The Impact of Policy on Early Childhood Education and Care Professionals Working in Integrated Service Settings

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Abstract

My research investigates the influence of policy reform on the professional identities of Early Childhood Education and Care professionals operating in an integrated service setting. I used interviews and activity-based focus groups to examine ways that ECEC professionals describe and value their work and how their priorities and practices shape their professional identities. In addition, I analysed five key ECEC policy-reform documents to identify the problems they propose and explore ways that policy imperatives shape the practices of ECEC professionals.

I worked between critical and poststructuralist theories to explore the complex intersection between policy and practice. I drew on the work of Foucault to explore concepts of governmentality and Butler to explore the performative ways in which policy is enacted. Turning to critical theory, I drew on Fraser’s concepts of recognition, redistribution, and representation along with Lynch’s concept of relationality, using these constructs to fashion a model of professional inclusion. Using this model, I traced the professional performances and practices of six ECEC professionals in one integrated care setting. I examined the ways in which both practitioner performances and government policies were influenced by cultural, economic, political, and affective scripts that circulated as discourse through the field.

Through my research, I found that both policy descriptions of quality service delivery and practitioner priorities are increasingly influenced by neoliberal ideology in ways that often obscure other valued professional contributions. I used the model of professional inclusion to re-centre views of professionalism and to examine the affective work in which ECEC professionals engage to counter-balance economically scripted policy descriptions of ECEC practice. Using this model, I argue for greater recognition of the affective effort that ECEC professionals describe in relation to implementing integrated approaches and undertaking the relational elements of their work.
Declaration

I declare that:

(i) this thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy;

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and

(iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed ___________________________  Date 14/03/2018

Daniel Leach-McGill
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Chapter 1 | Introduction

This thesis explores the performances of professional identities in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in integrated service settings. It has a particular focus on the intersections between policy and practice.

I developed an interest in integrated services and policy through my work in the Early Childhood and Community Services’ sectors. I started my career in ECEC in 1999 as an untrained assistant child care worker and have worked with children and families in Early Childhood settings and in a range of family support and community development roles. This has included roles in state government-funded preschool programs and federally funded long day care settings. For eight years I worked in a combined Preschool and Long Day Care program that also provided a range of additional inclusion support and family support services. Practising in this context, I developed a strong interest in working with families and in community development approaches, so commenced study in this area. A consistent experience in my professional upbringing was the close link between work with children and work with families. Over the last ten years, I have worked with a specific focus on developing and implementing integrated service delivery approaches in a range of roles including project-based work, service development, involvement in establishing governance structures for integrated services, and in direct service delivery.

Through this work, I have witnessed the impact of innovative initiatives that have emerged from the commitment of practitioners working flexibly across traditional professional boundaries to meet the needs of their local community. This work has often been at odds with policy priorities and directions, which typically stifle emerging innovations. I have also seen policy that was designed to enable and enhance collaborative practice and flexibility be interpreted and applied prescriptively, again stifling the intended change. This disconnect is of urgent concern; it demonstrates the problematic interaction between spheres of policy and practice. In both examples, the need for change is apparent, yet the authority and the will to make lasting changes are misaligned.
This has raised questions for me in relation to the connection between the intent and implementation of policy, and about the opportunities for professionals to influence policy. Literature in relation to ECEC practice and integrated service delivery often focuses on describing practice (the ‘what’), describing implementation methods (the ‘how’), and, to varying degrees, describing the rationale (the ‘why’). What I have focussed on is the ‘who’ in integrated services. I have explored the experiences and practices of professionals working in integrated settings, specifically, ECEC professionals with rich and diverse histories and perspectives. I concentrated on the values and complexities that ECEC professionals bring with them into integrated services.

My interest was in exploring the ways that ECEC professionals identify in their profession when working in integrated service settings and responding to policy reforms. Of particular concern was ECEC professionals’ experience of compatibilities and incompatibilities between their own goals and the goals of policy promoting ECEC and integrated service delivery.

Initially, I commenced this research project with a purely instrumental objective. I intended to undertake research related to a service planning project that I was working on through my paid employment developing an integrated child and family centre. The leadership groups had frequent discussions about how to ensure that the service was integrated and not just co-located. Group member opinions varied as to how integration should be led and encouraged. The leadership group were reluctant to trust ‘on the ground’ professionals to develop the relationships required to deliver the desired results. What was significant for me was that the leadership group did not consider ECEC professionals to be professionally equipped to lead this work. This led to the development of legal agreements and lengthy circular discussions about what would ‘drive’ integration. I initially imagined my research would contribute to identifying the skills that would help ECEC professionals ‘drive’ integration through their practice.

My research interest changed quickly when I began to critically engage with the content of the field and applied the practice values that I had developed over time to my question. I became interested in what roles ECEC professionals took up in integrated service settings amidst my mounting suspicion that members of the leadership group considered their roles as supplementary to adult-focused services planned for the
integrated setting. I subsequently resigned from my role and engaged with my research interest differently to explore not only the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of ECEC in integrated setting, but also the ‘who’.

To undertake my exploration, I combined policy analysis and research with the experiences of practising professionals.

**TOPIC AND QUESTION**
My research investigates ways in which professionals understand their roles and functions in integrated service settings. My exploration is set in a context of significant ECEC reforms in Australia and in light of an increasing push in state and federal government policies towards the integration of child and family services. My interest in this topic spans both practice and policy influences on professional identities. The research question I investigate is:

*How are the professional identities and practices of Early Childhood Education and Care professionals in integrated settings influenced by policy reforms?*

I analyse the impacts of reform and policy (particularly those associated with integrated service delivery), explore ECEC professionals’ perspectives on their profession and operating environments, and compare these participant perspectives with policy analysis to identify emerging compatibilities and tensions.

In doing this, I explore the interaction between policy and ECEC professional practice. To assist my exploration, I developed a number of sub-questions including:

*What compatibilities and tensions arise between policy and practice?*

*How does policy influence and contrast the ways that professionals articulate and practise their roles?*

*To what degree does policy shape practice and reflect practice?*

In the following section, I introduce the Australian Early Childhood policy context and some of the key policy reforms relevant to my study. Next, I map out the chapters of the thesis and describe the work they do to frame my topic, outline the theoretical and
conceptual frameworks for the design and analysis of my research, and present discussion of relevant literature and analysis of my data.

**POLICY CONTEXT: A CHANGING LANDSCAPE**

In 2009, Australia commenced implementation of a range of significant ECEC policy reforms that would span an eleven-year period. This has included aligning practices, standards, and regulations of state and federally-funded ECEC services. These reforms have resulted in fast-paced practice changes for practitioners whose professional practices and identities have historically been structured differently. In addition, there have been fundamental shifts in the way that services for children and families are planned and delivered, including the introduction of integrated service delivery.

**Education and Care**

The significant change, investment in, and attention paid to ECEC policy in Australia was heavily influenced by international policy. In 2001 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published a report titled *Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia*. The report outlined a number of issues pertaining to ECEC delivery. While generally favouring market principles being applied to the ECEC sector, the report also drew attention to the notion of balancing concern for catering to the ‘here and now’ of childhood and concern for future readiness, that is, preparing the child to be a future student, adult, or citizen. The OECD raised concerns in relation to the ‘care’ and ‘education’ split - the separation of programs that provide *childcare* in contrast to *preschool* or *kindergarten*. The report also raised concerns in relation to ensuring access to and affordability of high quality services for low income and disadvantaged families. The report noted specific concern in relation to the geographical issues of ECEC provision in Australia and the strategies being employed to *Close the Gap* for Indigenous Australians (OECD, 2001).

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1 Close the Gap is the name given to a set of strategies developed by the Council of Australian Governments “to address the disadvantage faced by Indigenous Australians in life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment” (COAG, No Date online).
Investing in the Early Years: A national early childhood development strategy – 2009

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) published *Investing in the Early Years: A national early childhood development strategy* (*Early Years Strategy*) in 2009. It was produced collaboratively by federal, state and territory governments to articulate a shared vision “that by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). Through this document, COAG communicated government strategy and changes to the policy and funding priorities of the federal, state and territory Governments. It also signalled changes in relationships between governments, sectors that deliver services, and the broader community. The purpose of the *Early Years Strategy* was to articulate the vision for a series of reforms, strategies and policies related to Early Childhood Development:

“The strategy will guide Australia’s comprehensive responses to evidence about the importance of early childhood development and the benefits—and cost-effectiveness—of ensuring all children experience a positive early childhood... It will also support Australia to better meet the diverse needs of today’s families and focus on improving child outcomes and foster the health and wellbeing and productivity of our next generation” (COAG, 2009, p. 4).

The *Early Years Strategy* is a high-level strategy that targets governments, government departments, the ECEC sector and, to an extent, the general public to promote a range of reforms and initiatives. The *Early Years Strategy* influenced and consolidated policy initiatives such as the National Quality Reform agenda, the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), Universal Access to preschool, and early childhood development programs such as the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY).

Since the release of the *Early Years Strategy*, a number of ECEC services have been brought together under the *National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* developed through a *National Partnership Agreement* between the federal government and all state and territory governments (Productivity Commission, 2011). This included the introduction of a *National Quality Framework* (NQF) that implemented new regulatory systems that brought licensing and quality rating together.
The NQF involves increasing the staff-to-child ratios and raising the minimum qualification levels for all staff employed in ECEC settings. These systems are administered by state and territory governments under revised legislative arrangements in each jurisdiction. It covers state-funded ‘Preschools’ and ‘Kindergartens’ that were traditionally known as ‘education’ services and that were separate from federally-funded ‘Long Day Care’, ‘Family Day Care’, ‘Occasional Care’, and ‘Out of School Hours Care’, which were traditionally known as care services. While ‘education’ programs differ between jurisdictions, they are generally led by degree-qualified staff and operate sessional programs for children in the year before formal schooling (Productivity Commission, 2011). Table 1.1, below, shows the different terminology and age requirements for programs offered to children in the year before school across all Australian state and territory jurisdictions. In contrast, Early Childhood ‘care’ programs are provided as full-day programs to children between birth and five years of age (Out of School Hours Care is offered to children between five and twelve years of age before and after school). ‘Care’ programs employ staff with a range of qualification levels, supervised by either diploma or degree-qualified staff depending on the size of the service and the state in which it is delivered (Productivity Commission, 2011). An approved ECEC certificate III level qualification is required as a minimum qualification to work in centre based services, in addition 50% of educators are required to have an approved ECEC diploma level qualification (ACECQA, No date-b). An approved early childhood teaching qualification, typically a degree, is required to be recognised as an Early Childhood Teacher. Both certificate III and diploma qualifications are typically completed over one to two years while a bachelor degree typically takes three to four years to complete (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013, pp. 14-16).

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2 Sessional programs generally operate for five to seven hours per day for two to three days per week.
Table 1.1: Program terminology and age entry requirements, by State and Territory – 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Program name</th>
<th>Age entry requirement</th>
<th>Program name</th>
<th>Age entry requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales(a)</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Generally aged 4 and 5</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>5 by 31 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria(b)</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 30 April</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>5 by 30 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 30 June</td>
<td>Preparatory Year</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia(c)</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>4 by 1 May</td>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>5 by 1 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 30 June</td>
<td>Pre Primary</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 by 1 January</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>5 by 1 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory(d)</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>4 by 30 June</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>4 by 30 April</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>5 by 30 April</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) In New South Wales, all licensed children’s services for under 6 year olds (who have not commenced Kindergarten) are required to offer programs that meet children’s educational and developmental needs. New South Wales subsidises access to community preschool for all 4 and 5 year olds, all 3 year old Aboriginal children, and all 3 year old children from low income families.

(b) In Victoria, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to child protection are eligible for free kindergarten if they are 3 years of age by April 30 of the year in which they are enrolled.

(c) SA provides early access to Department funded preschool for children who are Aboriginal or under the Guardianship of the Minister after their 3rd birthday. The compulsory school starting age in SA is 6 years at the oldest.

(d) NT provides early access to preschool for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in remote areas if they turn 3 by 30 June of the year they are enrolled. Children turning 4 after 30 June are eligible to enrol in a preschool program after their birthday, if places are available and with the understanding that the child will access more than 12 months of preschool.


**Early Years Learning and Development Framework: Belonging, Being and Becoming – 2009**

The NQF brings together the practices of education and care programs, which, through jurisdictional funding and structural arrangements, have been traditionally treated as separate. Another key initiative within the NQF, implemented in 2009, was the introduction of the *Early Years Learning and Development Framework: Belonging, Being and Becoming* (The Framework). The Framework, published and endorsed in 2009, is a national learning framework for early childhood services working with children from birth to five years. The document outlines a vision for children’s learning: “All children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7); it sets out the Principles, Practice and five Learning Outcomes for children from birth to five years. *The Framework*, targeted at those working in ECEC and related fields, and is the first national framework for the Early Years in Australia. *The Framework* also
re-titles all staff working with children in ECEC settings as ‘Educators’ (DEEWR, 2009, p. 8). It is one of two approved learning frameworks, sitting alongside the *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia (Framework for School Age Care)* also published in 2009 by DEEWR. This signals a move to integrate the professional identities of care and education within the ECEC sector, a move that will be explored in more detail in chapter 4.

**Guide to the National Quality Standards – 2011**
Introduction of *The Framework* was followed closely by the implementation of the *National Quality Standard*. The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) published the *Guide to the National Quality Standards (The Standards)* in 2011 to articulate the criteria by which quality will be assessed. This was a part of the agreement “all Australian governments, through the Council of Australian Governments” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 7) made: to develop a National Quality Framework for ECEC through the *Early Years Strategy*. The purpose of *The Standards* is to guide services in working towards quality service provision and “sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services... It brings together seven key quality areas that are important to outcomes for children” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 8). The publication is the third in a series of four guides, alongside two other guides, outlining the implementation of a new approach to quality assessment for ECEC. ACECQA was formed in 2011 to oversee a newly implemented regulatory system that brought licensing and quality rating together (ACECQA, 2011, p. 7). The changes were aimed at implementing consistent approaches to quality assurance and regulation across Australia’s traditionally separate education and care programs.

**Early Years Workforce Strategy – 2012**
The changes that accompany these reforms and policy initiatives have had a significant impact on the workforce charged with implementing the strategies. To address this, the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) commissioned the *Early Years Workforce Strategy (Workforce Strategy)* in 2012. The publication was managed by the Early Childhood Development Working Group (ECDWG), overseen by the now disbanded Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). The ECDWG held “responsibility for providing advice... on
early childhood development issues” to Senior Officials and Ministers (MCEECDYA, 2010). The document outlines a workforce strategy for the ECEC Workforce that builds on COAG’s Early Years Strategy and sets our five priority areas: A professional workforce; A growing workforce; A qualified workforce; A responsive workforce; and A collaborative workforce (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 3). The Workforce Strategy “reflects a commitment by governments to address the immediate priorities for the ECEC workforce, and at the same time work towards a long-term broader strategy for the workforce with a focus on supporting more integrated ways of working across the ECD sector” (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 3).

A key priority in the workforce strategy is the development of collaborative and integrated service delivery.

**Government reviews**

In addition, the Productivity Commission (2011) undertook an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Workforce Study in 2011 to

“examine issues impacting on the workforces in the early childhood development... including the supply of and demand for these workforces, and provide advice on workforce planning, development and structure in the short, medium and long-term” (p. IV).

An additional Productivity Commission review, commissioned in 2013 and completed in 2015 by the subsequent Liberal and National Party-led Australian Government, examined Childcare and Early Childhood Learning. The report looked “into future options for childcare and early childhood learning, with a focus on developing a system that supports workforce participation and addresses children's learning and development needs” (Productivity Commission, No date). The Productivity Commission published a range of recommendations that focused on increasing accessibility, flexibility, and affordability; regulatory reforms; and funding and assistance reforms. The recommendations focusing on accessibility, flexibility, and affordability involved extending government funding to support home-based options, such as the provision of nannies, and pushed for more demand-responsive services such as government-supported occasional care places, extended hours’ services, and flexible delivery in
regional and remote areas of Australia. Proposed regulatory reforms aimed “to broaden the scope of the NQF, while at the same time reducing the regulatory burdens on services and enabling providers to offer a broader range of quality ECEC options” (Productivity Commission, No date), as well as reducing the levels of qualifications demanded and ratio requirements for children under three years of age and school-aged children.

The Productivity Commission recommended a range of “funding and assistance reforms” that involved changes to funding models and simplification of government tax transfers and rebates to support ECEC and workforce participation directed at “mainstream ECEC services”, including activity tests, “services for children with additional needs”, and “universal preschool services”, or services for children “the year immediately before starting school” (Productivity Commission, No date).

In 2015 the government called for a review of the National Quality Framework. Following a public consultation process, matters raised were under consideration “by the Australian and state and territory governments to ensure the goal of improving quality in education and care services is being met in the most efficient and effective way. The review will identify what is working well, areas for improvement and any unintended consequences resulting from implementation of the NQF” (Department of Social Services, No date).

While the review largely maintained the qualification and ratio requirements of The Standards, it resulted in revisions that removed “conceptual overlap between elements and standards, clarifies language and reduces the number of standards from 18 to 15, and reduces the elements from 58 to 40” (ACECQA, 2017, p. 2). The review also resulted in additional changes to the oversight and compliance requirements for home-based Family Day Care, changes to the “supervisor certificate” for services, and changes to ratios for services for school-aged children (ACECQA, 2017, p. 1).

**Integrated services**

In addition to reforms relating to ECEC practice and quality, both state and federal governments have prioritised integrated practices in policy. The concept of integrated service delivery has had a significant impact on the way that ECEC services are delivered
by early childhood professionals; for example, the *Early Years Strategy* discusses the need for a more responsive and integrated early years system. It emphasises co-location or collaboration between services that adopt “interdisciplinary approaches” to better respond to the needs of children and families:

“In a responsive service system there are no ‘wrong doors’... The aim is for children and families to receive the right level of support in the most effective way and in a timely manner, without unnecessary referrals to other services” (COAG, , p. 18).

Another example is the Victorian state Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) investment in Children’s Centres in Victoria:

“The Victorian Government regards the integration of early childhood services and the increased collaboration between services as integral to both addressing and supporting the needs of children and their families” (DEECD, 2010, p. 3).

The DEECD published the *Evaluation of Victorian children’s centres: Framework to support the establishment and operation of children’s centres* (Children’s Centres Framework) in 2010, together with the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH), to guide its implementation of the Children’s Centres. The Framework’s development drew on a literature review undertaken for the Evaluation of Victorian Children’s Centres (Moore, 2008), which in turn drew on international examples of integrated services for young children. The purpose of the Children’s Centres Framework is to guide the development of integrated children’s services, acknowledging

“the integration of early childhood services and the increased collaboration between services as integral to both addressing and supporting the needs of children and their families... The five guiding principles provide the community with a comprehensive guide to establishing and operating an integrated children’s centre” (DEECD, 2010, p. 4).

The *Children’s Centres Framework*, emphasising community involvement within its guiding principles (DEECD, 2010), outlines supporting information and literature, along with practical tools to establish integrated services at a community level from a service
planning perspective. It is targeted at Local Governments and service providers with responsibility for service planning and delivery in local areas.

The *Children’s Centres Framework* sits within other Victorian policies and strategies, linking to both the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and the national *Framework*. The VEYLDF, released at the same time as *The Framework*, mirrors the national language and strategies. The VEYLDF, however, differs in the scope of its implementation, extending its age range to eight years of age and expanding to encompass other Early Childhood Professionals. This

“...includes any person who works with children between the ages of birth and eight years. It includes, but is not limited to, maternal and child health nurses, all early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings (educators), school teachers, family support workers, preschool field officers, inclusion support facilitators, student support service officers, primary school nurses, primary welfare officers, early childhood intervention workers, play therapists, health professionals and teachers working in hospitals, and education officers in cultural organisations” (DEECD, 2011, p. 5).

There is a strong link visible in the Victorian example between the VEYLDF and the framework for integration presented within the *Children’s Centres Framework*. There is no equivalent national document or strategy that specifically addresses integrated service delivery.

In addition to specific texts relating to integrating services, the language of integration is included across early years policy. These policy and practice trends have significant impact on the way that services are planned and delivered within a context of significant change and reform in the early years more broadly. Despite these trends the definitions, models and practices of integration remain diverse (Moore, 2008, Press, Sumson, & Wong, 2010, Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

The reforms resulted in complex changes which have had a significant impact on the ways in which ECEC services are planned and delivered. Underlying these reforms is an emphasis on the positive impact of children’s participation in ECEC services. In the
following section, I discuss the arguments underlying the investment and interest in the Early Years that are made to support the positive impacts.

**Justification for investing in ECEC and integrated services**

Scientific knowledge has played a significant part in the policy responses of the ECEC sector. Research into early brain development had a significant influence on ECEC reform in Australia (Bown, Sumsion, & Press, 2009, p. 194). Bown et al. (2009, p. 194) point out that for two decades prior to the 2009 reforms educationalists and advocates have understood and drawn attention to brain research; they highlight the fact that scientific knowledge has been used successfully to leverage investment in a way that those in the sector could not.

Compelling economic arguments have been presented to support early intervention and investment in children’s early years as the most efficient and effective means of addressing future developmental and social issues (CCCH, 2006). The work of Phillips and Shonkoff (2000), highlighting the importance of early intervention in the future trajectories of children, is regularly cited in the policy and practice arena. The message is that risk and protective experiences in early childhood have a cumulative effect in shaping children’s future development. Heckman (2000), using a cost benefit analysis, demonstrated that the biggest financial return for governments is achieved through early investment in children. This is built on the premise that when children fall behind they stay behind. Early investment is seen as an efficient way of preventing future developmental and social problems for children; therefore, spending early in children’s lives has the potential to reduce future spending in a range of other areas, in justice and health for example.

Integrated approaches to service delivery are also often justified as responding to “evidence that adverse early childhood environments are involved in the etiology of costly social and health problems” (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, p. 54). Integrated responses are a point of early detection that enable “programs to be more accessible and responsive to the needs of all parents and children”, while navigating the complex terrain of policy landscapes and multiple program delivery contexts (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, p. 55). Integrated services, designed as a response to disadvantage and social exclusion, recognise that the current service system is not designed to meet the
current needs of children and families (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, Sims, 2011a). Outcomes for children from this perspective are linked with economic rationales based on positivist perspectives; that is, if investments are made early in childhood, then future spending on social problems will be reduced.

**Neoliberal justifications**

Many of the above justifications for investment in the early years are tied to the influence of neoliberal discourses. Peet (2003, p. 8) describes neoliberalism as “an entire structure of beliefs founded on... ideas about individual freedom, political democracy, self-regulating markets and entrepreneurship”. There is a key shift in the relationship between service provision and consumption linked to consumer choice and performance-based allocation of resources. Brown (2009) surmises:

“Under neoliberalism, democracy is no longer a political concept. It is an ‘economic one’ (Apple, 2007, p. 114). Public agencies are to be de-funded and privatized, and ‘free markets, unfettered by government regulation, [are to] solve social, economic, and political problems’ (Weiner, 2007, p. 275)... government does ‘not seek to govern through “society”, but through the regulated choices of individual citizens” (pp. 240-241).

