
Ethics Committee Support Officer

Copies to:    michelle.turner@usq.edu.au
              karen.noble@usq.edu.au

# Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet

**Full Project Title:** Uttering the unspoken: Early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their profession.

**Principal Researcher:** Michelle Turner

**Other Researcher(s):**

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project.

In January 2012, the Australian Government introduced the mandatory National Quality Accreditation systems (NQA) against which all early childhood provisions are measured. It is both timely and necessary to undertake research to properly ascertain the effects on early childhood service provision from multiple stakeholders' perspectives. Beyond general evaluation and monitoring of achievement of NQA standards, this research aims to explore the experiences of one stakeholder group – that of early childhood educators.

In particular, the proposed project investigates the different ways in which early childhood teachers understand regulation and its impact on their profession by focussing on the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF - which is the quality and regulatory framework component of the NQA). Of particular interest is hearing educators articulate how their profession has been impacted by the implementation of mandatory accountabilities through the regulation of service provision. While the outcomes of this particular study may be unique to the chosen location, sample and time, it is anticipated that the like will stimulate further discussion and investigation of impacts upon workforce development within changing regulatory contexts.

## Procedures

Participation in this project will involve an open-ended interview that is expected to take between 1 and 1.5 hours.

Prior to the interview, you will be asked to prepare a visual representation of your feelings about your experience as an Early Childhood Educator under the NQF and this will be photographed and discussed as part of the interview process. Once the audio-recorded interview has been transcribed, you will be invited to review the transcript for accuracy.

It is hoped that this study will provide new understandings for early childhood educators in the field as they engage with the new regulatory environment. Additionally, it is hoped that policy writers will also take the time to review the educators understanding of the phenomenon of the regulatory environment and consider policies and implementation methods and strategies that reflect these expressed understandings.

## Voluntary Participation

Participation is entirely voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Any information already obtained from you will be destroyed.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with the University of Southern Queensland.

***Please notify the researcher if you decide to withdraw from this project.***

Should you have any queries regarding the progress or conduct of this research, you can contact the principal researcher:

*[*Michelle Turner*]*
School of Teacher Education and Early Childhood
Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Email - michelle.turner@usq.edu.au
Phone - 4631 1202


If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer on the following details.

**Ethics and Research Integrity Officer**
**Office of Research and Higher Degrees**
**University of Southern Queensland**
**West Street, Toowoomba 4350**
**Ph: +61 7 4631 2690**
**Email:** *ethics@usq.edu.au*

2

# Appendix E: Consent Form

**USQ**
**University of Southern Queensland**

The University of Southern Queensland

**Consent Form**

HREC Approval Number: H13REA158

**TO:** *Participants*

**Full Project Title:** Uttering the unspoken: Early childhood educators' conceptions of the impact of regulation on their profession

**Principal Researcher:** Michelle Turner

**Associate Researcher(s):**

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

- I understand that I will be audio taped during the study.

- I understand that my arts-based plate will be photographed and de-identified where necessary.

- I understand that the tape and photograph will be stored on a password protected computer at the University of Southern Queensland. Once the audio-recording is transcribed and I have checked for accuracy, the audio file will be destroyed. The de-identified transcript and photograph will be stored securely for a period of 5 years.

**Name of participant**…………………………………………………………….......

**Signed**………………………………………………….**Date**……………………….

3

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer on the following details.

*Ethics and Research Integrity Officer*
*Office of Research and Higher Degrees*
*University of Southern Queensland*
*West Street, Toowoomba 4350*
**Ph: +61 7 4631 2690**
**Email:** *ethics@usq.edu.au*