Greater efficiency, as seen through a neoliberal lens, can be achieved through competition while ensuring accountability measures are in place. There is also a focus on striving to do more with less.

Dahlin (2012) expresses concern in relation to what he refers to as the “marketization of schooling” (p. 4). Dahlin (2012) considers the purpose of education as always being tied to “social, political and economic power relations” (p. 6). Standish (in Dahlin, 2012) starkly states that increasingly “the purpose of education is simply to serve the economy” (p. 3). Education in this sense is seen as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Brown (2010) discusses this trend in the context of early years reforms in the United States that focus on preparing children for the future demands of schooling rather than providing rich and diverse early childhood experiences. Internationally, there have been gradual changes in the way that education and education policy is administered. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) discuss “a reorientation of values from a focus on democracy and equality to the values of efficiency and accountability” (p. 72) in
education policy. This is a concern shared by Apple (2004) who places education policy within a wider set of neoliberal-influenced goals of competition resulting in narrowing curricula into managerial and accountability-based activities. Lingard (2010) discusses how, in Australia, national interest in schooling, particularly in national testing such as the National Assessment Program of Numeracy and Literacy (NAPLAN), has turned towards assessment-based practice. For Lingard (2010), a central concern is the “test-focused schooling” that is occurring in response to initiatives such as NAPLAN as an accountability type of assessment (p. 131). These types of conditions create a low level of autonomy and professional decision-making in practice.

Key policy and reform initiatives in ECEC and integrated services are deeply entwined with, and locate their justifications for, policy intervention in neoliberal discourses. This context and justification impacts upon both the content and practices of ECEC. I have identified a cross-cutting focus on increasing ‘productivity’ through investment and intervention in ECEC. The thread that runs coherently throughout the policy settings, particularly in the Early Years Strategy, is the productivity agenda within which they are positioned. Investing in the early years is promoted as a mechanism to achieve a broader social and economic return. This investment relies on the work of ‘The Early Years’ to deliver a return on broader social goals. Identifying this emphasis enables further analysis of ‘productivity’ as a discourse that frames these and other linked policies.

**Policy descriptions**
I have selected five documents that explore further the different stages in the reform of ECEC between initiation (2009) and implementation (2012). The Early Years Strategy provided a foundation and launching point for a process of reform. While this document builds on previous work, politically it signalled a commencement of a series of change and reform processes.

The five documents I have selected (outlined in Table 1.2), representing key points along a timeline of change and reform, are written by various government departments and bodies. I use them to illustrate what is emphasised and what is de-emphasised within and throughout different policy texts over a period of time. These policies have had a considerable impact on the practices and professional identities of ECEC professionals.
Table 1.2: Policy Documents

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<th>Policy Document</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Early Years Strategy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2009, Council of Australian Governments (COAG),</td>
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<td>Investing in the Early Years—a National Early Child</td>
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<td>Development Strategy <em>(Early Years Strategy)</em></td>
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<td><strong>The Framework</strong></td>
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<td>2009, Department of Education, Employment and</td>
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<td>Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Belonging, Being and</td>
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<td>Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for</td>
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<td>Australia <em>(The Framework)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Centres Framework</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2010, Victorian Department of Education and Early</td>
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<td>Childhood Development (DEECD), Evaluation of</td>
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<td>Victorian children’s centres: Framework to support</td>
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<td>the establishment and operation of children’s centres</td>
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<td><em>(Children’s Centres Framework)</em></td>
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<td><strong>The Standards</strong></td>
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<td>2011, Australian Children’s Education &amp; Care Quality</td>
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<td>Authority (ACECQA), Guide to the National Quality</td>
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<td>Standard <em>(The Standards)</em></td>
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<td><strong>Workforce Strategy</strong></td>
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<td>2012, Standing Council for School Education and Early</td>
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<td>Childhood Development (SCSEEC), Early Years Workforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy: The Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
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<td>Workforce Strategy for Australia <em>(Workforce Strategy)</em></td>
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STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The question that I explore spans complex policy and practice terrains. My interest in exploring the dynamic relationship between policy, theory and practice has led to adopting a range of methods and theoretical perspectives. As such, the structure of my thesis involves weaving and folding policy analysis with participant input gathered through a range of interactive methods.

Chapter 2 | Poststructuralist Theory: Conceptualising discourse power and performance

In chapter 2, I draw on poststructuralist theory to lay the foundation for my exploration. I draw on the work of Michel Foucault (1970, 1972, 1977, 1988a, 1988b, 2003, 2007) relating to discourse and power to explore their operation in the regulation and governance of individuals. Foucault’s work provides insights into the processes by which discourses shape the policy and practice which govern ECEC professionals in their profession. I also draw on the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1998, 2004, 2014a, 2014b) to explore norms, performance, and performativity, in particular the ways that individuals perform, and perform against, normativity and policy regulation. While there is a strong intersection between Foucault and Butler’s work, Butler’s thinking provides an evolved model within which to consider the individual’s performance in relation to normalising forces.

Chapter 3 | Policy discourses

In chapter 3, I expand on these poststructuralist concepts, applying them to conceptualise the analysis of policy. Drawing predominantly on the work of Fazal Rizvi and Bob Lingard (2010), I discuss the ways that discourse operates through policy, while exploring ways that policy operates to form practices that influence professional identities. Further, I draw on Stephen Ball (2006) to explore the impact of policy, as both discourse and text, on shaping the performances of teachers who increasingly respond to measures of accountability. These ideas provide me with analytical tools to deeply explore the framing and impacts of policy on practice.

The concept of policy as discourse informed the development of my policy analysis methods and has influenced the ways that I have engaged with policy literature.
Chapter 4 | A Professional Context: Education Care and Integrated Services

In chapter 4, I introduce additional terms that are important for my research. ECEC spans a broad and complex field of study, further compounded when considering the concept of service integration. I have structured this review of ECEC literature to explore ‘education and care’ and ‘integration’ as key terms relevant to my field of study. I discuss literature relating to political and historical developments in the ECEC sector in order to contextualise both previous and current policy directions. This review revealed historical and political differences in the ways that ‘education’ and ‘care’ programs came to be valued and, in this case, publicly funded. State government-funded ‘education’ programs, provided to progress children’s learning and development in the year before school, have generally received greater public support than federally funded ‘care’ programs which were seen as substitute parental care (Brennan, 1998, MacDonald & Merrill, 2002, Maloney & Barblett, 2002). This presented a range of policy and practice challenges.

Chapter 5 | Critical Theories: Conceptualising Professional Identity

In chapter 5, I discuss concepts of inclusion, exclusion and participation as relevant to the context of social disadvantage in which integrated services are positioned. I draw on Nancy Fraser’s (1995, 2009, 2013) theories of “recognition”, “redistribution” and “representation” through which she argues for parity and justice in social life. I also draw on the work of Kathleen Lynch and her colleagues (Lynch, 2013, Lynch, Baker, & Lyons, 2009, Lynch, Grummell, & Devine, 2012) which builds on Fraser’s three dimensions of justice to include an additional affective dimension of “relationality” in which parity of participation is sought. These theories of justice are closely aligned with critical and emancipatory paradigms. I use critical theories to explore some of the conditions that affect an individual’s ability to participate in their social, or in this case their professional, contexts. In addition, critical theory aligns with the policy intentions of ECEC and integrated services.

Drawing on these theories, I developed a model of professional inclusion that applies broad concepts of justice within a professional frame. I fashioned this model to accommodate the tensions that exist between poststructuralist thinking and emancipatory theory. This model enables me to call upon insights from multiple
theoretical perspectives. My model enables exploration of dimensions of professional inclusion, helping me to analyse discourses that are in operation throughout ECEC policy and practices. Critical theories played a key role in defining the way that I conceive the term ‘identity’ throughout my research, assisting my exploration of the broader social and political frame which affects both policy and practice.

**Chapter 6 | Methodology**

In chapter 6, I outline the two types of qualitative research methods that I adopted to undertake my research, including policy analysis and exploration of ECEC professional experiences through interviews and workshops. My policy analysis includes discursive analysis of key terms across five key policy reform texts, while the empirical methods include semi-structured interviews and activity-based focus groups.

In designing my research methods, I have drawn on constructivist ideas of ‘multiple realities constructed by people’ (Patton, 2002, p. 96). This accommodates multiple answers to questions of identity when considering ECEC professional practice and policy. By adopting this stance, I reject the positivist notion of a single answer or a single identity in my research design; instead, I draw on poststructuralist concepts of discourse and power to investigate understandings of policy and practice in the ECEC profession.

To cater for this complexity methodologically, I align with concepts such as “bricolage” discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 5) and Lather’s (2006, p. 36) concept of “hybrid positionalities”. These approaches accommodate a multiplicity that enables spanning paradigms and perspectives.

**Chapter 7 | Enacted influences of ECEC professionals**

Here I introduce the six participants of my research and draw on interview data to analyse the ways they conceptualise their roles. I explore the ways that these ECEC professionals relate to, are influenced by, and are influential to policies in the context of significant change and reform. I then explore the ways in which the participants describe the profession and its contribution, identifying particular qualities, skills and knowledge required to work in the ECEC profession. Through this analysis, I examine the interactions between [the ‘what’ of] policy and [the ‘who’ of] practice, exploring how policy plays out in every day practice.
My analysis of participant interviews uncovered a complex array of values that drive participants’ practices. Significantly, the practices that participants valued were rarely reflected in policy with the same level of detail or importance that participants assigned to them.

Chapter 8 | Policy Analysis: Intended influence of policy
In chapter 8, I discuss the intended influence of the five selected policies drawn from my policy analysis. Through my analysis, I explore how each policy fits within a broader context and influences various related policy agendas and interest groups. I explore the way that policy forms and defines the problems and the solutions to which they are positioned to respond. In particular, I look at ways that the five policy texts work to emphasise, reinforce, prioritise and contrast meaning. In addition, I locate 'policy-endorsed practices' that are emphasised throughout the five selected texts.

Through my analysis, I uncovered the dominant neoliberal discourses that operate within the policies.

Chapter 9 | Integrated Settings: An amplified context
In chapter 9, I discuss the specific emphasis placed on integrated services through policy, then explore ways that participants give meaning to integration in their practice. I use my analysis of policy to uncover the problem that ‘integration’ seeks to address. I discuss this in relation to participants’ views about the roles and positions of professionals in integrated services.

My analysis revealed that ECEC professionals use models of practice within integrated settings which are largely uncharted in the given policy and practice frameworks.

Chapter 10 | Comparison of Participant and Policy Priorities for Practice
In chapter 10, I deepen my policy analysis, exploring the impact of reform on participant practices. I focus on how participants perceive their practices and how their practices are framed by the policy texts. I analyse data drawn from focus group discussions about the ways that ECEC professionals articulate and prioritise their 'participant-described practices'. I also analyse how participants responded to the ‘policy-endorsed’ practices drawn from my policy analysis. The ranking and sorting activities revealed complex
relationships between the ways that participants prioritised their practices in comparison to practices set out in policies.

**Chapter 11 | Performances of Practice and Policy**

In chapter 11, I return to my model of professional inclusion to [re]analyse my research findings, employing cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions as scripts that circulate to shape participant performances and counter performances. I analyse the policy scripts in relation to participant performances and counter performances, and explore the recognised, [re]distributed, represented and [inter]related performances drawn from participant interviews and focus groups, using them to identify policy affirming and policy resisting performances.

**Chapter 12 | Affective Professional Accents**

I conclude my thesis by drawing together key findings and recommendations from my multi-layered research relating to the concept of professionalism and professional identities performed in ECEC and integrated service settings. I fashion a model of professional inclusion that enables a complex exploration of professional identity in the context of policy reforms and in relation to the values held by professionals working in integrated services. My research reveals practices and performances of professionalism that are often obscured in policy texts and discourses of reform. I identify rich examples of relational and integrated practice that regularly evade the measures promoted as quality practice through policy interventions. Referencing these examples, I present a case for including the voices of ECEC professionals in the development and implementation of policy. Further, I argue for stronger affective professional accents to be applied when framing the ECEC profession.

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**LAYING THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

I have drawn on both poststructuralist and critical theoretical traditions to progress different elements of my research. Poststructuralist thinking provides concepts with which to explore the ways that discourses operate in the policies and performances of practice in ECEC settings, while critical theories provide ways of exploring in more detail some of the discourses in operation in the fields of ECEC that are progressed through policy interventions. Weaving these concepts through my analysis enables me to lace
together discursive and performative contexts along with concepts of policy and practice within the fields of education, care and integrated services. This allows me to bring together contrasting ideas, to explore their complexities, and the tensions that exist between those ideas.

I fashion a model of professional inclusion that accommodates and puts poststructuralist concepts to work while also enabling critical explorations of issues of justice, inclusion, power and identity in my field of study. My thesis is structured to examine the ways that policy and practice interact, weaving together policy analysis and analysis of interview and focus group data.

My research project spans a range of diverse and complex topics that require multi-layered responses. I adopt theoretical perspectives that accommodate complexity and multiplicity, and that facilitate deep exploration into my field of study. I use the next chapter to establish the frame for my research, exploring concepts drawn from poststructuralist theory.
In this chapter, I describe the theoretical influences on which the design and analysis of my research project is built. I introduce the broad concepts of post-structuralism that I use to frame the assumptions that underlie my research. I start this section by discussing poststructuralism as an ontological paradigm. I then pay specific attention to two key poststructuralist thinkers, Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) and Judith Butler, employing core concepts that I take forward into my research. I draw on Foucault to explore concepts of discourse and their complex intersection with knowledge, language and power. I then focus on discourses in operation through technologies of regulation and norms. I draw on Butler’s work relating to performance and performativity to bring a theoretical frame to my analysis of professional identities.

My aim in this chapter is to articulate the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that have influenced my exploration, analysis and methodological decisions. These understandings provide the paradigmatic framework in which I locate my research design.

**POSTSTRUCTURALIST POSITIONING**

In research, a paradigm shapes the way that the researcher explores their topic and frames the way that a topic can be seen: “The researcher’s view of the world influences their choice of paradigm” (Hughes, 2010, p. 35). Through a poststructuralist paradigm, the notion of individuals constructing continuous meaning is rejected, instead favouring the view that individuals are “fundamentally incoherent and discontinuous” (Hughes, 2010, p. 50). For Hughes (2010) it is the “dynamics of relationships between knowledge/meaning, power and identity” (p. 51) with which poststructuralists are concerned. This contrasts with positivist paradigms, for example, in which knowledge is predominantly concerned with explanation and prediction, follows specific rules and techniques of investigation, and is based on underlying assumptions that everything is knowable or discoverable (Hughes, 2010, p. 37).
I have chosen poststructuralist thinking to underpin my research because it provides ways of thinking about the forces that inscribe practices and identities. From a poststructuralist perspective, identity is not fixed, but presumes that there are multiple ways of taking up, tracking and interpreting identity. Weedon (2004) explores the ways that identity is shaped and located [remembered and forgotten] by history and concepts of origins. This presents opportunities for identity, in a policy and professional context, to be understood as not only multi-faceted, but “complex, located and contingent, rather than fixed, authentic and true” (Weedon, 2004, p. 83). Branaman (2010) argues that poststructuralist thinking dismisses the notion of identity as self-determined, instead positioning “identity as a fiction” (p. 145). From poststructuralist perspectives, identity is shaped by an interplay of forces that position individuals in both subtle and overt ways. Chaffee (2010) notes that poststructuralist thinking focuses on “the political question of how cultural practices become ‘natural’” (pp. 79-81) and determine norms on which identities are often based or against which they are measured. Poststructuralist thinking provides opportunities to think differently about common situations and to question what is often considered as “natural”, creating “other possibilities” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479). Chaffee (2010) summarises:

“post-structuralism is a powerful cultural critique, a way of investigating the hidden workings of power at play in the very way we communicate and create social meaning” (p. 84).

From a poststructuralist perspective, neither knowledge nor power are static.

There are strong and complex intersections between poststructuralist and postmodern thinking. Postmodernism is often described as a departure from and critique of the “crisis in the values, cultures and aesthetics of the modern... [and is] sometimes articulated as ‘the end’ of modern life” (Han, 2010, p. 119). Mendelson (2010) describes the commonalities between postmodern and poststructuralist thinking, stating that “both frameworks dismissed universalizing narratives and centred origins” (p. 291). While postmodern thinking allows for multiple perspectives, poststructuralist thinking differs in its focus on power and its interconnection with knowledge. Hughes (2010) adds that “where poststructuralists focus on individuals, postmodernists focus on society as a whole” (p. 50). Through a poststructuralist lens, identity is not understood to be fixed,
but rather to be shaped by relations and within its context or circumstance. One of the key contributions that poststructuralist thinking makes is highlighting “deficiencies of deterministic and universalizing notions of the self and society” (Mendelson, 2010, p. 291).

West (2010) discusses the contribution that Foucault made to poststructuralist thinking through the strong interconnections he articulated between concepts of truth, power and knowledge and the operation of discourses. These concepts enable a critique that focuses on “knowledge as a force shaping society” (West, 2010, p. 190), and have significant application to the way that I understand policy in my research as a force shaping the practices, identities, and contexts of ECEC provision. Discourse permeates everything that is viewed, known, learned and taught through subtle and overt “persuasion” (Chaffee, 2010, p. 82). Tracing discourses provides opportunities to explore how knowledge and truth are applied powerfully [through policy and in practices] in ways that limit and enable possibilities for individuals.

These poststructuralist concepts provide a frame through which policy and professional identities can be conceptualised as complex and shifting.

**Guides**

I have chosen to focus predominantly on the theoretical work of Michel Foucault, along with the work of Judith Butler, to establish the ontological framework within which to conduct my explorations.

I draw on the work of Foucault (1970, 1972, 1977, 1988a, 1988b, 2003, 2007) relating to discourse and its complex interactions with knowledge, language, and power. I use these concepts to explore the operation of discourse in the regulation and governance of individuals as subjects. This sets the scene for further exploration of the impact of policy and reform on the ways that ECEC professionals identify in their profession.

I draw on the work of Butler (1990, 1998, 2004, 2014a, 2014b), particularly her concepts of norms, performance, performativity, and citation. I specifically explore the ways that individuals perform, and perform against, normativity and regulation. Butler builds on Foucault’s work, her thinking providing evolved models within which to consider the individual’s position and activity in relation to normalising forces.
I draw on these ideas because I am interested in ways that policy is experienced and performed and how it shapes the ways that ECEC professionals undertake their work. I draw on Foucault’s work to provide insights into the process by which discourses shape policy and practice and turn to Butler’s work to use concepts of performance and citation to deepen my analysis of professional identities.

**DISCOURSE: KNOWLEDGE, LANGUAGE, AND POWER**

In this section, I explore Foucault’s use of the concept of discourse and the ways in which it is strongly interconnected with concepts of knowledge, language, and power. I explore the ways that discourse operates by discussing regulation through norms and technologies of self-governance.

Foucault (1972) argues that discourse operates to reinforce and make possible the “idea of tradition”, which creates conditions for truth to be presented as continuous, unquestioned and “self-evident” (pp. 23-28). Discourses operate to enable the establishment of rules in ways that limit and enable definition.

The term discourse is often linked to and used to describe meaning, both implied and stated, within language and text; however, Foucault’s (1972, pp. 53-54) description of the concept of discourse extends beyond this usage. For Foucault (1972), language:

> “reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the general system of the formation and transformation of statements” (p. 146).

Language exerts power through the construction of knowledge. Foucault (1970) explores the way that “[l]anguage intertwines with what is exterior and indispensable to it” (p. 131) to construct knowledge. Language operates discursively, not only to determine what can be said within the discursive practice, but also to determine what is outside of it.

Language operates as “disciplinary techniques of power” (Foucault, 2003, p. 184). Foucault (2003) argues that power, operating within “fields of knowledge” or “disciplines” (pp. 184-185), is exerted in ways that limit what can be said and in ways that determine which practices become available within a particular field.
Another tenet of Foucault’s exploration of discourse is the way in which it operates to ‘classify’ and ‘categorise’ language and knowledge into truth. Foucault (1972) describes these as rules by which ‘unities of discourse’ come into being and exert power:

“the unity of discourse... would be the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects during a given period of time” (p. 36).

Analysis of discourse tracks contradictions (Foucault, 1972, p. 168). Foucault (1972) rejects pervasive narratives, instead examining instances of breaks or “discontinuities” in the unities of discourses (p. 201).

The concept of discourse, and the ways that it is entwined with knowledge, language and power, provides constructs through which to explore the forces that shape contexts, such as policy and its implementation through practice. In the next section, I discuss two ways in which discourse operates with regulatory effect through regulation and norms and “Technologies of the self”.

**Regulation and Norms**

Foucault (1977), in his book *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*, explored the history and evolution of torture, punishment and discipline in France, drawing on developments in the techniques and mechanisms used to exercise power and maintain control in societies and institutions. Foucault (1977) traced the movement from violent forms of punishment to subtler forms of coercion.

To explore these mechanisms, Foucault (1977) examined techniques and rituals that surrounded torture as an overt violent enactment of power over the body. Foucault (1977) used this examination to demonstrate ways that power was exercised through a “network of relations” rather than being owned by individuals. Power is active and relative, not “a privilege that one might possess” (Foucault, 1977, p. 26).

Further, Foucault (1977) explored concepts of discipline through analysis of institutions. He articulated ways through which discipline is achieved, including: distribution of bodies through physical spaces designed for supervision and control of interactions; control of pace and timing; planning for progression through exercises with stages through which to advance; composing bodies as forces; and signalling action and placing
for effect. These institutional mechanisms operated to ensure compliance and conformance without overt intervention.

Both the techniques of discipline and the spaces in which discipline is administered were a focus of Foucault’s (1977) work. This included techniques that arrange, normalise, and apply judgements to reinforce desired and desirable behaviours while deterring undesirable ones. Punishment exists in the regime of disciplinary power, revealing and reinforcing norms of acceptable participation. Foucault (1977) argued that both behaviour and punishment were coded by what was deemed acceptable. Normalised behaviours became expected, while punishments were deployed for breaches of these behaviours. The effects of power exercised on the body gave rise to the creation or materialisation of the ‘soul’ or the conscience (Foucault, 1977, pp. 28-30), that is, an internal force to regulate behaviour that is affected by external forces of regulation. The eventual shift from violent methods, including torture, coincided with greater social interest in property and ownership (Foucault, 1977, pp. 76-77). Punishment contributed to reinforcing norms by balancing the societal need or desire for vengeance with the broader aim of deterring criminal acts as ‘unnatural’ occurrences: “power must act while concealing itself beneath the gentle force of nature” (Foucault, 1977, p. 106). Normalisation is described as the process for transmitting disciplinary norms; that is, punishments are considered ‘natural’ consequences of breaching societal norms and expectations. This created the articulation and reinforcement of norms that were subject to both surveillance and enforcement.

Techniques of surveillance and supervision operate at different levels and for different effects. Foucault (1977, pp. 195-200) gave the example of the ‘panopticon’, an architectural intervention of power that enabled high levels of visibility of subjects and surveillance through physical design and positioning. This created the constant possibility of being observed, without the subject knowing if they were being observed, and the opportunity to surveil without having to resource constant surveillance or supervision (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). Surveillance acts as a normalising gaze by which performances and participation are measured. This ‘normalising gaze’ is further supported by techniques of examination - a form of surveillance that renders individuals visible, describable and comparable (Foucault, 1977, p. 184).
In the next section, I expand on the ways that norms create conditions for regulation, and on the ways that individuals draw on them, consciously and unconsciously, to regulate their own behaviour and actions.

**Technologies of self/Governmentality**

My research explores the consequences of discourses in operation through mechanisms of language, knowledge and power on the formation of professional identities. Foucauldian understandings of the ways that discourse operates provide analytic tools to explore identity through concepts of subject formation through technologies of the ‘self’ and governmentality. These are the systems of regulation that individuals impose on themselves to live within the bounds of societal norms and rules (Foucault, 1977), the impact of which shapes both the policy that is formed and the identities available from which professionals in ECEC settings may choose. This has particular applicability to integrated services’ settings. Through a poststructuralist lens, the notion of identity as self-constructed is rejected; instead identity is understood as being formed through relations of power between individuals and discourses.

In his discussion of ‘technologies of the self’, Foucault argues that understandings of ‘self’ have varied, having their roots in different times and contexts; for example, Foucault (1988b) describes processes of self-examination and accounting for one’s self, which involves a self-administered process of evaluating one’s actions, thoughts and behaviours in accordance to rules that are imposed or adopted (pp. 33-34). This in part develops techniques whereby the willing subject scrutinises themselves to both monitor and censor their actions. This occurs both consciously and unconsciously.

Foucault (1988b) explores different ways that the ‘self’ has been understood to explore what has shaped conceptions of and governance of individuals. Foucault (1988b, p. 18) identifies a range of technologies that function together to shape and influence behaviour and actions of individuals to an idealised end, that is, technologies of production, technologies of signs, technologies of power, and technologies of self.

‘Technologies of the self’ intersect in complex ways with political technologies of individuals and technologies of government taking on the norms and rules and applying and self-enforcing them. This involves the recognition of one’s self as being within a society and in relation to the norms of government, politics and law, which in turn
compel conformity. These are the “techniques by which a government in the framework of the state was able to govern people as individuals” (Foucault, 1988a, p. 154). Foucault (1988b) uses the term “governmentality” to describe the way that these technologies work together, in complex ways, as “contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (p. 19).

When exploring Foucault’s concepts of power, I was drawn to the work of Jennifer Gore (1990) who has built on his work to undertake research that demonstrates the ways that power is ‘exercised’ and ‘circulates’. Importantly, Gore (1990) observes classroom interactions to point out that power is not ‘held’ or possessed to be ‘exerted’ exclusively by one over another; rather, power moves and interacts through ‘regimes of truth’ that are applied in a particular context to make some thoughts possible and actionable and others not. Gore (1990) draws on Foucault exploring ‘regimes of truth’ that operate in specific sites or contexts, rather than the idea of a ‘Grand Narrative’ or dominant discourse, to make particular positions and actions possible and others not possible. Gore (1990) calls for:

“more attention to the micro dynamics of the operation of power as it is exercised in particular sites” (p. 11).

Gore (1990), in her research, drawing on Foucault’s concepts, demonstrates power in operation in classroom interactions between teachers and students. In doing so she challenges ideas of the binary positions of being powerful/powerless, demonstrating the ‘ordinary’ ways that power is deployed through everyday action. Action is an important feature of power; it is through action that power exists. Gore (1990) notes that “it may be helpful to think of social actors negotiating actions within particular contexts” (p. 13).

Gore (1990, pp. 16-17) outlines both political and ethical aspects of regimes of truth that assist in exploring the discourses that affect the relations of power that exist between subjects and structures (political), and the discourses that affect the way individuals monitor and adapt their own behaviour and action through self-surveillance (ethical), highlighting the fact that regimes of truth operate or are enacted powerfully at an individual level and in political structures.
Power is in operation in policy and in practice. Locating the movement of power through discourse, language and knowledge in both policy and practice, and identifying its impacts on determining the truth or the rules by which ECEC professionals operate, provide important possibilities for exploration in my research. I am particularly interested in tracking the ways that power operates in “micro dynamics” and in ordinary interactions, as Gore (1990, p. 11) outlines, to explore movement and contest of power in policy discourses and practice identities. This provides opportunities to explore everyday descriptions of practice as expressions of power.

Governmentality links with a complex system and relations of power that are based on and reinforce norms. There is a complex interplay between government, the law, norms and processes of normalisation that is contingent on the movement and relations of power. Governmentality holds in balance “economic practice, population management, a public law constructed on the respect of freedom and freedoms, and a police with a repressive function” (Foucault, 2007, p. 355).

I draw on Foucault’s concepts in my research to explore the impact of policy as a regulatory technology that rests on practices of normalisation and regulation. The structures of normalisation and regulation that Foucault (1977) discussed provide analytic opportunities for my research interest in exploring the impacts of policy and regulatory reforms in ECEC and integrated service settings. Foucault’s (1977) concepts provide a frame through which to view both the acts of practice, the discourses within policy, and the governing effects. The way that subjects intervene to regulate themselves and reinforce the externally-regulated norms highlights their participation in the process of regulation. This provides insight into the ways that identity comes to be understood and enacted as complex and regulated.

In the next section, I draw on the work of Judith Butler to explore the concept of norms and the opportunities for enacting or resisting them. Butler expands on Foucault’s concepts of norms by highlighting opportunities that come from exploring identity through performance.
PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMATIVITY

The concept of norms, and their regulatory effect, has implications for understanding the forces that influence individual constructions of identity. Butler (2004, p. 206) describes norms as both a mechanism of regulation and as socially and politically binding. Normativity provides a map of inclusion and is a process of coercive normalisation speaking to the question: what is common, or ‘natural’? Butler (2004) argues that while the function of norms is to create coherence and social integration, they have the potential to create conditions for exclusion by defining the uncommon or un-natural “Other” (p. 206).

It is because of this definitional, or categorising, effect that enacting and resisting norms is a political act. Performative acts are constituted by repeated enactments, acts or performances that are based on ‘fabrications’ of what is deemed to be natural. Butler (1990), for example, argues that performing gender is an act that is performative due to the ways that gender performance is constructed and regulated: “In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior... discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation” (p. 185). Performativity is generative in that it becomes what is constituted by the performances, which is then repeated and regulated. An act or performance therefore, “acts not because of the subject’s will, but because it relies on certain social conventions, which give a certain efficacy to the act” (Butler, 2014b, online). Repetition of performative acts reinforces their regulatory effect. This however, also provides opportunities to displace the norms on which they rest.

Butler (2004) discusses the opportunities for enabling ‘other’ acts and other performances to demonstrate the constructed nature of what is ‘natural’, describing the possibilities that the concepts of imitation and citation create in resisting norms, noting that “Sometimes the very conditions for conforming to the norm are the same as the conditions for resisting it” (p. 217). A parodic performance, for example, reveals the performativity [of gender] that destabilises concepts or categories of what is understood as “natural” (Butler, 1990, p. 189). Performance, or counter-performance, has the capacity to be political in its critique of power. This type of performance acts as political resistance and makes visible the structures of political power. Where one performance
is replaced with another, its site and position of legitimacy is challenged, and possibility is availed (Butler, 2014a, online).

Performances require a stage or context in which to be grounded. When a performance is removed from this context it is no longer grounded or supported, struggling as a result, or is in contest for legitimacy (Butler, 2014b, online). A performance as a ‘quotation’ or ‘citation’ is necessarily out of its original context and is removed from the historical legitimacy in which it is located and supported (Butler, 2014b, online). A citation act de-territorialises the real or genuine, dislodging it from intelligibility and out of its original context. Butler (2004) focusses on the ways that norms construct certain subject positions while at the same time exploring ways in which performances are powerful and contradictory in resisting or countering norms.

These concepts provide opportunities to explore ECEC professional performances in relation to the norms that are imposed and regulated through policy reform, and to explore performative practices in ECEC. I am concerned with the ways that participants may ‘cite’ policy in and out of context in the enacted and constructed assertions of their profession through performances of professional identity.

**Application to my research**

Discourse, through relations of power [enacted through policy], has a significant influence on not only the formation of the subject but also the way that the subject constructs their identity. Drawing on Foucault’s work, St. Pierre (2000, p. 480) describes ways in which language provides structures that categorise, classify and reinforce privilege such as to assert assumptions over reality. St. Pierre (2000) describes this as the way “we word the world” and notes that language can be disrupted to reveal the cultural practice through which the world is constructed, making it possible to challenge the “absolutes” on which language rests by considering alternative “questions” and “possibilities” (p. 484). St. Pierre (2000, p. 486) asserts that discourse is productive, material, and contestable. I am interested in the ways that policies are ‘worded’ for impact, and interested in examining the ‘absolutes’ on which they rest. My research seeks to explore discourses in operation through policy and to locate alternative possibilities within them.
Ball (2006) uses the work of Foucault to critique policy, discussing ways in which relations and ‘flows’ of discursive power are “written on to our bodies and into our conduct” (p. 6). Relations of power are also critical to exploring the ways that subjects come to be positioned. St. Pierre (2010, p 480) describes one of the functions of language as naming objects and giving category to identity. Categories group and reinforce identities. As Foucault (1970, 1972, 1977, 1988a, 1988b, 2003, 2007) contends, subjects are positioned discursively and not by individual will; however, through their performance they participate in their subjection in complex ways (Butler, 1990, 1998, 2004, 2014a, 2014b). The impact is that identities are constructed and reconstructed through complex relations and performances of compliance and resistance. I am interested in exploring how policy discourses work to construct professional identities, and the ways in which they are taken up in ECEC practice.

Foucault describes the interplay of truth, knowledge, and power, particularly within disciplines, that act to regulate and normalise. This regulatory effect has significant implications for the formation of professional identities and for the operation of policy, particularly in relation to the concept of ‘truth’. Truth emerges from the operation of power through ‘truth games’ or ‘regimes of truth’, producing statements by which other statements are judged as true or false (St. Pierre, 2000). I describe this in more detail and in relation to policy as a “regime of truth” in the next chapter. Knowledge and power work in relation to reinforcing ‘truth’, also making it possible to observe and critique the relationship and to reveal the breaking points and disconnect between power and knowledge (Butler, 2004).

Through my research, I am seeking to explore the impact of enduring ‘truths’ and the ‘micro-dynamics’ of power relations in the construction of professional identities. I extend on this frame of thinking in the following chapters to conceptualise policy and professional[ism] identity for my research.

**CONCLUSION**

I have chosen poststructuralist theory to provide a framework for my methods and analysis. I draw on terms from poststructuralist thinking to interrogate concepts of both policy and identity that assist me to frame my exploration from a perspective of
possibility rather than from one of certainty. By tracing the discourses that operate within policy design and implementation, I can locate the forces that influence the subject positions of professionals operating in these contexts. Further, poststructuralist thinking enables critical engagement with the broader context in which policy and identity are both formed and performed.

My research draws on Foucauldian concepts to track the assumptions that are nested in the language of policy. I draw on Butler (1990, 1998, 2004, 2014a, 2014b) to build on these concepts and to explore the ways that ECEC professional participants perform prescribed standards in their professional identities, or resist them and create new possibilities. This provides a framework for my exploration of the impact of policy on practice, and the ways in which research participants understand and describe their work and roles.

In the next chapter, I further explore Foucault’s concepts of discourse and regulation as a way of approaching my analysis of policy and policy discourses and the subject positions they enable or inhibit. I describe different conceptualisations of policy to locate the theoretical frame of my research. Specifically, I attend to policy as discourse to outline the ways that discourse operates through all stages of policy design, implementation and reform.
Chapter 3 | Conceptualising Policy

In this chapter, I expand on the poststructuralist paradigm and concepts presented in the previous chapter to conceptualise policy and policy theory, and further frame my exploration. For my research, I needed to find ways to deeply examine policy articulations and meanings and their impact on the development of practice. I also needed theoretical tools to assist in analysing the influences of policy. In this chapter, I discuss the definitions and descriptions of policy and the links between discourse and policy that I use for my analysis.

In the following sections, I discuss definitions of policy that I apply through my research in relation to concepts of discourse, knowledge, and power. I also explore policy as discourse, aligning policy analysis with techniques of discourse analysis to critique the content and implications of policy.

**CONCEPTUALISING POLICY**

The term ‘policy’ is used in a variety of ways to describe an array of functions, relations and processes that can be applied to a broad range of fields to determine and authorise particular action. Policy can manifest as a text or as a series of decisions or actions. Bown et al. (2009) list a range of “official policy documents, legislation, regulation, media releases, blueprints, speeches, photographs, websites, reports, memoranda and correspondence” that operate to convey policy messages. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) propose Easton’s (1954) definition of policy that “consists of a web of decisions that allocate values” (p. 7). These values and decisions are reinforced by “authoritative, mandating aspects of policy” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 7) that determine action. In short, Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 36) define policy as the “authoritative allocation of values”, referring to the actions and decisions that public policy authorises and to the values that these actions and decisions reflect. As such, policies are authorised such as to “create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed” (Ball, 2006, p. 21). Policy is aimed at influencing behaviour and practice and is often associated with change; whether significant or small, these changes are tied to broader policy, political or societal values (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 7). Policy defines what is problematic, what is important or valued, and what practices and
approaches are favoured or endorsed. This ‘definition’ is important in exploring how policy functions in “transmitting a policy message” (Ozga, 2000 in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 5).

Values are allocated through policy in a number of ways, both formal and informal, to authorise and direct action. Policy messages, and values, are transmitted through policy, which is then interpreted and implemented by practitioners, which, Ozga (2000 in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 5) argues, positions them as ‘policy makers’. Policies are not always specific, often only directing practice in general ways, leaving “room for interpretation” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 5). Ball (2006) refers to the “complex ways” in which policies are both “encoded” and then subsequently “decoded” relative to the reader, or “actors”, their “history, experience, skills, resources and context” (p. 44). Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 39), drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1999), discuss how this process of interpretation, often outside of the context in which it is written, creates great potential for ‘misunderstanding’; that is, there are limitations in the extent to which policies can completely transmit the values on which they are based.

These definitions of policy extend beyond the notion that policy is a specific type of text; they provide greater scope within which to consider a range of formal and informal mechanisms that operate to allocate values and determine action.

**Policy as discourse**

There is a need to not only explore the problem that the policy addresses but also the way that the policy problem was constructed, that is, identifying the discourse at work (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Policy as discourse exists beyond text and language. Ball (2006, pp. 44-50) describes policy as both “text” and as “discourse”. When describing “policy as text”, Ball (2006) acknowledges that the process of policy development and reform is “both contested and changing”, and, further, that “policies pose problems... that must be solved in context” (pp. 44-46). Ball (2006) goes on to describe “policy as discourse” in which practices are constructed and taken up as a “system of practices... and a set of values” (p. 48). The problems that policies are designed to address are constructed in the same way that values are allocated through policy. Discourses in operation enable policy problems to be constructed as ‘problems’, while legitimising ‘policy responses’ to address these ‘problems’. Policy is not only formed and re-formed by discourse, it also
reinforces discourse and becomes discursive. This creates what Foucault (1972, p. 30) describes as “a system for possible statements” that limits the strategies and policies that are possible - or, drawing on St. Pierre (2000, p. 483), “the way the world [of practice] is worded” through policy discourses.

Policy works to ‘classify’ action and behaviour as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ within the rules that it defines. These rules are embedded in the way that people come to think about society and their place in it. Lister (2010) describes classification as “a regulatory technique” that “concerns the application of science to everyday life”, acting as a ‘sorting’ mechanism for individuals that enables differentiation based on judgement or measurement against ‘desired norms’ (pp. 123-124). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) discuss this in terms of a “social imaginary... a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy” (p. 34). Policy operates discursively to “ensure consent through policies”, while this consent exists to “secure popular legitimacy” of policy, reinforcing the discourse in operation (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, pp. 36-37). By observing and analysing policy discourses that operate within policy, it is possible to observe “correlations”, “limitations” and “exclusions” alongside the “rules” and “categories” that are being created and reinforced (Foucault, 1972, p. 25). Just as public policy affects the social imaginary of the public, reform within the ECEC sector affects the professional imaginary of the sector.

Understanding the operation of discourse enables the exploration of how power moves and is exerted. Tracking this movement presents opportunities for questioning such as: “How is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?” and “What is being said in what is being said?” (Foucault, 1972, p. 30). Just as discourse gives rise to “fields of knowledge” to operate as legitimate knowledge and as ‘truth’, policy determines the practices that are associated with these “fields of knowledge”. Dominant discourses, however, span multiple fields of knowledge simultaneously. Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 8) describe “a collection of interrelated policies” as policy ensembles. Policy ensembles are mutually reinforcing policies that position different strategies in interrelated ways that “exercise power through a production of “truth” and “knowledge” as discourse” (Ball, 2006, p. 48). The relationships observable in policy
ensembles are an example of what Foucault (1972, p. 32) describes as “events”. He argues that by dislodging them from these relationship “groupings” that are presented as “natural”, other possibilities become available (Foucault, 1972, p. 32). In a policy context, what is presented as “natural” limits the possibilities available, establishing ‘regimes of truth’ that determine the ‘rules’ by which action is sanctioned (Foucault in Ball, 2006). Discourses in policy “position us” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 8) not only in ways that regulate what is and what is not said, but also in ways that limit the alternatives that can be “imagined”. An example of this is present in the way that neoliberal discourses impact upon a wide range of government policies across domains, such as economic, education, health, and social domains. I return to the influence of neoliberalism in more detail later in this chapter.

As text, policy works to address problems in context. The context includes change and debate over the solutions that policies are supposed to provide. As discourse, policy reflects and represents the “system of practice” and “set of values” (Ball, 2006, p. 48) that circulate and are available in the field of knowledge within which the ECEC profession is positioned.

**Policy analysis as discourse analysis**

Analysis of discourse seeks to look for and disrupt discourses that reinforce some positions and disprove others, while exploring the ‘realities’ that are created by their effects (Graham, 2005, p. 4). Graham (2005, p. 4) describes the intention of Foucauldian discourse analysis as that which “aspires to dissect, disrupt and render the familiar strange by interrogating” the taken-for-granted discourses or truths that operate in certain fields or settings. Through policy analysis, I seek to locate and disrupt policy discourses.

This process of questioning and un-stitching the assumptions of discourse from the practices and actions that they endorse is a form of “deconstructive discourse analysis” that aims at “destabilising meaning as presence, and disrupting dominant, taken-for-granted notions of a subject” (Macleod, 2002, p. 18).

Discourse analysis has significant applicability in understanding the impact of policy on the formation of subject identities or, for my research, ECEC professional identities. Williams (2002) discusses the complex “discursive rules” on which subject formation
rests. He argues that “governing discourse [in policy] offer certain possibilities for concept-formation, for enunciation, for truth and, indeed, for certain subject-positions within discourse” (Williams, 2002, p. 28).

Peet (2003) describes the “regulation of space” based on “dominant theoretical and policy discourse”, strongly establishing the link between discourse and policy. Power is transferred through policy, which is “reinforced by a series of formal-institutional mechanisms” (Peet, 2003, pp. 20-21).

A starting point for analysis described by Foucault is an examination of “those links whose validity is recognized from the outset” (Foucault, 1972, p. 24). Foucault is referring to history and tradition when encouraging the examination of areas that seem impervious to question or that are unquestionable due to an invisibility that stems from their ‘natural-ness’.

My research seeks to identify the unquestioned [or unquestionable] assumptions that underlie ECEC policy rationales as discourses in operation. I undertake this work in a context of significant policy reform, which prescribes professional practices for ECEC professionals. Policy doesn’t only shape the way that problems and solutions are formed; it shapes the ways that professionals can act to address these constructed problems and to demonstrate ‘professionalism’. To analyse the discourses operating in policy (with consequences for the subject position of professionals) is to question the ‘natural-ness’ and unquestioned elements of policy.

**Policy Reform**

A specific focus of my research relates to policy reform in ECEC. I have adopted Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010, p. 45) description of analysis of policy, meaning that my focus has been on analysis to critique and understand policy rather than to develop or evaluate it. Rizvi and Lingard (2010, pp. 54-55) outline a range of “questions for policy analysis” that relate to three broad policy issues: ‘contextual issues’; ‘policy and textual issues’; and ‘implementation and outcomes issues’, which I discuss in the following section.

**Contextual issues**

Rizvi and Lingard (2010, pp. 54-55) identify “historical, political and bureaucratic origins” as “contextual issues” of policy, posing questions relating to where and why policies originated and were adopted to locate their “origin”. The context of reform is important
because it not only enables an exploration of the formation of policies but also the performances of reform that take place because of it. Ball (2006) provides a commentary on the ways in which reform impacts upon professional practice, decision-making and autonomy, describing the uses of technology as mechanisms of monitoring and control. Moss (2014) discusses the impact when one story is presented as “truth”, obscuring other possibilities and creating “political definitions” of what is and what can be. Applying this thinking to the context of reform means that policy is powerful in politically determining what ECEC is and what it can be.

Policy reform represents a break from one set of practices, approaches and rationales in favour of another set. Foucault describes the concept of archives serving as both a basis for what is said and a point from which to break from what is no longer said:

“The description of the archive deploys its possibilities... its threshold of existence is established by the discontinuity that separates us from what we can no longer say and from that which falls outside our discursive practice; it begins with the outside of our own language” (Foucault, 1972, p. 147)

While there are elements of continuity throughout phases of reform, there is an opportunity to explore the discontinuities and the broader contexts in which a set of reforms operates.

In my analysis, I explore the contextual issues that surround the process and implementation of reform to locate the continuities and discontinuities through that process of reform.

**Policy and textual issues**

Policy and change go hand-in-hand. Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 5) describe the way that policy “desires” and “imagines” change. Policy is a mechanism that governments employ to reform systems. Osgood (2012) discusses the impact of reform on practice, describing it as both text and discourse, making it “possible to conceive of policy makers seeking to establish a ‘correct reading’ or the promotion of certain truths” (p. 41). *Truth* and *correct readings* are concepts also taken up by Ball (2006) who notes that “policies are textual interventions into practice” (p. 46, original emphasis). Ball (2006, p. 46) also notes that policy is messy, that even tightly controlled policies leave scope for
interpretation, space for creativity, and room for manoeuvring within its intended bounds.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) discuss how practitioners also contribute to policy: “practitioners can also be regarded as policy makers or potential makers of policy and not just the passive receptacles of policy” (Ozga, 2007 in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Building on the idea of text, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that policies “are always contested, value-laden and dynamic, and are a product of various compromises” (p. 12). Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 72) refer to the political processes in which values are negotiated and contested to form policies. This work seeks to identify the values that are emphasised and inscribed into the text of policy.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) identify five “Policy and Textual” Policy Issues: “Discursive formation of policy and policy problem”; “Textual considerations”; “Interests involved and underpinning the policy”; “Policy Structuration”; and “Resources Issues” (pp. 54-55). Broadly, these relate to the discourses that frame and form a policy and policy problem, to the way that the text works and interacts to construct policy, and to how interest groups, structures of power and knowledge influence the development of policy.

My analysis draws on the concepts of ‘discursive formation’ and ‘textual considerations’, including the ensembles in which these policies exist, to explore ways that the terminology used helps to signal the discourses in operation. This analysis makes visible the way in which policy problems are framed and identified, thus justifying the associated policy response. Discourse analysis, based on post-structural theories, seeks to uncover or make visible hidden meaning, specifically, “discourses of true and false” (Foucault in Graham, 2005, p. 4) within policy texts, and explore the effects these have on practice. As previously noted, discourse in policy ‘positions’, limits and regulates professionals’ practice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In my analysis, I seek to uncover the ways that policy works to position practice.

The impact of text and language in determining both the reading and justification of policy through ‘evidence’ is important for my exploration. I bring these concepts forward through my research to pay close attention to textual constructions of policy.
**Implementation and outcomes issues**

Rizvi and Lingard (2010, pp. 55-56) identify “Implementation strategies” and “Policy outcomes” as key policy issues. “Implementation” relates to the way that policy is executed, while “outcomes” relate to the results of policy implementation.

Practice is an important way of exploring the impact of reform. Ball (2006) points out that controls implemented through reform act to ensure that performance is self-managed and that professionals strive to fit with the system; however, he also notes that there are ways in which professionals take up positions of resistance. Ball (2006) provides a commentary on the ways in which reform impacts on professional practice, decision-making, and autonomy. Reform and policy use technology to create mechanisms of control and monitoring, Ball (2006) argues; however, he further notes that this can result in “cynical compliance” (p. 152). Mechanisms such as policy and assessment ensure that performance is self-managed and that professionals strive to fit with the system.

I am interested in both broad strategies of implementation and in the ways that professionals ‘embed’ and implement [or resist] policy through their practices. The ways that policy categorise practice are significant in shaping ‘what’ the ECEC profession comprises and ‘how’ practitioners perform ‘professionalism’ in their day-to-day practice. The intended outcomes and implementation of policy reforms require considerable attention. The impact of policy in determining and directing practice, or implying a definition of the “ideal professional practitioner” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 55), is both the implementation of policy and the outcome of it. When considering current conceptualisations of policy, it is important to also explore the influence of the neoliberal justifications on which policy interventions are increasingly based.

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**THE INFLUENCE OF NEOLIBERALISM ON POLICY**

The environment in which policy is produced influences its development and implementation. Increasingly, neoliberal values are affecting the way that nations think about governing. Neoliberalism provides both a structure of ideas and a system of operation that has significant influence on the way that policies are developed and the way that governing is done. There is “a preference for the minimalist state, concerned
to promote the instrumental values of competition, economic efficiency and choice, to deregulate and privatize state functions... it rests on a pervasive naturalization of market logics, justifying them on the grounds of efficiency and even ‘fairness’” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 31). A strong feature of neoliberalism is where it locates solutions to social and economic problems:

“neoliberalism focuses on the ways in which influences such as democratic governance, public opinion, mass education, free trade, liberal commercial enterprise, international law and organization, arms control and disarmament, collective security, multilateral diplomacy and ethically inspired statecraft can improve life on our planet” (Kegley & Blanton, 2012, p. 42).

Self-sufficiency, market solutions and enterprise are often promoted as sites of solution. This often rests outside of governments who are shifting effort to “catalysing all sectors – public, private and voluntary – into action to solve their community’s problems” (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, in Ball, 2012, p. 7).

Accountability practices feature heavily within a neoliberal frame. Through systems of ‘self-monitoring’ there is an embedded focus on performance for citizenship. This has given rise to different ways of governing and administering policy for education. Ball (2012), referring to the “shaping of policy through data”, discusses how competition and comparison have driven ‘performance’ in education. Ball (2012) remarks that “[t]here is a marked paradox here in that these techniques, which rest upon the granting of greater autonomy... provide the state with new modes of governing society and the economy and shaping individuals and individual conduct” (p. 34). These ways of governing are placing increased emphasis on a particular kind of measurement and evidence. The promotion of “public management” systems and “evidence-based” policy and practice is emphasising self-reporting, increasingly relying on validated (scientific and quantitative) methods (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 58). This is determining the types of evidence that can be used and determining that which is less valid (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, pp. 49-51).

Ball (2012) contends that neoliberalism exists in both “the material and the social relations involved... [in the] neo-Marxist economisation of social life [and] Foucauldian analytics of governmentality” (p. 3). Referring specifically to descriptions that
inextricably link neoliberalism with globalisation, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that neo-liberalism “is but one way of interpreting globalization” that “presupposes a set of values” aimed at reading globalisation as a shared, interconnected problem that requires “us to recognize our interdependence, but from a particular point of view” (p. 32). Strong links remain between conceptions of globalisation and neoliberalism, however.

Changing relations is a theme that is often explored relative to globalisation, which “has produced not only material economic shifts, but also a changing sense of identities and belonging” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 34). This sense of change in identity relations is mirrored in descriptions of neoliberalism. Ball (2012) explores this concept further, describing how

“the translation of neo-liberal or libertarian doctrine into practice as curriculum of reform... relationships, value and values, purpose and indicators of self-worth are ‘redesigned’. What we do is changed, but more fundamentally who we are and how we think about what we do are changed” (p. 37).

Neoliberal ideology influences reform and policy in a way that shapes identities, belonging and practices: ‘the who’ and ‘the what’. My analysis traces neoliberal discourses in operation throughout policy and field work data.

I have presented these understandings of policy as concepts that I take forward through my research. Policy is shaped by, reflects, and operates as discourse in shaping professionalism and professional practice. Poststructuralist thinking and techniques of discourse analysis present opportunities to analyse the discourses operating in policy. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) provide a framework for policy analysis that I have drawn on to further consider policy and its analysis.

**CONCLUSION**

The conceptualisations of policy that I describe in this chapter enable critical engagement with a broader context in which policy is discursively formed. I conceptualised policy as discourse creating links to concepts of policy analysis as discourse analysis.
Policy analysis assists in identifying the impacts of contextual issues, textual concerns, and the outcomes and implementation issues of policy. My underlying interest relates to tracing the discourses that operate throughout policy design and implementation. This enables examination of the forces that influence the subject positions of professionals in ECEC and integrated service settings. In chapter 8, I draw on these concepts to identify the relationship between policy initiatives and the discourses that are dominant in their development and implementation. In particular, I pay close attention to the influence of neoliberalism, which is increasingly impacting upon, and being applied through policy and reforms.

In the following chapter, I review literature to explore ways in which different definitions of roles in ECEC settings have emerged over time, and in response to different policy emphases. This interrogation demonstrates the different forces and interest groups that have been influential in the ways that ECEC professionals identify in their profession.
Chapter 4 | A Professional Context: Education, Care and Integrated Services

The ECEC sector in Australia has emerged from complex histories and political decisions. The concept of service integration is similarly broad and associated with diverse meanings. I review literature relating to ‘education and care’, and ‘integration’ as key terms important for my research because they impact upon the ways in which ECEC professionals’ understand and perform their professional identities.

In chapter 1, I outlined the policy context, including an overview of some key policy developments and reforms, to describe the context in which my exploration is set. I also provided an outline of the justifications used to support policy and practice initiatives. In this chapter, I refer to these policy trends and justifications to demonstrate their influence in shaping ECEC practice trends.

I draw on terms from critical perspectives to explore dimensions through which active participation contributes to the formation and affirmation of individual identities. I apply this to the ECEC professional context to explore the forces that influence formation of professional identities. I draw on Fraser’s (1995, 2009, 2013) theories of ‘recognition’, ‘redistribution’ and ‘representation’, and employ Kathleen Lynch and colleagues’ work on affective participation and ‘relationality’ (Lynch, 2013, Lynch et al., 2009, Lynch et al., 2012). These theories perform an important role in how I define and conceptualise professional identities and explore ECEC professionals’ participation or inclusion in these dimensions. My review of literature relating to the ECEC profession is framed by dimensions of professional inclusion: recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality. I use these constructs to undertake a critical examination of literature and debate relating to ECEC and integrated services settings. I present a deeper discussion of these concepts in chapter 5.

Given that my research is situated in a context of policy reform, I first explore political and historical literature pertaining to the ECEC sector. Throughout this section, I refer to both previous and current policy directions. I note that my use of the term ‘current’ in relation to policy aims to locate policy at a point in time, that is, ‘current’ at the time of writing, but also to reference their historical roots relating to the flow or ‘current’ that
brought policies and practices into being. The histories of education and care intersect with the policy changes and significantly affect the ways that ECEC professionals identify in their profession. Additionally, the increased call to extend beyond this role to work in integrated ways increases the complexity of identifying, participating, and performing in the ECEC profession.

EDUCATION AND CARE

In this section, I consider the terms ‘education and care’ relative to the terms recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality. First, I explore the concepts of a ‘recognised profession’, considering the different histories of and ‘split’ between education and care and their impact on recognition and identity within the profession. Next, I explore how skills and qualifications are distributed, and how approaches to practice circulate. I then explore the varying degree of influence and representation that ECEC professionals have had in the shape and direction of their field. Finally, I explore the relational efforts, associations and professional bodies that exist in the field. In doing so, I discuss the ways that these histories and influences have shaped what is available to ECEC professionals when identifying in their profession.

A recognised profession: education and care

Historical changes to the ways that ECEC services are planned and delivered have had a significant impact on how ECEC professionals’ roles are recognised. In 2015, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) prepared a literature review that explored the impact of ECEC on learning and development in Australia. The literature review explored the relationship between ECEC attendance and developmental outcomes, giving consideration to the time in and exposure to ECEC and to effect on school readiness (AIHW, 2015). While there was not always consensus in relation to the benefits or relative benefits of ECEC, there was a consistent link made between the quality of the ECEC setting and positive learning and development outcomes. The review reported variance when considering the impact of ECEC on children aged 0 to 3; it found that results varied with the age of the child at commencement of ECEC participation, the time spent in ECEC, and the duration of children’s participation in ECEC. For this age group the review highlighted the potential for negative impacts if the child started too
early or participated for longer hours in a week (AIHW, 2015, pp. 9-10). There was however general acceptance that when the ECEC setting is of high quality, children in this age range tend to outperform their peers. The evidence is clearer for children 3 to 5 years old in relation to the benefits of ECEC attendance. The literature review consistently highlights the positive impact that ECEC has on socially disadvantaged groups, Indigenous children and children from non-English speaking backgrounds (AIHW, 2015, pp. 10-12).

The literature review points to the federal government’s *Universal Access to Preschools* policy as a response to this evidence. There was a split between the type of program that children attended in the year before school in Australia, with 55% in stand-alone preschool compared to 41.7% attendance at a preschool program in a long day care (LDC) setting. The literature review notes that the services are generally deemed to be of equal value in relation to outcomes, noting however that: “Day care without preschool is generally considered to be of lower quality, and it is thought to provide fewer developmental benefits” (AIHW, 2015, p. 11).

The dissection of education and care program types relative to differing outcomes for different cohorts affects the way that ECEC professionals’ roles in these respective services are recognised. This framing reinforces the historical differences between education and care programs.

**Different histories: education and care**

While the language of education and care is emphasised, policy messages often separate the two conceptually. The Australian Government’s investment in ‘child care’ is predominantly linked to supporting “workforce participation of parents with young children, particularly mothers” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 29); thus, one of the key ‘valued products’ of care is workforce participation. In contrast, investment in education, through universal access, has been described as an investment in children and in the economy of the nation (Garrett, 2011).

The emergence of child care services has been linked to the political environment surrounding women’s participation in the workforce. This has seen a transition, and normalisation, of care in Australia from services that were provided to ‘the needy’ to services provided for everyone (Brennan, 1998). Brennan (1998) notes that:
“The ‘mainstreaming’ of child care, however, had been achieved at a high price... Child care has expanded rapidly but has become an instrument of economic and labour force policies” (p. 204).

Early conceptions of education for young children reflected a moral intervention in lower socio-economic areas designed to produce ‘good citizenship’ (Brennan, 1998, p. 14). In Australia the “kindergarten movement” was tied to ideas of social benefit, with reform targeting “poverty-stricken suburbs” with the aim of producing or reproducing “middle-class values such as cleanliness, courtesy, industriousness and thrift” (Spearritt, 1974 in Brennan, 1998, p. 16).

These conceptions of kindergarten associated with educational outcomes encompassed a strong ‘future focus’ related to developing the future adult as a ‘good citizen’, a consumer or a student. Education in the early years is recognised as a mechanism to produce value for the future. There is a significant emphasis on economic and workforce participation: “Children who have a good start in life are more likely to develop the capabilities that will better equip Australia to compete in a global society” (COAG, 2009, p. 7). In contrast, Child Care, recognised for its immediate contribution to the workforce, is targeted at parental participation.

A common criticism of Child Care suggests that government supporting “the workforce participation of parents with young children, particularly mothers” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 29), also supports the absence of parental [or rather, maternal] care and responsibility. Bowman (2010, p. 1) points out that women are regularly faced with balancing their own “desire [or expectation] to care” with the “imperative of labour market participation”. The tension between the ‘imperative’ of participating in paid work, or unpaid care work is complex, drawing in issues of the expectations on women to care and the low value placed on such care (Bowman, 2010, p. 1). Contested criticisms of care have, and continue to be, generally centred on the damaging impacts of non-parental, or non-maternal, care. Brennan (1998), in her exploration of the politics of care, describes common critiques of child care relating to the damaging effects of having one’s child cared for by a non-parent carer. The research of John Bowlby (1951 in Brennan, 1998, p. 59), for example, was often cited to argue against the “maternal deprivation” associated with child care. It is important to note however that this study
focused on children in statutory care. Vernon-Feagans and De Marco (2012), referring to the childcare system in the US, suggest that it is not the absence of parental care that causes damage, but rather the quality of child care that is often low when designed to support workforce participation. Other recent criticisms of care cite bioscientific research to warn against the potential dangers of non-maternal care. Sigman (2012), for example, whose work is widely contested, posits: “take a privileged mother out of the home, and some of the privileges leave with her” (p. 39). Sigman’s commentary explicitly states what is often only implied in policy and embedded in maternal discourses of care, that is, that it is a maternal responsibility to care for and raise children. I will return to the issues associated with gendered allocation of care roles later in this chapter.

Exploration of the development of ECEC over time reveals the ways in which discourses of maternal care and those of citizenship have shaped the landscape of ECEC in Australia [and beyond]. I will now expand on these histories to explore the ‘split’ and ‘integration’ of ‘education’ and ‘care’.

The split and integration of education and care
The split between education and care is both artificial and structurally very real. The integration of care and education is also not a new notion. The table below appeared in an article, written in 1989 and entitled A Comprehensive Model for Integrating Child Care and Early Childhood Education (Caldwell, 1989), in which the concept is traced back to the 1970s. The table below juxtaposes education and care, emphasising the perceived differences between the two. Current initiatives such as The Framework and quality reforms are creating structures to reinforce this integration. Caldwell (1989) describes education and child care, comparing the values associated with each program type, demonstrating the perception that education is seen as beneficial while child care is seen as problematic.
Table 4.1: Market Segmentation of Early Childhood Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Childhood Education</th>
<th>Child Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHARACTERISTIC DESCRIPTORS</strong></td>
<td><strong>HUMAN NEEDS SERVED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an educational service</td>
<td>Provides education and training—enriches the lives of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essentially for the middle class and affluent</td>
<td>Provides care and protection—keeps children from harming others and themselves (starting fires, having accidents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A service for intact families</td>
<td>Encourages value choice and decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operates in a school or centre</td>
<td>Imposes values and instills [sic] behavior [sic] patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is mainly a service for children</td>
<td>Encourages freedom and accepts diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a supplement to home care</td>
<td>Imposes conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is privately funded</td>
<td>Serves as a family support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operates only a few hours a day</td>
<td>Weakens the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratizes children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Sovietizes” children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Caldwell, 1989, p. 69)

More recently, there has been a growing and influential evidence-base supporting the integration of care and education programs and practices in the early years (CCCH, 2009). Research from the United Kingdom shows that outcomes for children are improved when care and education are integrated (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). The Productivity Commission (2011) reported on this trend “with 55 per cent of [LDC] services offering in-house preschool programs... While the number of LDC centres has been increasing, the number of stand-alone preschools has declined” (p. 13). This presents an identity challenge for ECEC professionals in forging new identities within changing settings, identities which embrace both education and care.

**Implications for recognition**

*The Framework* brings the diverse types of care together with education services and re-titles all ECEC professionals as ‘educators’. This represents a shift for all in ECEC roles while reflecting the broader goal of integrating the care and education of children. It also creates an environment where the work of education and care must be reconciled in order to develop an integrated education and care identity. For MacDonald and Merrill (2002, p. 76) this requires a careful balance to ensure that the “emotional and
“relational” elements of care are not subsumed into efforts for “occupational prestige” that promote “skilled work”. Jayne Osgood (2012) describes her research in relation to the negotiated position of predominantly female nursery workers in the UK in identifying in their profession, particularly in relation to maternal discourses that are prevalent in ECEC. Osgood (2012, pp. 111-118) found that the participants in her research held their professional role distinct from their maternal one. The physical and relational elements of the work were acknowledged by participants in Osgood’s research, while contained within the context of their professional deployment. This contrasts with the neoliberal image of professionalism and represents “the struggle to reconcile the necessarily emotional and affective aspects of ECEC practice with demands for more widely accepted constructions of professionalism” (Osgood, 2012, p. 131).

In what is often described as the education and care divide, skilled work is regularly attributed to professionals in education settings as educators. The role of carer, more frequently associated with care settings, has been subsumed into the role of educator. While the intent of this is to recognise the contribution of care programs and their efforts in the education of children, it places value on education over that of care. Maloney and Barblett (2002) note “There is no doubt that the term 'education' receives greater support from the public and government and has a higher status in the community [than care]” (p. 12). They then go on to discuss the disparity between status, conditions, training and qualifications in the context of the divide between care and education (Maloney & Barblett, 2002). Education is considered skilled work that makes a valuable contribution to society.

The ECEC sector is notable for its different purposes and histories that include a complex split and an integration of ECEC services. This is further confounded when additional services are ‘integrated’.

**The [re]distributed profession: education and care**

The ways in which the ECEC field has been both defined and recognised over time has a considerable impact on the way that the professional status, skills, knowledge, and approaches of ECEC staff are [re]distributed in the ECEC profession, particularly when integrating preschool or education programs into Long Day Care settings.
The implementation of the NQF has required change in legislation in each state and territory within Australia (Garrett, 2011) to enable a consistent approach to quality. The NQF brought together the regulation and quality assurance processes for traditionally separate education and care programs, meaning that state-funded preschools and kindergartens are held to the same quality standards as federally-funded Long Day, Occasional and Family Day Care programs (Productivity Commission, 2011). The Framework provides principles, practices, outcomes and an emerging common language for all ECEC professionals (DEEWR, 2009). A range of professional development opportunities and networks have accompanied the roll-out to support the development and implementation of The Framework.

ECEC professionals working in education and care services are expected to consume the same content, which is distributed as professional ‘goods’. Further, they are required to be accountable to the same quality standards established through the reform. In the following section, I discuss ways that these reforms have resulted in the promotion of particular skill sets and minimum qualifications. I also discuss the ways in which professional practices associated with education and care have been historically distributed.

**Skills and qualifications**

Professional goods are distributed, and remunerated differently, throughout education and care services. There are a number of pathways into the field, including a diverse range of qualifications that are recognised by ACECQA, enabling a person to work as a teacher in early childhood services in Australia. The range includes early childhood bachelor degrees that enable graduates to teach children aged 0 to 5, or in some cases the early years of primary school, or a range of primary teaching qualifications, including some that incorporate Graduate Certificates, specialisations, or minors in Early Childhood (ACECQA, No date-a). Brennan (1998) points out that some of the eligible qualifications have limited or no specific early childhood training. This has resulted in a diverse range of professional backgrounds in education and care; hence there are different starting points when considering the distribution of professional goods. It is important to note that while the qualifications to be a teacher in long day care and kindergarten are often the same, “when pre-school teachers are employed in long day
care settings their salaries and conditions of work are considerably poorer than teachers working in pre-schools” (OECD, 2001, p. 33).

From the 1970s, training programs in Australia emerged that were specific to the needs of child care services. The “most significant... was a two-year course known as the Child Care Certificate’ that enabled graduates to be considered teachers in Child Care services” (Brennan, 1998, p. 126). This played a significant part in determining the status of teachers in child care services compared to teachers in pre-schools and kindergartens, sending a message that

“a three-year program of study at a tertiary institution was required for pre-school teaching while a two-year certificate from a technical college would be adequate preparation to work in child care” (Brennan, 1998, p. 126).

As well as affecting professional status, it also shaped the type of information, knowledge, and skills distributed to professionals in child care, creating distinct differences in the practices and identities of ECEC professionals. In their early inception, child care services had a strong focus on tending to children’s physical needs through health and hygiene practices. This led to criticism of care services, which critics perceived to have a focus on “haste” and “task” over care and affection (Brennan, 1998, p. 65). The emergence of certificate level qualifications went some of the way toward rejecting a notion that child care professionals are “merely warm-hearted people who are fond of children” (Australian Pre-Schools Committee, 1974 in Brennan, 1998, p. 84), while continuing to position child care professionals as lower in status compared to those in education services. The structural differences in how skills were distributed reinforced the disparity of recognition afforded to those in care roles compared to those in education roles.

In the 1920s and 1930s, advocates for the establishment of preschool and kindergarten programs distanced those programs from “child minding” and aligned them with “scientific” approaches to measuring child development (Brennan, 1998, p. 52). Kindergarten and preschool teachers were positioned as professional educators aligned with moral causes. A further purpose was to educate parents on child-rearing practices, rather than enabling women to “avoid their responsibilities” (Brennan, 1998, p. 51). The preschool and kindergarten movements emphasised employing tertiary-qualified staff;
as such its workforce was recognised more readily as comprising “professional educators” (Brennan, 1998, pp. 120-121). Their qualifications were heavily influenced by scientific methods of observation, data collection, and measurement, and were loaded with moral imperatives of ‘who’ should care for children and ‘how’. Child care has also been heavily influenced by scientific knowledge based on developmental theories of child development—leading to monitoring of children’s progress in scientific ways (Brennan, 1998, p. 51).

These skills and moral imperatives were distributed in ways that segmented the sector and shaped the approaches adopted in ECEC practice, significantly influencing the professional identifies of those working in ECEC.

**Approaches**

There has been vigorous debate about which approaches deliver the gains promised through investment in early childhood. Competing interests in ECEC outcomes, and the practices that will deliver them, present challenges to ECEC professionals in determining their practice approaches.

An example of this is reflected in debates surrounding when to introduce academic instruction into early childhood programs (Katz, 2012, p. 15), particularly in relation to school readiness. In response to this debate, Katz (2012) promotes the attainment of intellectual goals associated with “reasoning, hypothesizing [sic], predicting, the quest for understanding” as more valuable than “small discrete skills”, “correct answers”, “memorisation”, “application of formula” (p. 15). In contrast, Lonigan and Phillips (2012) provide evidence from “high-quality experimental studies” to dispute concerns about “early targeted instructional efforts”, dismissing these concerns as “untested assumptions about skills philosophically favoured over early-academic skills” (p. 154). Marcon (2012) counters, emphasising the importance of developmental approaches rather than “rote memorization and correctness” (p. 165). Marcon (2012) asserts that there is a need for “high quality instructional and emotional support from teachers” and that an over-reliance on instructional methods “leaves little time for scaffolded teaching that begins with the child’s interest and builds upon the child’s understanding” (p. 163).

The OECD (2001) also cautions against the “push down of school-based literacy and numeracy expectations into the Early Years” (p. 37).
For Cannella (1997), however, all of these approaches pre-suppose a concept of readiness and progression that frames the way that children are viewed, the scope and type of experiences provided, and the type of approaches, knowledge and skills available to those in early childhood education. Cannella (1997) promotes the development of critical analysis skills, rather than any specific type of interventions that they perform.

These approaches are built on conceptualisations and beliefs about children that cast them as developing learners. In the next section, I draw on alternative conceptualisations of children that challenge traditional assumptions of childhood capability in order to identify and critique the impact that these have on approaches adopted in ECEC.

**Conceptualising Childhood**

The conceptualisation of childhood has a significant impact on the ways that ECEC professionals are positioned in their practice. Children can be considered as vulnerable subjects of intervention or active participants in it. Concepts of development and readiness are deeply embedded in policy and practice texts, often to the exclusion of other approaches, which can have a silencing effect on debate.

Srinivasan (2014) discusses this in the context of the ways that cultural and national identity are constructed, circulated, and contested in ECEC settings. Children at a very young age start to consider, question and categorise who they are, and who they are in relation to others, and to hypothesise not only the physical attributes of their own identity but also that of ‘the national subject’. Srinivasan (2014) describes childhood as “a period during which social interactions with those around enables young children to construct understandings about the status of the group to which they belong in comparison with those to which they don’t” (p. 14). Srinivasan (2014) discusses ways that language and practice reinforce particular national identities, while having ‘othering’ effects on children who do not fit within the preconceived image of that ‘national subject’. This conceptualisation of children’s active participation in the construction of their identities, and the capacity that ‘educators’ have to limit and enable children’s contributions to it, illuminate different perspectives [and cast different shadows] on the skills and practices required of ECEC professionals. While The
Framework identifies the importance of culture in relation to practice with children and families, it describes this only in terms of ‘cultural competence’. Srinivasan (2014) looks beyond competencies and requires that ECEC professionals have not only the ability, but also the willingness, to unstitch the deeply engrained assumptions of cultural and national identities. This requires their deep and ongoing reflection on the way that power operates.

Robinson (2013, pp. 78-80) also advocates the need for deeper reflection, for examining ways that children and childhood are constructed by adults as innocent and in need of protection from ‘dangerous knowledge’. Children are ‘othered’ and subjugated through power relations and discourses of innocence. Robinson (2013, p. 5) discusses assumptions of heterosexuality and normative gender roles in ECEC settings, where children are positioned as vulnerable. By positioning children as vulnerable they are made vulnerable by lack of access to the knowledge, language and critical literacy about their bodies that is required to challenge and construct their sexual and other identities. These conceptualisations of children and childhood are largely absent in policy and practice descriptions of the field.

Tracing debate over the most appropriate skills, qualifications, and approaches to working in ECEC demonstrates the challenges associated with developing professional identities in ECEC while highlighting how values are contested through program and policy design. The distribution of practices as professional ‘goods’ through ECEC professionals is often dependent on how they align with competing values, the program that each works in, or the expectations of children. This has the potential to reinforce some approaches, while other approaches are silenced through their absence in policy and practice discourses.

A represented Profession: education and care
The phenomenon of change, by way of reform in the ECEC sector, is inextricably linked to political processes. This raises questions relating to the type of representation available to ECEC professionals. In this section, I discuss the context of reform and the different ways that the ECEC profession has influenced processes of decision-making associated with reform.
Bown et al. (2009) question the influence of the ECEC sector on decision-making, raising the point that scientific knowledge rather than the experience of the ECEC profession has influenced ECEC policy heavily. Long existing studies of equity practices and children’s rights perspectives, while considered of value to practice theory, are rarely cited as the drivers for ECEC policy (Bown et al., 2009).

There are however exceptions in which the field has been influential. The development of *The Framework*, for example, drew on “considerable input from the early childhood sector, with input from early childhood academics and the Australian State and Territory Governments” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). Barnes et al. (2009, p. 5), in an article describing an ‘insider perspective’ of the development of *The Framework*, discuss the process that the Charles Sturt University-led consortium underwent when developing the document, relative to the political process and context in which it was set. For Barnes et al. (2009, p. 5) this process often meant balancing narratives of hope, salvation and political risk that are often in competition when describing or defining the ‘possibilities’ that are available through the curriculum that *The Framework* informs. As such, *The Framework* gives weight to professional judgement and curriculum decision-making rather than prescribing practice.

*The Framework*, as a key practice framework in the early years, encourages educators to draw from a range of theories and knowledge in developing their practice. The language of *The Framework* emphasises exploration of ideology in pedagogy; it emphasises curriculum decision-making rather than prescribing it. *The Framework* provides for high levels of educator autonomy, promoting the importance of educator knowledge of theory, of the children and families with whom they work, and of the community in which they practise (DEEWR, 2009). This places priority on locally-applied practices and places trust in educator knowledge. As a result, educators are prompted to reflect on their knowledge of children, their families and their community, to apply their own professional knowledge and skills, to be aware of how their own beliefs and values affect children’s learning, and to bring their personal styles and past experience to bear on their work (DEEWR, 2009).

While this seems to be in direct opposition to uniform approaches favoured under the neoliberal influence of accountability and efficiency, there are also calls for greater
levels of accountability and transparency embedded in The Framework, initiatives such as The Standards, for example, that include a transparent rating system (Australian Government, 2011). The influence of neoliberalism is embedded in the prevailing focus on the developing child as a future student, adult, and participant in the workforce who contributes to a strong [economic] future. Osgood (2012, pp. 50-55) points out that the level of professionalism that is often associated with environments of “inspection” and accountability have also been associated with pathways to recognition and being taken seriously in ways that “every-day practice” has not widely achieved. Osgood (2012, p. 133) notes however that the “audit culture” is problematic when attempting to account for the emotional work undertaken in ECEC.

**Political influence**

Policy decisions in relation to the design of care services and the type of professionalism required, have largely responded to external forces. Initially, care services were developed independent of government; however, this changed when the political environment shifted to favour workforce participation, leading to care services being developed as a parent-driven service. The imperative of child care shifted to provision of flexible and low-cost service delivery that met the needs of [working] parents. With an emphasis on workforce participation, government policy strongly influenced the design and administration of childcare. This has resulted in care services being largely shaped by external forces of parent demand, workforce demand, or policy demand.

Education programs however emerged out of political processes of influence and advocacy leading to their establishment and wide take-up. Alongside this, those in the field had positioned themselves early as ‘professional educators’ with firmly established professional identities and pre-determined practices. Parents brought their children to a preschool or kindergarten program to benefit from it. Program delivery in this sense was teacher-driven, carrying with it autonomy, authority, and influence, at least with parents and children. Teacher engagement in debates over approaches that produced the best results in relation to school readiness demonstrate a level of engagement in the political process and a level of influence in decision-making in defining the practice of the field.
Both education and care programs have strong links between the professional identities emerging from the core work and the cause that such work serves. Brennan found that the child care workforce, for example, has strong ties to the children and families that it serves, accompanied by an acute awareness of issues of affordability in relation to services provided. Similarly, for education there was early resistance to “become involved in political or industrial campaigns”; early professional identities “were founded in notions of dedication and service” (Brennan, 1998, p. 121).

While in many ways the political environment has determined the direction and practice of the field, it has also offered opportunities for influence and representation. The ways in which ECEC programs have been tied to broader policy agendas, however, created an imbalance between opportunities for sector-led policy reform and those of government.

**A relational profession: education and care**

Relationships are deeply entwined with the content and practice of the ECEC profession and are tightly woven with ideas relating to the purpose of ECEC. In the following section, I discuss literature associated with relationality in ECEC professional identity and examine the networks and structures that have been established to support the broader sector.

**Relational effort and respect**

Historically, ‘education’ and ‘care’ services have been valued for their distinct contributions. Skilled work is regularly attributed to education, while supportive, relational, and routine-based work is attributed to care roles. *The Framework* seeks to address this by retitling all ECEC professionals as ‘educators’; however, because of this the role of carer has been subsumed into the role of educator, subtly placing greater value on education than on care.

MacDonald and Merrill (2002) discuss the lower levels of pay, poorer conditions and low value of care roles as the “care penalty” (p. 77). MacDonald and Merrill (2002, p. 73) comment on the experience of ‘disrespect’ that is often associated with ECEC work. This is a finding that is mirrored in the Productivity Commission’s Early Childhood Development (ECD) Workforce Study which reported on poor perception of ECEC professionals within communities (Productivity Commission, 2011). Care roles in early childhood settings, rather than being seen as professionally demanding, are seen as
residual work that fills the gap of absent parents. Rockel (2009, online) describes “an image of protective care” associated with child care roles perceived as “managing tasks efficiently” and “watching over children who are away from their parents”. For Maloney and Barblett (2002) this type of view feeds the notion “that childcare work is low status and conducted by women who have a natural disposition for this kind of work” (p. 10).

Considering that in 2011 women made up 97% of the ECEC workforce (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 61), issues of gender and the value of care are entwined in the sector. The needs and rights of children as recipients of care are also undervalued when care work is considered a menial and unskilled task. Through this lens, children require only undemanding supervision, with menial tasks efficiently handled for them. This is in direct contrast to preschool and kindergarten teachers who established identities as ‘professional educators’ early. Because of this, preschool and kindergarten teachers are recognised in the field as having identifiable skill sets and qualities, along with access to autonomy in defining the practices and approaches they adopt.

Early Years reforms have contributed to increasing the recognition of the professional needs and status of the workforce. The Workforce Strategy however remarks upon one notable limitation:

“Matters such as lower pay and conditions compared to other sectors are recognised as affecting professional status but are outside the scope of the strategy, as they are for employers and employees to negotiate” (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 4).

While the NQF goes some of the way to addressing these issues, the disparity in status and conditions of the ECEC workforce have not yet been fully addressed.

**Associations and professional bodies**

Associations and professional bodies have played an important role in promoting and advocating for the ECEC profession and are strongly tied to the emergence of ECEC as an issue of public interest. These associations play a significant role in providing a network of support to ECEC professionals in the sector.

The Australian Preschool Association, formed in 1938 and initially limited to supporting the preschool movement (Brennan, 1998), later became Early Childhood Australia, a
peak-body that provided support and advocacy for all ECEC services, helping their work to be recognised as professionally demanding. In contrast, Community Child Care (CCC) was established in 1971 in Victoria under the name Community Controlled Child Care (Community Child Care, No date), which later expanded to NSW, “growing out of the feminist and women’s trade union movements of the 1970s” (Community Child Care Co-operative, No date). Responding to sector trends, these associations and professional bodies became peak bodies for all ECEC program types and professionals employed in them. As other associations affiliated with them these bodies continued to provide support to the sector through advocacy and professional development. This support and advocacy continued throughout the development and implementation of the reform agenda.

*The Framework and The Standards* provide a common language and require standards of quality that are shared across all ECEC services. This shift reflects the broader goal of integrating the care and education of children. It has had a significant impact on all ECEC roles. By leveraging the joint language and standards there is potential to bring the diverse types of care together, with education services as the overarching theme; however, while the language of the standards and frameworks combines concepts of education and care, other structures such as conditions, awards and funding separate the two service streams.

*The development of ECEC programs has a rich and complex history. ECEC professionals experience this complexity in the ways that their roles are recognised and valued, in the manner that professional goods are distributed within the field, in the ways they are represented in policy reforms and implementation, and in the manner that their relational efforts are valued and supported through professional associations and bodies. Identities of ECEC professionals are changing as a result of sector reforms that are bringing traditionally separate practice identities of care and education together. Increasingly, ECEC professionals are called on to affiliate outside of their program type.*

The complexity of the ECEC sector is compounded when ECEC programs are delivered through integrated models of service delivery. Press et al. (2010) point out that integrated services that include ECEC service should “recognise the inseparability of the
education and care of young children”; however, they further note that “it is evident that in some cases historical divisions between care and education have yet to be overcome” (p. 10).

INTEGRATED SERVICE SETTINGS
In the following section I discuss concepts of integrated service delivery. First, I identify ways that integrated service delivery is recognised as producing or not producing value. Next, I explore the set of skills and functions that are promoted and distributed as supporting integration. Third, I explore concepts of representation through the opportunities for decision-making and influence in integrated contexts and policy. Finally, I consider the structures of interrelated professional support promoted in integrated contexts.

A recognised approach: Integration
In integrated settings, ECEC roles are recognised for their contribution to broader social goals. Central to the issue of integration is the view that working in isolation is not the most effective way of addressing the increasingly complex needs of children and families (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, Sims, 2011a). Integrated service delivery stems from a recognition that social and health issues are often interrelated, requiring an integrated service delivery approach, and an understanding that children develop within a family context (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, p. 54). The provision of integrated child and family services in ECEC settings is also situated in response to disadvantage and social exclusion (Sims, 2011a, pp. 87-90). Anning, Cottrell, Frost, Green, and Robinson (2010) describe the emergence of integrated service delivery in the United Kingdom as stemming from trends to ‘join-up’ service delivery and governmental approaches. Integrated services were developed based on the belief that they

“would make services more flexible, more responsive to local demographic groups and priorities, more efficient by reducing overlap of treatments, diagnosis and records and ultimately more effective” (Anning et al., 2010, p. 4)

Integrated services seek efficiency in improving outcomes and are valued as a strategy aimed at improving outcomes for children by working with them in the context of their family and their broader community. ECEC professionals in integrated services are called
on to work beyond their immediate program context and to engage in extended ways with families and the community.

The extent to which integrated services can improve outcomes for children is unclear. The Centre for Community Child Health notes the importance of being “clear about what direct and indirect outcomes can realistically be expected” (CCCH, 2009, p. 2). They go on to identify some direct outcomes such as increasing information available, detecting problems earlier, addressing greater family need and reducing isolation, while warning that improvements in child and family outcomes are ‘indirect flow-on effects’ (CCCH, 2009, p. 2). Anning et al. (2010) also note that it is often improvement to the process of service access that can in turn improve outcomes for children and families. Forbes and Watson (2012) note that there is “a widely shared and almost unquestioned belief that interagency collaboration is a very good thing” (p. 4). Many, however, comment that the evidence to support positive outcomes as a result of integrated service provision is inconclusive (CCCH, 2009, Moore, 2008, Sims, 2011a, Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2009, 2010).

It is important to note that the type of evidence that the above authors refer to is evidence based on scientific and objective research methods. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2010) emphasise the difficulty associated with proving the effectiveness of integration. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2010) note the methodologies used to evaluate integrated services do not yield valid evidence because they are often “based on relatively small-scale ethnographic studies and/or survey data... concerned with the processes of integrated working rather than any outcomes of it” (p. 8). A further issue associated with evaluations of integrated services is that they focus on how to ‘do’ integration rather than considering why services should be integrated. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2010) note

“significant challenges associated with designing research that could provide hard evidence of effectiveness due to the multiplicity of confounding variables, and this may ultimately be found to be impossible.” (p. 8)

Anning et al. (2010) discuss issues with the interaction between evidence and policy, noting that implementation of government policy commitments often outpaces the time required to gather evidence to evaluate it. Anning et al. (2010) argue for using
evaluation and evidence to inform public debate rather than using it solely to inform policy development. They cite Young, Ashby, Boaz, and Grayson (2002) to call for an “evidence-informed society” rather than flawed [and political] evidence-based policy and practice (Anning et al., 2010, p. 9).

Integrated approaches are, broadly speaking, recognised for their contribution to the positive achievement of outcomes for children and families. While questions remain unanswered in relation to the specific contribution of integration, there is general support for these approaches to meet need more effectively and efficiently.

**A [re]distributed approach: Integration**

Integrating services calls for ECEC professionals to work in different ways and a redistribution of the range of approaches and roles within these settings. This has a significant impact on the way that ECEC services are delivered by early childhood professionals. Early intervention is cited as a major focus of integrated service provision. It is in their capacity to rapidly mobilise resources around the needs of children and families that integrated services demonstrate their strength. Interventions focus on the early years in response to evidence that early experience, positive or negative, is a predictor of later life experience, especially as it relates to health and social issues (McInnes & Diamond, 2011). Integrated approaches to service delivery operate on the premise that “improving learning opportunities in the early years can make a life-time of difference” (Sims, 2011b, p. 9). Integrated responses are a point of early problem detection, enabling “programs to be more accessible and responsive to the needs of all parents and children” in increasingly complex program delivery contexts (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, p. 55). Strategies for integration emphasise the skills required to not only work in more joined-up ways but to assess and detect social and developmental risks, vulnerabilities and concerns. There is an assumption that individual professionals will take on additional roles to facilitate this. The intention is that risk factors will be spotted early and the issues resolved. Assessing children’s development and responding appropriately are identified [and distributed] as necessary skills for ECEC professionals working in integrated settings. An undercurrent to this thinking is that, by knowing more workers are able to do more, outcomes will be achieved more efficiently for families. Such efficiency goals are strongly linked to neoliberal influences that are aligned with
the productivity agenda nested in the *Early Years Strategy*. Early childhood professionals working in integrated service delivery are required to go beyond their immediate roles, to operate in a broader context of combined delivery.

Moore (2008) confirms this with reference to a ‘hybrid professional’ who brings “the right experience, knowledge and approach... [who] may facilitate joint working” (p. 40). Anning et al. (2010), drawing on research undertaken in the United Kingdom, also describe “hybrid professional types” (p. 29) and the emergence of ‘new’ professional identities resulting from the interaction between different professional backgrounds within multi-professional teams. For some, this *re-titling* represents a loss of identity that requires a careful balance between *letting go* of their previous professional identity while having their specialisation or professional history acknowledged, and having the flexibility and capacity to “re-affiliate” with a new professional identity (Anning et al., 2010, p. 29). Karila and Kinos (2012) describe the tensions and opportunities that this presents, drawing on their research in Finnish Early Childhood Education contexts. While “Multi-professionalism is seen as a solution for the increasingly complex problems faced by practitioners” (Karila & Kinos, 2012, p. 58), the context of delivery is complicated by the differences between roles, backgrounds and qualifications. Karila and Kinos (2012) describe instances where this has led to generalising roles in multi-professional settings, where “everybody does everything” (p. 68), while conversely highlighting the specific expertise required in some areas of service delivery. Karila and Kinos (2012) highlight a strong emphasis in policy documents in support of multi-professionalism, noting that these “new ideals of professionalism... form an important cultural context for the practitioners to construct their professional identities”.

Sims (2011a), in an Australian context, argues for the need to “re-think how we train early childhood professionals to ensure they are prepared for working in integrated settings” (p. 95). A mixture of skills required in integrated settings must be generated. While Sims (2011a) clearly states that “no worker can have the skills to work across all aspects of integrated service delivery”, her call is to “develop core training and build specialisations around that core” (p. 95) to enable graduates to work as early childhood professionals while maintaining their area of specialisation.
Sims (2011a) cites *The Framework*, identifying the triple responsibility of ECEC professionals as responsibility to children, to families and to the community. This conceptualisation frames ECEC professionals’ role within a vision for the early childhood profession which focuses on addressing the multiple needs of families. While *The Framework* is not explicit in regard to integrating services for young children, it does, as Sims (2011a) points out, frame practice in a way that introduces a broader context for that practice. Policy, practice, and research documents that promote integrated service provision go further than this, calling on all who work with children and families to collaboratively plan for their needs (CCCH, 2009, Press et al., 2010, Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2009, 2010). For this to occur, all professionals need to look beyond their chosen fields to identify the needs of children and families within broader contexts than their own professional backgrounds.

This has led to work being done and discussion taking place in relation to the skills needed for integrating services. Some examples of this are the CCCH Platforms Training (CCCH, 2012a), networks such as the *Early Years Integrated Service Providers Network* (CCCH, 2012b), and formal qualifications such as the Graduate Certificate in Integrated Early Childhood Service Delivery, developed by Sims (University of New England, 2012). Anning et al. (2010) describe a policy model for integration in the UK known as ‘the onion’ that encompasses “governance, strategy, process and front-line delivery” (p. 114), designed to achieve outcomes for children, families and communities. An early childhood professional from these perspectives is an outward-looking professional challenged to extend their skill base and work within a broader context.

There is a strong emphasis on looking beyond a direct delivery context with children in centre-based settings to developing services that are responsive to the needs and values of families. Services from this perspective are designed in consultation and collaboration with children and their families. In addition to acquiring the skills needed to undertake this additional consultative work, ECEC professionals are required to look outward, to tailor services to their community while focussing on early detection and intervention.

**A represented approach: Integration**

Planning and implementing integrated services require different forms of representation in decision-making; for example, the importance of the community
having a voice and shaping services provided is emphasised, though not mandated, in integrated services. Community Development principles, as described by Kenny (1999 in Spiker & Madden, 2011), emphasise citizenship, justice and participatory democracy. There is a strong focus on listening to the voice of the community and fostering services that respond to this. This is evident in examples provided, such as the Sheffield Children’s Centre which is described as growing from: “the desire of ordinary people to influence social change based on local demands” (Broadhead, Meleady, & Delgado, 2008, p. 3). This service has adopted a whole-of-community approach, providing a broad range of services and advocacy with a commitment to representing and reflecting local diversity in employment practices and activities offered. The service sought to address broader community issues in consultation and partnership with community members. A framework developed by the CCCH for the implementation of the Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s Children’s Centres emphasises community involvement within its guiding principles (DEECD, 2010). The framework, outlined previously, has drawn on a literature review undertaken for the Evaluation of Victorian Children’s Centres (Moore, 2008) which describes international examples of integrated services for young children.

It is also important to note the influence of international examples of integrated services in gaining policy support for delivering services in more collaborative ways in Australia. Policies and their funded programs, such as Head Start in the United States and Sure Start in the United Kingdom, have heavily influenced Australia’s policy and practice environment in relation to integrated service delivery (McInnes & Diamond, 2011). Anning et al. (2010, p. 8) locate the emergence of integrated services in the UK within an increased focus on ‘joined-up’ thinking and approaches under New Labour reforms. The justification for their development positions integrated services as a response to complex needs, with the underlying assumption that ‘joined-up’ approaches are better able to address the inter-related nature of issues facing children and families. This influence can be seen in Australia in initiatives such as Best Start in Victoria and Communities for Children at a National level.

Integrated services are described as being influenced by both a shared model of decision-making and a community in which a service is positioned alongside top-down
approaches informed by external sources of evidence. There is great potential for
tension between these two sources of influence.

**An [Inter]related approach: Integration**

In this section, I consider the relational components of working in partnership in
integrated settings. As a result of different partnerships, professionals in these settings
are being called upon to work in different ways. Anning et al. (2010) describe the
expectations of professionals in multi-professional teams in the UK context that
information and assessment processes will be shared and that joint planning for children
and families will be undertaken. Joint planning and collaboration are intended to reduce
the number of professionals working with families. Anning et al. (2010) further describe
how different staffing structures and relationships have emerged to meet the policy
demands for integration:

“teams delivering multi-agency services consist of personnel from a range of
professional backgrounds. For professionals a particular knowledge base, set of
values, training and standing in the community at large give them a particular
professional identity” (p. 10).

Anning et al. (2010) explores the impact of the mixture of ways that ‘joined-up’ working
has been supported in the UK, acknowledging that “categorisations of professionalism
are seen to be intricately linked to the use of knowledge and power in a changing world
of work” (pp. 8-9). Anning et al. (2010) describe interaction between workers from
different professional backgrounds in creating ‘new’ professional identities in multi-
professional teams. As well as processes of “re-affiliation” previously described, Anning
et al. (2010, pp. 36-39) raise a number of other concerns relating to integrating multi-
professional teams. These include difficulties in reconciling different professional beliefs
and practices, differing pay-scales and conditions, challenges associated with combining
funding and budgets, and the dilemmas attached to offering joint professional
development and training. Further, they identified a number of management challenges
in the multi-professional team structures studied in their research. These related to
clarity of line management, coordination of work activity, and supervision and support.
Anning et al. (2010) note that these challenges represent distractions from the work of
the multi-professional teams; they also note that addressing them is fundamental to enabling ongoing work.

A number of mechanisms have been established that encourage collaboration across integrated services settings, among them networks such as the Early Years Integrated Service Provider Network (CCCH, 2012b), and frameworks and training offered, such as the platforms training. As previously outlined, many integrated services are community-driven projects that have adopted community development approaches emerging from locally identified needs. Ife (2001, pp. 101-110) describes this as “change from below” based on local knowledge and decision-making. From this perspective it cannot be assumed that community level action is linked to broader initiatives.

Identifying or not identifying as an integrated service can also act as a barrier to inclusion in networks of professional support. Press et al. (2010) undertook research on the provision of Integrated Services in Australia, seeking to identify best practice models of integration. Intending to survey a diverse sample of integrated service providers across Australia, they developed a database of integrated services; however, in their contact with different identified providers they found that not every service identified itself as an integrated service provider (Press et al., 2010). Diversity in models of integrated service delivery is common, often seen as a strength of the approach: Moore (2008) reports that one of findings of the review of the “Children’s Centre Model” is that “no single model has become accepted as best practice” (p. 20). This adds complexity to the issue of defining integration. Definitions of integrated services need to allow for the diversity of delivery to be reflected and for services to be able to identify themselves within these definitions. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2009) findings in a research review on integrated services support this, noting that “there is some way to go before practitioners and stakeholders develop a clear understanding of integrated services” (p. 31).

The above examples found in the literature demonstrate the complexity associated with participation in the relational networks of professional support associated with integrated service delivery. It also demonstrates a significant degree of professional ambiguity both within and across integrated settings and in relation to working in partnership.
Exploring integration through dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality revealed the complexity associated with integrating ECEC settings with other services. This complexity is compounded by factors relating to the ways the profession is recognised, issues related to the distribution of professional skills, the limits and extent of representation, and the relationships that support participation in the profession. While I have identified broad practices and approaches associated with integration, such as consultation, increased communication and collaboration, examples of implementation remain both elusive and diverse. The context of ambiguity and uncertainty present in this emerging area of work complicates the space in which ECEC professionals participate and perform their roles.

**ISSUES FOR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES**

Early Years services are being introduced into integrated models of service delivery while also experiencing significant practice changes arising from a range of reforms. These reforms are bringing together structures of quality and regulation which affect not only the ways that services are administered but also how ECEC professionals form and perform their professional identities and roles. ECEC services are seen as “central to the range of options necessary to support young children and their families” (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, p. 57). The type of ECEC practices that should be adopted in these settings has not been completely determined, some of them being “most difficult to incorporate and expand in an integrated model” (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, pp. 57-58). This presents a challenge in relation to developing and forming a professional identity within an emerging area of work. In the context of integrated service delivery, it raises the question: for what are ECEC services valued in integrated settings?

Professional identity in integrated service settings is acknowledged as a complex issue. Horwath and Morrison (2007) suggest that, “Ultimately, joint commissioning [associated with integrating services] may lead to the merger of one or more agencies, who give up their individual identities for a shared new identity” (p. 61). The concept of developing a “shared new identity” is significant for ECEC professionals working in integrated service delivery contexts. Cooper (2012) notes a tension in:
“the need to have boundaries to work across if professional identities are not to become merged, indistinct, meaningless and the risk of inadvertently producing a kind of fundamentalist backlash” (p. 17).

Cooper (2012) raises the potential negative impact of “anxieties mobilized by perceived threats to identity” related to a “widely shared anxiety” that professionals in children’s services “are now being asked to do jobs quite different from ones they were trained for” (p. 18). Anning et al. (2010) note similar adjustments required when bringing together people from different professional backgrounds. Anning et al. (2010) argue that asking people from different professional backgrounds to undertake the same or similar duties may result in a loss of professional prestige or status (p. 30). While there are challenges for all professionals associated with developing shared inter-professional identities in integrated settings, there are specific challenges for ECEC professionals in Australia, compounded by high levels of change resulting from policy reforms.

In the literature there is greater attention given to the management and implementation of processes of working in integrated ways. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2010) focus on the diversity of models, services and strategies in integrated settings, while emphasising the importance of high quality provision. Sims (2011a) emphasises that it is not what is provided but how it is provided that is important. Amidst the focus on the what and the how of integration, there remains a great need to reflect on the identities, or the ‘who’ of integration, within and between disciplines when considering integrating them.

In the context of integrated delivery, it is important to acknowledge power imbalances with the introduction of additional professionals into the service settings, particularly in the context of ECEC professionals being seen as lower status professionals. MacDonald and Merrill (2002) note that ECEC has been significantly undervalued and is commonly likened to ‘baby-sitter’ or ‘child minder’ service. Bown et al. (2009) demonstrate this power imbalance with an example, describing how health professionals have been successful in leveraging government investment in the early years while many educationalists, citing the same research over long periods of time, have not. This demonstrates what Honneth (2004) describes as identity harm or ‘misrecognition’. This experience of misrecognition, taken into integrated services as part of new identities,
has the potential to significantly affect the relationships developed with other professionals.

There is a complex intersection between the histories of ECEC and integrated service delivery and the ways in which ECEC professional identities are formed.

Through my review of the literature I have identified neoliberalism and gender as key influences impacting upon professional identity, both in ECEC and more broadly.

**Neoliberal approaches to ‘professionalism’**
The term ‘professionalism’ in ECEC is increasingly being used to promote neoliberal practices associated with accountability and transparency. Below, I outline some of the approaches, techniques and consequences of this neoliberal influence.

Lynch et al. (2012) describe techniques of new managerialism as significant in framing professionalism. They discuss new forms of interaction that are required under this model. These techniques of managerialism and practices of accountability are promoted as professionalism:

“on first encounter, these principles seem laudable as they appear to give openness and accountability to the educational system, However, as education is not simply about ‘products’, prioritizing products over process undermines the very process that created the products in the first instance” (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 199).

Lynch et al. (2012) locates issues associated with the professionalisation of education as an international matter: “Business oriented organizations are increasingly well placed within globalized networks to dictate the priorities of national education systems” (p. 179). These priorities, embedded in policy, are imposed as measures of performance in the practice of educators and teachers.

Measuring performance has become a key technique for managing and shaping professionalism. Ball (2006) notes a distinct shift from a focus on team-based participation to concern for individual performance against set measures, referring to a process of “re-professionalisation” where reform replaces “‘need’ and professional judgement with commercial decision-making” (p. 154). Ball (2006) discusses
‘performance’ as policy technologies that are employed to ensure accountability through self-monitoring. Ball (2006) argues that

“Policy technologies involve the calculated deployment of techniques and artefacts to organise human forces and capabilities into [a] functioning network of power. Various disparate elements are inter-related within these technologies involving architectural forms, functional texts and procedures, relations of hierarchy, strategies of motivation and mechanisms of reformation or therapy” (p. 143).

Increasingly these technologies are used to define what professionalism is. Ball (2006) extends on this concept, describing performativity as:

“a technology, a culture and mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)” (p. 143).

Individual performances can be observed and assessed (against productivity measures) and rewarded or punished. The performative influence of policy links with Butler’s concept of professional performance as constructed and regulated by measurement and monitoring representing normalised behaviour (Butler, 1990, p. 185).

Increasingly these techniques of measuring performance are aligned with descriptions of professionalism. This has significant consequences for ECEC professionalism, especially in relation to the ways that ECEC professionals are recognised and perform their work.

**Consequences**

Anning et al. (2010) draw on the work of Sims, Fineman and Gabriel (1993) who argue that defining a profession requires a systematic body of knowledge and monopoly of power over its application, a self-regulating code of ethics, the sanction of the community at large, control over one’s professional qualifications, and an altruistic orientation. This definition of professionalism contrasts with that of neoliberal professionalism which is based on practices of measurement and accountability. Lynch et al. (2012) note that concepts of care and relationality do not easily translate into this neoliberal framework. Osgood (2012) describes a similar uneasy translation, citing policy
effort in the UK relating to ECEC in relation to formalised processes to ‘recognise’ the status of the ECEC workforce as professional. This included formal processes of accreditation, labels and job titles, in contrast to the Australian example that involved implementing a learning and development framework, with all staff in ECEC settings being retitled as educators. This labelling and categorisation has a significant impact on identities in ECEC settings, particularly in relation to other professions.

Anning et al. (2010) discuss conflict as a core component of developing professionalism in integrated settings. They note that adjustment is required to bring together professional backgrounds, redefine ‘typical’ work/duty boundaries, and re-work the status associated with specialist roles and positions. Anning et al. (2010) highlight the complexity that emerges in relation to status when bringing different professionals together.

**Gender and professionalism**
The approaches, techniques and consequences of neoliberalism have a significant impact on defining professionalism in what Osgood (2012) describes as a “highly gendered employment sector” (p. 120). Osgood (2012) argues that “neo-liberal discourses promote a form of professionalism that foregrounds masculinist values and cultures” (p. 120). By applying the concept of professionalism that is associated with accountability through measurement, “the affective realms of caring and nurturance... [become] understood as lacking in professionalism precisely because it is deemed hyper-feminine” (Osgood, 2012, p. 120).

Urban (2005, p. 30) makes a connection between the “emerging debate on ‘quality’” and “the development of an early years’ profession”, suggesting that this marks an increasing level of public responsibility for the care and education of children. Others (Butler, 2004, Fraser, 2013, Lynch et al., 2012, Osgood, 2012) argue that care is still largely treated as a private matter. Urban (2005) locates “early childhood institutions [as] fields of social and cultural interactions... [and that] ‘Quality’ then becomes a question of attitudes and values” (p. 33).

Osgood (2012) further notes that challenges and tensions arise when attempting to blend technical and relational elements of ECEC roles.
“Whereas the demands to demonstrate neo-liberal technicist competence occupy space in nursery practice, this is frequently superseded by subjective and collective commitments to an ‘ethic of care’ performed through emotional labour” (p. 133).

Lynch et al. (2012) identify examples of critique of such practices in Ireland where “new managerial values were perceived to be in tension with the traditional person-centred and child-centred values” (p. 183) and were resisted.

Fraser (2013) points out that issues of lower pay and recognition are common in female dominated or “pink-collar” industries (p. 162). For Fraser (2013), this is an issue of justice, or rather of cultural and economic injustice:

“Here we have a category [gender-difference] that is a compound of both status and class. Not only is gender “difference” constructed simultaneously from both economic differentials and institutionalised patterns of cultural values, but both maldistribution and misrecognition are fundamental to sexism” (p. 163).

Lynch et al. (2009) describe the complexity associated with care as work that brings together ‘language and thought’ with ‘empathic understanding’ (p. 57). They argue that

“Care is work because it requires competence, skill and learning to do it well. It also takes time and effort and levels of attentiveness and responsiveness at the emotional level that are not required in much non-care work” (Lynch et al., 2009, p. 57).

In the context of an increasing ‘Audit Culture’, Osgood (2012, p. 124) observed tension in the ways that ECEC professionals reconciled the emotional work that they performed with working in an environment of increased surveillance and accountability. Osgood (2012) describes how her research participants explained deploying their emotional labour within a frame of setting professional boundaries. Osgood (2012) observed the ways that they rationalised their affective contribution to ensure that boundaries were in place between their “natural self” and their “performing self” (Hochschild, 1983 in Osgood, 2012, p. 134). In this way they withheld or limited ‘unprofessional’ care in favour of ‘professional’ care by “setting emotional boundaries” (Osgood, 2012, p. 134). While accountability, associated with professionalism, provides a pathway to
‘professional status’, the “normalising discourses” embedded in reforms “obscure” the “other forms of professionalism” embedded and embodied in ECEC practice (Osgood, 2012, pp. 50-57). Rejection of, or distancing from maternal discourses, is an act of ‘professionalism’ because it distances ECEC professional identities from what is considered natural or unskilled work. Osgood (2012) describes this phenomenon in her research as participants reflecting a need for professional boundaries.

**Other opportunities for professionalism**

Dalli and Urban (2012) argue that “we must acknowledge practitioners’ experiences and encourage their capacities to building and interpreting the professional body of knowledge” (p. 165). Dalli and Urban (2012) explore professionalism by examining multiple examples of practice in ECEC across the world. They observed the differences and the influences that shape professionalism, describing “a very different professionalism: one that is a constant exercise of creating shared understandings, negotiating actions and maintaining connections – between children and adults, laypersons and professionals, individuals and society” (p. 168). They highlight a range of insights, drawing on their research, that shows the diversity of experience that makes up the construction and conception of professionalism. Dalli and Urban (2012) highlight strong links between “knowing” and “being practical” (pp. 169-170), suggesting that professional knowledge was always deployed in context. Context was important for participants of their research who reinforced the relational characteristics of their work, along with the continuous need for awareness and presence, to manage both the demands of their work and the need to remain open to other possibilities, beyond plans (Dalli & Urban, 2012, pp. 169-170). Dalli and Urban (2012) found that the professionals in their study constructed their professional identity in relation to their immediate context and the broader socio-political context in which their work is embedded. Professionalism from this perspective was in constant balance, a process of managing competing contextual influences and demands. Dalli and Urban (2012) did not identify a singular ‘professional identity’; rather, they found a “diversity of individuals acting professionally” (pp. 169-170). This construction of ‘professionalism’ rejects “hierarchical relationships between research and practice and narrow understandings of evidence-based practice” (Dalli & Urban, 2012, pp. 169-170). Dalli and Urban (2012) argue for a critical ecology of the profession: “A critical ecology of the profession takes the concept
of critical reflection one step further, beyond the individual practitioner to the entire professional system” (p. 171). This critical ecology sits well with the concept of integrated service delivery and my interest in the ways that ECEC professionals identify in these settings.

By focusing on the approaches, techniques and consequences of neoliberalism in defining professionalism, I seek to look beyond ‘professionalism’ as performed through practices of accountability and transparency and focus on the “other forms of professionalism” embedded and embodied in ECEC practice (Osgood, 2012, p. 50). This is a key concept that I take forward in my research to frame the ways that I view, and seek out examples of, professionalism through my policy analysis and field work.

**CONCLUSION**

By organising my review of literature relating to education and care, and to integrated service delivery, using dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation and relationality, I have identified key themes and trends relating to my field of study. Each dimension has enabled a different type of exploration. Using the lens of ‘recognition’, I uncovered a range of complex and value-laden histories that split the ECEC sector and position integrated approaches as a preventative investment. The dimension of redistribution guided my exploration into the distribution of skills and approaches, revealing ways that this distribution of professional goods limits or enables selected practices. The struggles for influence in the shape and structure of the sector were made visible by exploring the dimension of representation. Using the dimension of relationality, I have explored the relational focus of the role along with the interrelated networks or groups with which professionals identify, from whom they gain support, and with whom they can debate.

The economy, scientifically gained knowledge, and the capacity for effective and efficient interventions to offset future social problems have all played a key role in the neoliberal shape of ECEC and integrated services today. I have identified a consistent focus on early detection and intervention, a prevalence of scientific knowledge either as practised through objective observation and measurement or as offering evidence to support practice, and a pervasive neoliberal influence.
The influence of neoliberalism in integrated services is reflective of the environment in which ECEC exists. Through the introduction of The Standards and The Framework, ECEC has experienced increased levels of accountability and transparency that improve the quality of services, it is argued; however, the consequences of neoliberalism, some claim, have negative impacts on families. Sims (2011a), for example, conceptualises integrated services as a redistributive strategy to redress the impacts of social exclusion due to neoliberal influences. Regardless, the influence of neoliberalism is deeply entrenched in the ways that services and policy are designed, delivered, funded, and measured. Further, neoliberalism has had a significant impact on the ways that professionalism is described and understood.

My theoretical and conceptual work has provided a structure to explore the ways that policy is formed discursively. Through this I have engaged critically with policy literature and identified themes for further investigation. While this provides insight into the influences of policy on professional identities, it doesn’t completely address my research question. I am also interested in the ‘who’ of integrated services in relation to policy. To support this exploration, I introduce an additional theoretical framework drawing on critical theory, exploring concepts of participation and performance in the ECEC profession and adding to the poststructuralist foundation described in chapter 2. I further explore dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality along with concepts of social inclusion as a lens through which to consider the work of professional identity formation within a policy intervention context.
I am interested in the ways that ECEC professionals experience and construct their professional identities in practice settings. To precede this exploration, I introduce and discuss theorisations of justice to further conceptualise identity and accommodate the context in which ECEC professional identities play out. I draw on theorisations of justice for two reasons: first, because concepts of justice and inclusion are closely aligned with policy intentions of ECEC and integrated services that seek to address disadvantage; and, second, these concepts provide ways of exploring how professionals come to identify in their profession.

In the first section of this chapter, I situate critical theoretical perspectives within my broader theoretical framework. I follow by using a justice lens to extend my conceptualisation of identity. I draw on the work of Nancy Fraser and her theories of ‘Recognition’, ‘Redistribution’ and ‘Representation’. In addition, I discuss Kathleen Lynch’s theorisation of ‘Affective Equality’. I use these theories to fashion a model of professional inclusion for use as a lens through which to analyse my research findings. By doing this, I extend and enrich the theoretical lens[es] through which I conceptualise professional identities to explore ECEC professionals’ participation or inclusion in these dimensions as dimensions of professional inclusion.

**CRITICAL THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL POSITIONING**

In this section, I discuss concepts of justice that are strongly associated with critical theories. Lather (1992) argues that research based on critical theory “takes into account how our lives are mediated by systems of inequity such as classism, racism and sexism” (p. 87), and that this type of research is positioned in an emancipatory paradigm. Emancipatory or ‘post-positivist’-based inquiry is “overtly values-based”, rather than neutral, with a focus on change and challenge to inequality (Lather, 1992, p. 92).

In chapter 2, I discussed poststructuralist understandings of discourse and power, and their impact on subject formation through systems of governmentality and norms. Through this, I established a frame through which to consider governmentality and
performativity. While critical and poststructuralist ideas contrast significantly, my approach seeks to create a productive tension between critical theory’s location of power within “systems of inequity” and poststructuralist concepts of power as relational and contested. I am influenced by Pattie Lather’s (2006, p. 36) concept of “hybrid of positionalities” in my effort to harness the tension that exists between the two theoretical traditions that I discuss. Lather (2006) calls for approaches that enable moving in, out and between different positionalities, that is, using practices of hybridity to address the ‘misrepresentation’ or taming that occurs when paradigms are conceptualised or mapped as linear structures with firm boundaries. I draw on these ideas in an effort to negotiate the different emphases prompted by post-structural and critical traditions.

CONCEPTUALISING JUSTICE WITHIN PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY
Theorisations of justice provide additional analytic tools to conceptualise identity by exploring conditions in which individual participation is enabled or limited. Nancy Fraser (2009) argues for a three-dimensional approach to theorising justice, “incorporating the political dimension of representation alongside the economic dimension of distribution and the cultural dimension of recognition” (p. 15). Kathleen Lynch builds on the ideas of Nancy Fraser, identifying the limitations of traditional views of inequality that are linked to political, economic or cultural exclusion (Lynch et al., 2009). Lynch asserts that an ‘Affective’ dimension of ‘relationality’ is required alongside ‘political’, ‘cultural’ and ‘economic’ dimensions. Fraser (2009) and argues for ‘recognition’, ‘redistribution’, ‘representation’, while Lynch et al. (2009) argue for an additional focus on ‘relationality’ as a remedy or response to injustice.

Recognition, redistribution and representation
Recognition, redistribution and representation, Fraser (2009) argues, are three remedies to address exclusion, stemming from theorisations that prioritise justice and inclusion. Theories of redistribution promote work to address economic or ‘material’ exclusion, while theories of recognition encourage action that deals with identity and cultural or ‘non material’ forms of exclusion (Morrison, 2010). The concept of representation moves beyond the economic and cultural to include the political frames
of power and decision-making, where recognition and distribution are allocated. Fraser frames the above as ‘a three-dimensional theory of justice’ which, for Fraser (2009), suggests that:

“The most general meaning of justice is parity of participation. According to this radical-democratic interpretation of the principle of equal moral worth, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life” (p. 16).

I find the concepts of ‘recognition’, ‘redistribution’ and ‘representation’ useful in helping me to explore ways in which professionals come to identify and negotiate ways to have a say in the way that their profession is structured and performed.

**Recognition**

Fraser (1995) positions recognition as ‘institutional’ arguing that recognition is tied to the ways in which subjects come to experience being valued and respected in a way that either affirms or denies their existence or status. Fraser (2009, p. 16) sees misrecognition as a status injury resulting from a lack of institutional recognition, which in turn prevents parity of participation. Fraser (1995) draws the distinction between different types of cultural or symbolic and economic injustices (p. 70). Misrecognition, or “status inequality”, is a result of “institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value” that deny participants “requisite standing” (Fraser, 2009, p. 16). Fraser places responsibility on the structures and institutions that prevent participation through “the harms of disrespect, stereotyping, and cultural imperialism” (in Young, 1997, p. 149). She places a strong focus on addressing denial of rights and oppression in response to lack of institutional recognition. Strategies of recognition, from this perspective, are distanced from symbolic gestures associated with healing identity wounds and are focussed on redressing social inequity. From this viewpoint, material and cultural harms resulting from misrepresentation are often interwoven; however, institutional misrecognition is experienced when one is:

“...denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life—not as a consequence of a distributive inequity... but rather as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of
interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect and esteem” (Fraser, 2013, p. 176).

In contrast, others, Honneth and Farrell (1997) for example, favour a view of recognition as ‘intersubjective’. Honneth and Farrell (1997) describe intersubjective recognition as being linked to the formation of identity. They argue that recognition is achieved through individuals’ ability to see their “own needs”, their “moral accountability”, and their “good or valuable capabilities” as valid (Honneth & Farrell, 1997, pp. 25-26). Honneth and Farrell (1997) locate identity formation in the social community; that is, identity is formed relative to others through “struggle for respect”, such that recognition is achieved through “intersubjective conflict” (p. 22). It is only in being recognised that the individual can come to see themselves as a full member of society. Honneth (2004) refers to the “anchoring” of “societal morality” or “political ethics” (p. 353) that lie beneath the surface of society and that tie people in or leave them out. This provides possibilities for exploring the experience of gradual affirmation of patterns of behaviour and the positive formation of identity thereby, or conversely, misrecognitions through the “experience of disrespect or humiliation that cannot be without damaging consequences for... identity formation” (Honneth, 2004, p. 354).

Butler (2004, p. 132), drawing on the work of Benjamin, describes concepts of intersubjective recognition as a relational act of recognition that is the consequence of the interaction between a Subject and an Other who understand that they are both reflected by and separate from one another. Butler (2004) describes communicative practice as the vehicle for this recognition, referring to negation, the knowledge that the other is not me, as another key element in the process of inter-subjective recognition. For Butler (2004), this “differentiated relationality” (p. 132) reflects an ability to relate to, and at the same time recognise, difference. While recognition is seen as a desirable norm for Benjamin, Butler (2004, p. 133) suggests the process may constitute a risk of destruction in that being recognised as ‘Other’ has the potential to cause harm.

These conceptualisations of recognition emphasise elements of justice concerned with concepts of culture, identity and symbolism; however, they track different routes to achieving recognition. ‘Inter-subjective recognition’ deals primarily with identity formation in interaction with people and society (Butler, 2004, Honneth & Farrell, 1997),
while ‘institutional recognition’ emphasises the structures that inhibit participation (Fraser, 1995, 2009).

These concepts of recognition are useful in assisting me to consider the ways that ECEC professionals come to experience recognition within their profession, and to understand the ways in which they might value the contribution that their work makes. These concepts provide opportunities for me to explore the cultural construction of the ECEC profession, and to consider the pathways and performances that are recognised as fitting within the roles of ECEC professionals.

**Redistribution**

According to Fraser, the concept of redistribution is situated in an economic dimension, theorisations of redistribution having a strong focus on economic inequality associated with structural division in resource allocation. Responses to redistribution are guided by theories of distributive justice which argue for parity in resource allocation. Fraser (2009) positions redistribution in response to the “economic structures that deny [people] the resources they need in order to interact with others as peers”, resulting in “distributive injustice or maldistribution” (Fraser, 2009, p. 16). Fraser (2009) locates causes of economic injustice in examples of exploitation, deprivation and marginalisation (p. 16). Fraser (1995) further argues that redistribution requires “political-economic restructuring” to address issues of disparity: “redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labour, subjecting investment to democratic decision-making, or transforming other basic economic structures” (p. 73), for example. Redistributive remedies address “the problem [of] the class structure of society, which corresponds to the economic dimension of justice” (Fraser, 2009, p. 16).

Fraser (2013) argues that “neither recognition theory alone nor distribution theory alone can provide an adequate understanding of justice”. A ‘bifocal’ view is needed to look simultaneously through the lenses of recognition and redistribution (p. 162). Fraser (2009) argues that only this view “can supply the necessary levels of social-theoretical complexity and moral-philosophical insight” (p. 17). Fraser (1995), in her original body of work pertaining to justice, placed emphasis on recognition and redistribution as political dimensions. Later, however, she gave further consideration to the distinct political dimension of justice.
The concept of redistribution, applied to the ECEC profession, provides a way for me to explore the ways that the professional ‘goods’, such as skills, knowledge and professional development (content and opportunities) are distributed and made accessible in the field. In addition, it provides me with a lens through which to examine the economic construction of the profession and the ways in which this positions professional identities, practices and performances.

**Representation**

In Fraser’s earlier work, outlined above, her concern with justice was perceived to be cultural/symbolic and economic/material. Fraser later expanded her model, asserting that justice requires a third conceptual sphere that considered parity of participation and introduced a political dimension concerned with representational participation. For Fraser (2009), this brings together the ‘what’ of justice with the ‘who’, noting that previously this was assumed to be “national citizens” (p. 13). This conception was built on an assumption of territorial boundaries and a defined ‘Nation’. Fraser argues that the ‘nation’ of justice has shifted, with globalisation disrupting the idea of static and fixed national boundaries as the limit to the ‘who’ of justice. Fraser (2009) notes that:

“Whether the issue is distribution or recognition, disputes that used to focus exclusively on the question of what is owed as a matter of justice to community members now turn quickly into disputes about who should count as member and which is the relevant community. Not just the “what” but the “who” is up for grabs” (p. 15).

For Fraser (2009), this opens space for four key questions when it comes to justice: “How much economic inequality does justice permit?”, “Which kinds of differences merit public recognition?”, “What is the proper frame within which to consider first-order questions of justice”, and “Who are the relevant subjects entitled?” (p. 17).

The ‘Political’ dimension “concerns the scope of the state’s jurisdiction and the decision rules by which it structures contestation” (Fraser, 2009, p. 17). Fraser (2009) argues that belonging and membership, through ‘representation’, or misrepresentation, are determined through struggles in the political dimension. These struggles establish who is entitled to be represented in which decisions. Fraser’s exploration highlights that there are political obstacles to justice and parity by way of exclusion from claims to
justice that enable participation for some and deny it for others (Fraser, 2009, pp. 18-19).

This concept of representation is useful in considering the implications of policy and reform for the ways that ECEC professionals participate and perform in their profession, in particular, how this affects the way that ECEC professionals experience influence in determining the work of their profession.

I seek to apply these concepts to the context of the ECEC profession in order to describe and explore ways in which professionals come to identify, exchange their professional currency, and negotiate to have a say in the way that their profession is structured and performed.

**Love, Solidarity, Care and Affective participation**
Given the relational nature of the ECEC profession, additional concepts are required to explore and account for its significance. In this section, I draw on the work of Kathleen Lynch and colleagues to describe a fourth area for consideration: the affective dimension, concerned with concepts of love, care and solidarity. Lynch cites Fraser’s theories of recognition, redistribution, and representation, building on them to address what she refers to as the limitations of traditional views of inequality linked to political, economic or cultural exclusion (Lynch, 2013). Lynch elevates the importance of relationality as a dimension of equality, presenting it as an additional affective dimension of justice, alongside political, cultural, and economic dimensions. The affective dimension is made up of love, care, and solidarity work.

Lynch et al. (2009, pp. 1-3) set up the premise for an affective dimension of equality by asserting that the burdens and benefits of care are distributed unequally. This affects, by way of deprivation, those doing care work. Lynch et al. (2009, pp. 2-3) argue that *love, care, and solidarity* work, foundational to all other areas of public and social life, need to be taken seriously for equality to be achieved. As such, they are matters for public interest and investment. It is what Lynch et al. (2009) call “nurturing capital” that results in a more inclusive and “care-rich” future where members of society benefit from the time and resources that others have invested in them (pp. 39-50). Lynch (2013) views the human need for care as a standard condition, or primary “social good”, that requires public effort, noting inequality in the *doing* of care work, particularly for
women, and inequality of *receiving* care as two forms of affective inequality of concern (pp. 176-177).

Lynch et al. (2009) argue for the significance of care in the above areas, observing that patriarchy has obscured the “care-world” from importance by interpreting it as a private matter. Affective equality, therefore, does not feature as an issue of importance within public policy, the economy, law, or education (Lynch et al., 2009). Unequal distribution of relational effort is not seen as an area of public importance.

Lynch et al. (2009) uses the example of education to demonstrate ways that society and public policy privilege rationality, logic and cognitive domains over affective ones. They argue further that, as a result of the general absence of an “affective” emphasis, education prepares students for economic, political and cultural participation while neglecting the relational and other-centred elements of participation. In this framing, care and relationality remain private matters while the student is prepared for ‘real work’. This does not mean that care is absent in education: “Care is central to education but primarily as a process that enables learning” (Lynch et al., 2009, p. 58). Care remains distinct from education and other types of paid care work because of the longer-term relationships in which it is embedded that exceed the tasks that are associated with its enactment. Lynch et al. (2009) note that care cannot be completely delegated:

> “Parents can pay someone to care for their children and those entrusted with the task may do it very well, but the relationships they are building with those children are their own: they cannot build the parents’ relationship” (p. 19)

The concept of affective equality offered by Lynch et al. (2009) privileges ‘other-centred’ relations and values intimate, strong, interdependent attachment. This contrasts with an often ideal[ised] construction of citizenship that is positioned as neither dependent nor interdependent; rather, “the ‘care-less’ view of the citizen sets the agenda for... education where future adult citizens are being prepared” (Lynch et al., 2009, pp. 79-90).

Further, Lynch et al. (2009) discuss the complexities of:
“relationally integrated emotional and moral aspects to caring (love labouring)... that could neither be simulated nor bought on a simple hire and fire basis” (p. 76).

Lynch et al. (2009) argue that being cared for and loved is as important as doing care and love work, and that when this is distributed unequally it represents a significant deprivation. Affective equality acknowledges the importance of interdependence and relationality, along with the harm caused by its absence. Other forms of inequality and exclusion also accompany affective inequality. For those experiencing this form of inequality, this manifests as disproportionate responsibility along with low reward that results in further exclusion from material and social participation. Lynch offers this additional ‘affective’ dimension, incorporating relational and care effort, in response to what she identifies as a gap in Fraser’s tri-focal model that deals with political, economic and cultural exclusion.

In the following section, I bring concepts derived from Fraser and Lynch together to propose a model to explore participants’ participation and performances in their profession.

**A Model for Professional Inclusion**

In the previous chapter, I used concepts of recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality to review literature to explore ways in which ECEC and integrated service settings have emerged over time, and in response to different policy emphases. This provided a useful analytic tool to organise the literature and to demonstrate the different forces that influence the ways that ECEC professionals identify in their profession. This has further analytic application for my research. In the following section, I draw on the previous discussion and the concept of social inclusion to fashion a model of professional inclusion.

Social inclusion is commonly used to describe approaches that aim to combat factors that lead to the exclusion of members of society. For Saunders (2003), the concept of social exclusion moves beyond limiting definitions of financial disadvantage associated with poverty to concepts of participation. Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud (1999) propose four dimensions for understanding inclusion and exclusion. They argue that exclusion can be measured by low participation in activities associated with one or more
of the following dimensions: production, consumption, political influence, and social life. These descriptions of exclusion extend beyond financial disadvantage associated with poverty, acknowledging various dimensions of exclusion that can occur, in combination or individually, at different times (Saunders, 2003). Smyth (2010), for example, discusses domains of “material resources, employment, education and skills, health and disability, social, community and personal safety” (p. 11) in relation to research that attempts to measure the depth of exclusion. Sims (2011a) further summarises the multidimensional elements of exclusion as disengagement, service exclusion, and economic exclusion. Sims (2011a) argues that ECEC and integrated services are strategies for social inclusion through their alignment with early intervention approaches and that they aim to address exclusion and disadvantage. Efforts to increase social inclusion aim to address exclusion by enhancing people’s capacity to participate in the breadth of society.

The concept of participation in professional life (through practice), rather than social life, is of particular relevance to my research. I have re-imagined concepts of social inclusion for application in a professional context. I have fashioned the dimensions of justice, offered by Nancy Fraser, Kathleen Lynch and colleagues, into a model through which to explore professional inclusion. Through this model, I seek to demonstrate the interconnections between the cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions of justice and the performative dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality through professional practices and performances. Fraser (2009) and Lynch et al. (2009) discuss remedies for disparity in recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality located within the respective dimensions. In contrast, I developed my model to explore participant practices and performances of their professional identities relative to these concepts. From this perspective, it is not parity of participation that I seek to explore, but rather the ways in which participants undertake performances of recognition, redistribution, representation, and relationality. Through this I seek to locate the influence of discourses that operate in and through cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions affecting ECEC policy and practice.
The *professional inclusion* model is designed to help me review participants’ professional performances, not as observable acts, but, as descriptions of their practices alongside the intention and values that underpin them. Tracing professional performances relative to concepts of recognition and redistribution enables me to explore cultural and economic dimensions of identity formation in a professional context. Similarly, the concept of representation provides insight into the political dimensions of the profession: focusing on the exchanges and struggles of being, and of being heard, provides rich insights into ways that identity is politically [per]formed and negotiated. Concepts of relationality provide opportunities to examine often undervalued relational efforts, which are significant to my research. Exploring affective discourses offers a lens through which to explore relational and other-centred work undertaken by ECEC professionals. Just as concepts of social inclusion extend beyond financial disadvantage associated with poverty (Saunders, 2003) and consider other forms of exclusions, my model of *professional inclusion* provides an analytical framework to consider ECEC professional participation and performances in integrated services and in a context of policy reform.

In figure 5.1 I have illustrated the merging of the concepts offered by Fraser (2009) and Lynch et al. (2009) using Celtic knot art to depict an unbroken, interwoven thread. This demonstrates the interdependence between the different dimensions of equality and justice. The unbroken strand weaves between itself and the central circle to create loops in which cultural, economic, political, and affective dimensions are depicted. I have labelled the overlapping threads inside the central circle as recognition, redistribution, representation and relationality. They represent performative dimensions that are connected to and influenced by discourses that circulate within the respective dimension.

The thread is intended to illustrate the fluidity of struggles for justice while the circular band in the centre of the drawing represents the threshold of equity or the point for parity to be negotiated against. The circular band is the point of tension between the dimensions of justice and the performative dimensions. I propose that this be imagined as the point where practices are enacted and the impacts of justice/injustice or the balance/imbalance of power are experienced.
Figure 5.1 depicts a balanced version of the model in which the performative dimensions (recognition, redistribution, representation and relationality) are equally influenced by the dimensions of justice (cultural, economic, political and affective). In contrast to the ‘balanced’ image, Figure 5.2 illustrates the impact of imbalance on the model. In the image below, the loops of the political and economic dimensions are stretched out to show an expanded emphasis and influence. When this occurs, the cultural and affective loops contract, de-emphasising these dimensions. While the inner circle, where practice is enacted, holds the performative dimensions in place, the dimensions of justice become imbalanced. This flexible and fluid model provides a useful way of examining the shifting connections and tensions between policies and practices.
Figure 5.1 Model of *professional inclusion*

Figure 5.2 Model of *professional inclusion* with an economic bias
The image of the knot also provides a metaphor through which to weave critical and poststructuralist perspectives. The knot can signify the interweaving, struggle, and entanglement of working with complex issues and concepts. This model of professional inclusion enables me to consider the cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions of inclusion through a poststructuralist lens. It allows me to explore these dimensions in relation to discourses that shape and position subjects. It also permits consideration of the issues that policy addresses through a critical lens. This further enables analysis of the performances and participation of ECEC professionals when navigating their practice identities in a context of policy reform and within integrated service delivery.

My work in developing this model is influenced by the concept of bricolage, described as “the poetic making do” (de Certau, 1984, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6). A bricolage is an emergent construction of methods and paradigms that are pieced together in response to the needs of the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

I designed this model to enable me to explore the professional and policy context in which ECEC professionals identify and practice. The aim of this tool is to hold concepts of multiplicity and constructed identity that poststructuralist thinking offers while overlaying this with concepts of parity and participation. I use these dimensions to identify discourses in the literature that script the performances of ECEC professionals in their field. I pay closer attention to this interconnection in the next chapter in which I discuss my methodological decisions.

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have assembled a model of professional inclusion that demonstrates the interconnections between the cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions of justice and the performative dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation and relationality. I aim to use this to investigate professional practices and performances.

I have approached the concept of ‘identity’ through concepts of participation, performance and inclusion. I have used the concept of social inclusion to explore participation, in particular dimensions of professional life that impact upon perceptions
of inclusion and exclusion. I have drawn the dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation (Fraser, 2009) and relationality (Lynch et al., 2009) together with the concept of social inclusion to explore the impacts that they have on identity formation within a policy intervention context.

I have used these critical theoretical perspectives to extend and overlay the poststructuralist foundation that I articulated in chapter 2. This positions my research, at times uncomfortably, between critical and poststructuralist theoretical lenses. While poststructuralist theories have provided a range of analytic tools to explore policy discourses, together with the performative ways that subject identity is formed, I found that I needed additional ways to explore disadvantaged identities. Critical theories provide a pathway to explore the professional context in which ECEC professionals identify and the social issues to which ECEC policies respond. To accommodate this complexity, my research design and analysis supports multiple possibilities and different ways of interpreting and understanding the findings presented.

In the previous chapters I have outlined the framework that I will use to undertake my research along, and have explored the literature relevant to my topic. In chapter 2, I outlined the foundational, poststructuralist framework that guides my work. In chapter 3, I further discussed theoretical conceptualisations of policy related to my exploration. I then examined literature in areas of the ECEC profession relevant to my study. In the following chapter, I lay out the methodologies that I adopt for my research, building on my theoretical concepts and exploration of key literature.
Chapter 6 | Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the qualitative methodologies that I have assembled to explore the question guiding my research:

*How are the professional identities and practices of Early Childhood Education and Care professionals in integrated settings influenced by policy reforms?*

A focus of my research is the interaction between policy and ECEC professional practice. To assist my exploration, I defined a number of minor or sub-questions, including:

*What compatibilities and tensions arise between policy and practice?*

*How does policy influence and contrast the ways that professionals articulate and practise their roles?*

*To what degree does policy shape practice and reflect practice?*

I have selected qualitative methods because my inquiry involves the collection and interpretation of data with a focus on “production of meaning” (Dowling & Brown, 2010, p. 88) to “understand the complex world of human experience and behavior [sic]” (Krauss, 2005, p. 764). I use two types of qualitative methods to undertake my research: *Policy Analysis and Interactive Methods.*

In the following sections I first trace the methodological decisions I made in the design of this research. Next I discuss my approach to policy analysis, which includes discursive analysis of key terms across policy texts. I then discuss the interactive methods I used—semi-structured interviews and activity-based focus groups—along with my approaches to analysing the data, and the design and ethical considerations relating to the research.

Below, I discuss the decisions that I have made in assembling the methodologies that I utilise in my research.

**METHODOLOGICAL DECISIONS**

The term methodology encompasses both the practical and conceptual elements of research. This includes the methods and techniques used as well as the conceptual elements of research that link theory and epistemology as drivers. Gough (2002) asserts that, as a complex concept, methodology “cannot be reduced to simple, fixed,
unambiguous definitions” (p. 1). Krauss (2005) describes the concepts and relationship between methodology, epistemology and ontology as important in research design, mapping out what each of these components represents:

“ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it” (pp. 758-759).

These elements are combined and interact in research to influence the ways that topics are explored and findings framed.

Krauss (2005) describes the epistemological concern of qualitative research as positioned to construct or ‘make meaning’ from human experience, or “social knowledge”, in multiple and subjective ways; rather than seeking static or objective answers, the task of qualitative research is to ‘translate’ assumptions of subjectivity “into distinct methodological strategies” (p. 764). It is for this reason that I pay attention to the techniques used alongside the theoretical and epistemological drivers.

Dowling and Brown (2010, p. 17) assert that all research carries with it both theoretical and empirical ‘spheres’. The theoretical sphere refers to the broad area of study from which knowledge is drawn to think about the problem, that is, the general assumptions that shape the form of inquiry and the analysis of data collected (Dowling & Brown, 2010). The empirical sphere relates to “the general area of practice or activity or experience” that ‘claims’ will be made about (Dowling & Brown, 2010, p. 17). In the previous chapters, I have established the theoretical sphere that I draw on for my research, combining poststructuralist theories (Butler, 1990, 1998, 2004, 2014a, 2014b, Foucault, 1970, 1972, 1977, 1988a, 1988b, 2003, 2007) with critical traditions (Fraser, 1995, 2009, 2013, Lynch, 2013, Lynch et al., 2009, Lynch et al., 2012). These theories play an important role in how I define and conceptualise my empirical sphere, exploring ECEC professionals’ ‘identities’, their participation and inclusion in their profession, and in dimensions of Professional Inclusion. Consistent with these approaches, I rest my methods on constructivist assumptions of “multiple realities constructed by people” (Patton, 2002, p. 96). Further, I weave critical concepts of justice and poststructuralist concepts of discourse and power to explore concepts of identity and professional inclusion. I apply this theoretical frame to my exploration of ECEC reform, policies and
explorations undertaken with ECEC professional participants to accommodate multiple realities and multiple answers to questions of identity.

My theoretical and methodological decisions have been influenced by multiple perspectives. To accommodate the tensions that emerge from these differing approaches, I have drawn on Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) concept of bricolage in qualitative research. Bricolage provides a metaphor for describing the construction of methodologies using combinations of theoretical perspectives which provide valuable tools for exploring complex meaning-making (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) use the concept of montage to demonstrate the “blending together, overlapping, forming a composite, a new creation” (p. 4) that occurs through the process of bricolage. This type of multi-layered research has the capacity to span personal and political experiences simultaneously.

Through my research design, I have sought to accommodate complexity and to combine approaches and perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that

> “the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry” (p. 5).

My metaphor of the knot stitches together different “competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6), yet does so in a way that both maintains their distinctiveness and illustrates distance and tension between them. The model that I have fashioned is functional, serving as a visual reminder of the movement and tension that exists, not only between perspectives and paradigms, but also between the spaces of policy, practice, and theory. This helps to “explore competing visions of the context” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6).

Lather’s work further assists in exploring traditions in tension. As previously noted, I am influenced by Lather’s (2006, p. 36) concept of a “hybrid of positionalities” in the design of my methodology. Lather (2006) calls for approaches that enable moving in and out and between different positionalities – the practices of hybridity to address the ‘misrepresentation’ or taming that occurs when paradigms are conceptualised or
mapped as linear structures with firm boundaries. I draw on these ideas in an effort to negotiate the different approaches prompted by post-structural and critical traditions. I have constructed methods that enable high levels of participant involvement in contributing meaning, while maintaining a lens that may uncover relations of power in shaping professionalism and professional identities. The conflicts and contradictions that are present between these theoretical perspectives is both generative and useful in interrupting my analysis and assumptions.

Lather (2006, pp. 35-36) is also critical of narrow, positivist views that suggest ‘scientific’ methods are the only methods that are reliable. For Lather, there is a need to challenge the notion that there is one way of conducting research that holds together, and holds apart, dominant and emergent knowledge. Thought is both contained within and excessive to its container, and, while binaries seek to structure and categorise thought, the extensions that Lather seeks make space for different ways of researching and knowing. Through emergent knowledge, counter knowledge becomes possible and powerful. This provides the flexibility to draw in multiple perspective to explore my question.

Consistent with these approaches, I reject the positivist notion of a single answer, truth or identity in my research design. I do not seek to uncover ‘generalisations’ through my research; instead I seek “information-rich cases for study in-depth... from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). I aim to identify dominant discourses presented in policy and in the descriptions of professionalism that shape ECEC professional identities.

In this chapter, I outline the methods that I have identified as relevant to my theoretical framework, methods that enable analysis consistent with the research question. By articulating the theoretical perspectives that shape my work, I am acknowledging that “the process of analysis is always interpretive, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint” (Wetherall, 2001 in Graham, 2005, p. 3). My aim is to demonstrate reflexivity and rigour by providing a clear pathway from methodology to analysis that incorporates theoretical perspectives. My intention is to reflect a re-thinking of positivist terms such as “validity, generalizability and reliability” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 19), and to articulate the
assumptions I make to justify decisions of design and conclusions reached. By ‘situating’ myself in my research methodology, I am declaring an interest and making explicit some of the assumptions that determine the analysis and its conclusions (Dowling & Brown, 2010). I do this by outlining the methodological decisions and the methods adopted to undertake the research and analysis.

In the following sections, I outline the methods I used for analysis of policy, and the interactive methods I have adopted, along with the processes of recruitment, ethical engagement and analysis.

**POLICY ANALYSIS**

In this section, I outline my approach to policy analysis, drawing on the theoretical and conceptual definitions outlined in the previous chapters. Policy analysis offers ways of exploring a set of influential documents outside of the context in which they are ‘implemented’. Through my exploration of policy texts, I review each one in relation to its meaning, along with its context and origin, the formation and structure of its discursive text, and the implications of its implementation. My critical examination highlights discourses in operation within the field and across the broader policy environment, enabling a different type of exploration of practitioner positioning and identification.

In my research, I seek to identify the impact of policy and reform on the way that ECEC professionals identify in their profession. To explore this impact, I have undertaken a discursive analysis of five key policy documents, previously outlined, drawing on poststructuralist concepts to deconstruct policy intention through an exploration of ECEC reform and policy texts.

I commenced my analysis with a thorough reading of each policy to identify key terms and themes, followed by a range of analytical activities. As outlined in chapter 3, my analysis of the policy texts draws on Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010, p. 45) description of analysis of policy. Specifically, I draw on their “questions for policy analysis” to critique and understand policy relating to the three broad policy issues: “Contextual Issues”, “Policy and Textual Issues”, and “Implementation and Outcomes Issues” as previously outlined (pp. 54-55). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) discuss approaches to qualitative
content analysis that are used to analyse text as data (p. 1278). Qualitative content analysis, for Hsieh and Shannon (2005), “goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text” (p. 1278). This can be used to explore either explicit or inferred communication. I have adopted qualitative content analysis throughout my research.

I analysed each of the policy documents individually, then considered them as ensembles, that is, “a collection of interrelated policies” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 8).

**Policy and textual issues**
My analysis draws on the concepts of ‘discursive formation’ and ‘textual considerations’, including the ensembles in which these policies exist, to explore ways that the terminology used helps to signal the discourses in operation. In my analysis, I pay close attention to the presence of discourses that influence the ways values are allocated through policy. I have used terminology within the text to explore and uncover ways that the policy and policy problem are constructed. My analysis of policy texts explores the effect and impact of discourses on practice. This provides insight into the ways that policy regulates ECEC professionals’ conception of what is possible in practice. Discourse analysis, based on post-structural theories, seeks to uncover or make visible hidden meanings, specifically those that are presented as “natural” (Foucault, 1972).

I draw on Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010, pp. 54-55) five “Policy and Textual” Policy Issues: “Discursive formation of policy and policy problem”, “Textual considerations”, “Interests involved and underpinning the policy”, “Policy Structuration”, and “Resources Issues”. Using these issues, I explore the way that text works to construct policy. Drawing on my research question and literature review, I have identified the following terms that reflect areas of interest for my research:

- references to, the descriptions of, and the positioning of children;
- the uses of and purposes attributed to the terms—
  - care,
  - education,
  - education and care, and
  - integration.

I used summative approaches to explore the policy texts to “quantify certain words” relating to key terms identified in ECEC practice to explore “the contextual use of the
words” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1283). Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1285) argue that this approach focuses on the “underlying contexts” of texts, revealing patterns. I have searched each text for references to these terms, counting the instances of reference to each term (and its variations). I have grouped the references to each term into categories to explore the different ways that each term is used, quantifying instances for each category.

By quantifying the use of the terms and the associated categories, I have been able to identify the purposes of each document and to identify the categories that are given emphasis within and across policy texts. From this work, I have created a master list of categories related to each of the terms across all of the documents. My analysis identifies purposes implied through the uses of the identified terms. This makes it possible to locate dominant discourses through policy emphasis, within and across texts, where certain categories are omitted, and to consider what this might signify.

Using these techniques, I am able to make visible the way in which policy problems are formed, thus justifying the associated policy solutions or outcomes that a policy seeks to achieve.

**Implementation and outcomes issues**

I am interested in how ECEC professionals identify through and in relation to policy. To explore this, I emphasise the impact of dominant policy discourses in determining and directing practice or implying the “ideal professional practitioner” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 55). I follow Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010, pp. 55-56) approach to identify the “Implementation strategies” and “Policy outcomes” of policy in operation.

To explore references to practices in the text, I adopted a “conventional approach”: through my reading of the texts, I identified references to practices, categorising them based on the patterns that emerged from the text as data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). I paid attention to exploring the practices and approaches ascribed to professionals through these documents, quantifying references to various practices and approaches described in the policy documents. I present analysis of each policy document and compare my analysis across documents. I draw on this analysis to articulate what I refer to as ‘policy-endorsed practices’, that is, practices that are emphasised most frequently across the texts. This includes approaches and practices
that are described, both explicitly and implicitly, across the texts. In my analysis, I review each ‘policy-endorsed practice’, linking each one to the associated skills required to adopt this approach or practice. The purpose of this work is to identify and articulate a range of practices that are ‘endorsed’ by the emphasis in the policy texts.

In my research, I treat policy texts as data for analysis. I have a significant interest in the ways that policies are constructed, and how they influence and are influenced in context. Applying a framework to my policy analysis allows me to carefully consider policy and how it influences identities and practice in the ECEC sector. In the next section, I outline the interactive methods that I employ in my research that help me to explore the ways that these policies and frameworks are experienced, alongside and in interaction with other forces, in integrated ECEC settings.

**INTERACTIVE METHODS**

I used a range of interactive methods, including interviews and activity-based focus groups, to gain insight into participants’ experiences of their profession, of policy, and of integrated service delivery settings, and to interrogate how these experiences affect the way that they understand their role and its function. I use data drawn from interactive methods to analyse the ways that participants describe their work and identify within it.

I do not seek to uncover ‘generalisations’ through my research; rather I seek “information-rich cases for study in-depth... from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). It is the ‘richness’ (Patton, 2002) of the data that is important in qualitative research. Further, this type of rich detail “interrupts the process of developing generalizations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). While this is considered a weakness for quantitative research, it is a strength for qualitative research.

I held an initial hour-long interview with each participant individually, followed by three 90-minute activity-based focus groups with all participants, then finished with an additional interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I completed my fieldwork over a period of seven weeks with the focus groups running over three consecutive weeks. I outline the approaches I adopted below.
The design and implementation of my interactive methods have been informed by my policy analysis methods. I have incorporated findings from my policy analysis into interview and focus group discussions.

**Semi-structured interviews:**
Semi-structured interviews blend structured questions with space for participant-led discussion. Semi-structured interviews often include open-ended questions that enable participants to direct their responses, adding additional ‘richness’ to the data (Patton, 2002). Seidman (2006) reinforces the need to balance exploration and questioning, as distinct from probing, with allowing space to hear what the participant is saying. I have selected semi-structured interviews to enable participants to explore what is important to them in response to questions relating to my research topic. Seidman (2006, pp. 93-94) also acknowledges that semi-structured interviews are a “human” rather than a “mechanical” process and that they rely on the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. This means that the process is guided, but not tightly controlled, and that it is likely to be different between different participants, producing diverse responses. While for some research projects this would present limitations, the diverse responses based on individual experience provide rich information for my exploration.

I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each participant before and after the focus group sessions. I designed questions, influenced by concepts of *professional inclusion* previously outlined, to explore each participant’s individual experience of inclusion in their profession. I invited participants to explore their roles in relation to others within the ECEC service and in relation to their work in an integrated setting. I also asked participants to identify and comment on the influence of, and their interaction with, policy documents, frameworks, and directions. I provided scope in the interviews for participants to explore what was important and relevant for them in describing themselves in their profession. By posing open questions about each participant’s background, I aimed to enable them to describe what was important about themselves rather than seeking specific demographic information.

In addition to collecting valuable insights from participants, I used interview data to feed into the design of the focus group activities. I designed the interviews to provide participants with an opportunity for reflection prior to participating in the focus groups.
I undertook the second interview after the final focus group, adopting a similar structure to the first interview. I provided participants with the opportunity to explore, in-depth, more personal reflections and insights relating to their experience of participating in the focus group activities and in their profession.

**Activity-based focus groups**

I brought participants together through three activity-based focus groups to explore a range of issues relating to ECEC identity and policy. I designed a range of activities, including ranking, using shapes and structures, and using space, to encourage interaction and discussion. I outline these in more detail below.

Colucci (2007) argues that focus groups, useful for “eliciting answers and promoting discussion”, can be particularly useful “for talking about sensitive topics” (p. 1424). Activity-based focus groups use a range of activities to elicit responses in different ways. They shift the focus from answering questions to taking action in a group setting. Activities such as ‘ranking’ are used to elicit judgements (Colucci, 2007), while ‘Drawing a Picture’ and ‘Picture Sorting’ (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 45) are useful for organising content and ideas, particularly in relation to relationships and position, using space and creativity. Krueger and Casey (2009) contend that this “helps participants to collect their thoughts and explain how they see a concept or idea” (pp. 45-46). For Colucci (2007), a focus group “possesses elements of both [participant observation and individual interview] techniques while maintaining its own peculiarity and uniqueness” (p. 1422).

While activity-based focus groups seek information in ways that are both engaging and informative, they can present challenges in the implementation process and for interpretation (Colucci, 2007, p. 1432). This can present challenges for participants in contributing to, and having the confidence to contribute to activities (Colucci, 2007, p. 1432). In addition, the types of data that focus groups can produce can be diverse and difficult to analyse.

I outline the specific activities that I used for my research below.

**Ranking**

I facilitated a range of ranking activities with participants drawing on content that they generated through brainstorming activities or content that I introduced. Content for ranking was written on sticky-notes or printed on small pieces of paper that could be
arranged and ordered based on the ranking activity being undertaken (see chapter 10 for rank order and content).

I asked participants to rank this content in a number of different ways, including in order of importance, in order of most to least time spent on each category of activity, and in their order of importance, drawing on the group’s shared understanding of what is emphasised through *The Framework* and *The Standards*.

Negotiating the ‘rank’ of the various content generated discussion on different perspectives and values, which provided valuable insight into the ways that ECEC professional participants see their work and its contribution. This also enabled me to trace the discourses and norms of professionalism that were apparent in participant responses and which constructed their articulation of their performance as professionals in integrated ECEC settings (Butler, 1990, 2004, Foucault, 1977, 1988a).

**Shapes and structures**

In addition to generating content about their practices, I asked participants to brainstorm other roles that they performed in integrated service delivery. The activity required participants to plot these roles on shapes. The shapes that I used represented different concepts; for example, I used a large circle to explore concepts of fitting in. Similarly, I used a pyramid to reflect hierarchy and status. These activities were used to prompt discussion in relation to the ways that roles connected [or disconnected] in integrated services.

I led participants through these activities first from their own perspectives. I then asked them to repeat the activity from the perspectives of others - for example, the perspective of a Maternal and Child Health Nurse or of a family.

This activity provided ways of making visible relations of power, along with the multiple, complex and contingent (Weedon, 2004, p. 83) ways that the variety of roles performed are viewed and positioned.

**Using space**

In the final focus group, I asked participants to cluster together the categories of practice that were most compatible with each other and to distance practices that were less compatible, using all of the ‘practice categories’ and ‘policy-endorsed’ practices. The
participants used wall space to place compatible practices on one wall and less compatible practices on the opposite wall.

I used probing questions throughout all of the activities to gain additional insight into the decisions and the process. I have provided an outline of the activities for each focus group in Table 6.1 below, including a number of individual activities that I integrated into the focus groups.
Table 6.1 Session Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session one</th>
<th>Session two</th>
<th>Session three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group activity:</strong> Brainstorm functions of ECEC professional role</td>
<td><strong>Group activity:</strong> (Using categories from session one) From group knowledge of <em>The Framework</em> and <em>The Standards</em> rank from most to least important</td>
<td><strong>Group activity:</strong> Use all categories and ‘policy-endorsed practices’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster functions into categories</td>
<td>Present ‘policy-endorsed practices’</td>
<td>Position all categories clustered as most alike/compatible to least alike/incompatible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual activity:</strong> Rank the above categories on stair case</td>
<td><strong>Individual activity:</strong> select and describe the policy practice most important to you</td>
<td><strong>Individual activity:</strong> Stand and describe where you ‘fit’ most and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group activity:</strong> Re-rank categories from most time spent to least time spent</td>
<td><strong>Group activity:</strong> rank them in order of importance</td>
<td><strong>Group activity:</strong> brainstorm other professionals and position them inside/outside a range of structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group activity:</strong> using policy practices in the order drawn from analysis and the categories as ordered in the previous group, compare and comment on the similarities, differences, and other observations</td>
<td>Repeat activity, taking on different perspectives within the setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I used these techniques following Colucci (2007, p. 1424), who argues that they are useful in generating content while also generating discussion and reflection in a group setting. Focusing on participating in shared activities rather than giving individual responses provides less threatening and engaging ways in which to think differently about a range of issues and topics (Colucci, 2007, p. 1424).

This provides rich data to analyse relations of power, the norms that operate through a variety of values positions articulated, and the discourses that are in operation in the descriptions and values attributed to different descriptions of their role, their profession, and its contribution to society.

I used a combination of methods to provide different opportunities for participation. While the focus groups generated ideas and discussions they could not cater for individual reflections in the ways that the interviews did. This generated a vast amount...
of data for analysis. Below, I outline the ways that I have drawn the data together for analysis.

**Analysis**

I collected three types of primary data through my interactive methods: 1) data from activity-based focus groups and semi-structured interviews; 2) ‘products’ or ‘artefacts’ from Focus groups and individual activities; and 3) photographs, video and audio recordings and summaries of focus groups along with audio recordings from interviews. I have analysed the data in a number of ways to explore emerging themes and to create links to the theoretical perspectives and concepts that have informed the research design and question.

**Data**

I captured audio recordings and field notes during my interviews which I then had transcribed. I used this data to develop profiles of participants, to respond to specific areas of inquiry, and to explore the themes emerging from the interviews. The data that I collected through the focus groups includes the ‘products’ of the activities or ‘artefacts’ for examination along with video and audio recordings of the comments and discussion within the groups that enabled observation of participants while engaging in the activities. I use this data to gain additional insight into:

> “nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and... observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share when doing so would be impolitic, impolite, or insensitive” (Kawulich, 2005, online).

This provides important perspectives, adding to the richness of the content drawn from the focus group activities. This also enabled me to ask follow-up questions in the final interview.

**Emerging themes**

I use thematic analysis to explore the data gathered through the interviews and focus groups. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). I selected this method because it is appropriate to make sense of the “large quantities of relatively unstructured data” (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006, p. 140) that my methods produced. I coded
and themed my data in sets to draw out themes across my various data sets and to analyse and articulate the links and insights between the data, literature and theoretical perspectives employed.

Theoretical explorations
I have designed my questions with strong links to the concepts of professional inclusion outlined in chapter 5. I have drawn on the concepts of recognition, redistribution, representation (Fraser, 2009) and relationality (Lynch et al., 2009), framed as professional inclusion, to explore participants’ engagement in their integrated settings and within the broader policy environment. I designed specific questions (see appendix 6.1) for the interviews to explore concepts of inclusion and to interrogate how participants, as ECEC professionals in integrated settings, experience their profession and work as being: recognised as producing or not producing value; distributed as a set of skills and functions and as a strategy of reform; represented in decision-making and political influence; and related to structures of professional support. I then planned focus group activities to build on this work and to explore related areas of inquiry.

By exploring concepts of participant experience relating to their practice and policy engagement, aligned with my model of professional inclusion through interviews, my approach has been a “Directed Approach”, one that seeks to “validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). Through this I identified ‘participant-described practices’ and experiences and related them to my model of professional inclusion.

I used the focus group activities to investigate areas of compatibility and tension between different articulations of ECEC professional roles and functions when drawn from policy analysis and when articulated by participants.

* I have combined policy analysis techniques with analysis of interview and focus group data to interweave findings from both to further explore the compatibilities and tension of professional identities when viewed from different sources of data. My analysis combines a detailed analysis of policy and reform texts with analysis of participants’ rich accounts of operating in an integrated setting and in relation to policy and reform.
contexts. I do this to explore the ways that practice and policy are formed and framed in ECEC and in integrated practice, and to interrogate the categories of practice that I have drawn from both work with participants and from policy analysis, as well as to explore the ways that these influences shape the scripts and performances that are available to ECEC professionals in integrated services settings. This enables me to explore how ECEC professionals identify relative to policy, and the ways in which policy functions to position professionals and their practice.

**Sampling and recruitment**

Because I did not seek to uncover ‘generalisations’, my target sample size for this project was relatively small at six to eight participants. I sought to recruit ECEC professionals with any qualification level working in an integrated setting. Given that my study was specific to the context of integrated service settings, I did not seek demographic, geographic or setting diversity rather it was the context of providing ECEC services in integrated or multi-service settings that was important. For my research, this meant providing one or more types of ECEC programs alongside community and family support programs; for example, providing maternal and child health services, family support or supported playgroups in the same site with established working relationship between the services. The research project was selectively promoted to sites on this basis.

I distributed fliers and information packs to integrated services within the greater Melbourne area using a snowball method. I asked sites to which I sent the information to pass it on to other services to which the research may be relevant. I made initial contact with potential sites in person, by phone, and by email to distribute fliers and offer information sessions to discuss the research in more detail.

I circulated the call for expressions of interest to four individual sites along with two large providers who operated multiple services that matched the service setting criteria. I reached an additional five services through network connections.

Two services expressed an interest in the research but could not commit to it in the proposed timeframe. Another service indicated that the research didn't fit with its priorities, and the others either did not respond or did not take up the invitation to participate.
Participants

I recruited six participants from a single integrated service that expressed their interest in the research. The director of the service, who had agreed to participate in the research, was supportive of staff participation, allowing them to attend during their paid hours of employment.

The six participants, all female, worked in the same integrated service setting. They held different positions within the setting, with an even split between ‘leadership’ positions, that had a focus on management and supervision, and ‘on-the-floor’ positions – staff who worked directly with children. That the participants were all female was not surprising given the gendered make-up of the ECEC sector, as previously outlined. While I did not seek demographic diversity, the small group of participants was made up of women who varied in age and length of service and who represented a diverse range of experiences, roles and backgrounds. I have developed profiles of the participants derived from data collected, which I use in the following chapter to introduce them.

I made the decision to proceed with a sample from a single integrated service for two reasons. Firstly, the level of interest expressed by staff within the setting met my recruitment targets. Secondly, I identified benefits relating to working with a single setting in that participants had a shared understanding of what integration meant within their setting. This meant that time could be spent addressing my research question rather than comparing and contrasting different models of integration.

About the integrated service

The centre is a purpose built integrated service that offers state funded Kindergarten programs for 4 and 5-year-old children and Long Day Care programs for children 0-5. The centre and operates a Toy Library and offers a range of facilitated playgroups throughout the week along with a range of additional family and community support programs. The centre has consulting and multi-purpose rooms available to community groups and other services and is co-located with a Local Government operated Maternal and Child Health Service.

The centre is located in a low socio-economic area and services both working and non-working families. The setting is situated in a community with high levels of cultural diversity and a high proportion of new migrants and refugees.
The centre seeks to be a welcoming place for children and families in its community and is committed to providing high-quality ECEC programs that has strong connections with its community. It develops formal and informal partnerships with local services to provide a range of additional support services to children and families who attend.

The service is a community managed not-for-profit service with a voluntary board of management.

I drew on my theoretical framework to construct my approach to sampling and recruitment. This was also guided by the ethical standards in place to guide research with human participants. I outline my approach to ethical engagement below.

**Ethics**

Because my research involved human participants, approval from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee was required to undertake this project. Additionally, because the research was conducted in Victorian State Government services, it required permission from the Victorian Government’s Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. I identified the following ethical considerations for my research: seeking informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity; managing processes and participant reactions; and ensuring that the benefits outweighed the burden and risk of participating.

I asked participants to give consent to participate in the research by signing a consent form. I developed and provided each potential participant with a Plain Language Statement along with the consent form that outlined the research project and purpose, what was required, the guarantee of confidentiality, and other information about the process and the implications of consent. As well as seeking signed consent from participants through the recruitment stage, I kept the issue of consent on the agenda at each stage of my fieldwork, reminding participants of their right to withdraw their consent at any time.

I made a commitment to participants to protect their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses to the fullest extent possible, within the limits of the law. To protect participant’s anonymity, I invited participants to select a pseudonym use for the research. Where participants did not select their own pseudonym, I selected it in
consultation with them. I refer to participants only by their pseudonym throughout and do not identify the location and name of the site. I also informed participants when seeking consent that it was not possible to guarantee complete confidentiality due to the small sample size and sharing within a focus group environment and that this might limit their anonymity, particularly between members. I asked participants, when signing their consent, to keep any information shared within focus group discussions strictly confidential. In addition I provided participants with transcripts of their interviews to ensure that they were comfortable with what they had said and with it potentially being quoted in the research.

Through the process of seeking ethical approval, I gave consideration to the potential risks associated with participant reactions to the facilitated process and questions; for example, when planning, I gave attention to managing conflict and disagreement within the focus group settings. I was alert to the potential for negative reactions to questions that prompted reflection, particularly those questions related to a sense of belonging within the ECEC profession and the value of that profession. I arranged appropriate support and referral options when planning the fieldwork, while providing opportunities for participants to debrief.

In planning the research, I was mindful of the relationships between participants within the focus group activities, particularly between staff ‘on-the-floor’ and centre leadership, including the director of the service, present as a participant. I worked to ensure that activities were facilitated in a way that allowed participation in multiple ways, and I revisited the content in individual interviews.

I also gave consideration to the high level of involvement and commitment that I asked of the participants, ensuring as much as I could that this was not burdensome. I designed the interactive activities not only to collect data but also to provide benefit to participants through providing opportunities for their reflection and learning. I also addressed this issue in the recruitment stage through transparent communication about what was required of participants, then though ongoing processes of gaining consent from participants. I gave participants the opportunity to make informed decisions about whether to participate in an ongoing way throughout the process. This was offset by the service supporting participants to attend within paid hours.
In this section, I have explored the interactive methods that I use for my research. I have chosen these methods to create opportunities for ECEC professional participants to explore the ways that they see their role and professions, and to gain insight into how these participants construct their role in relation to their context and its broader policy environment.

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have outlined the two types of qualitative approaches adopted to explore my research question: policy analysis and interactive methods. Though this research, I seek to explore the impact of the compatibilities and tensions of ECEC professionals’ identities in integrated settings through my analysis of key policy and reform texts and as that impact is described by ECEC professional participants.

The policy analysis methods described enabled me to explore the overt and implied meanings of the selected policy texts. Further, it enabled analysis of the interconnections within and between the components of this policy ensemble, and in relation to broader social and economic policy areas. This has enabled me to give a critical account of policy by exploring its origins, its textual and discursive formations, and its implementation outcomes in practice.

My interactive methods have enabled a rich exploration of the experiences and insights of a group of ECEC professionals practising in an integrated service setting. Through interviews, I sought to elicit participant perspectives of their field, its value, and the impact of policies and reforms affecting it. This provided the opportunity for an exploration of deeper personal narratives and accounts of the participants’ work than was available through the focus groups. Focus group activities provided unique opportunities for participants to both discuss their work and profession and to explore how they perceive the emphasis of the key practice documents that influence them. My rationale for selecting activity-based focus groups for my research was to facilitate exploration of ECEC professional practice in different ways. The ranking activities challenged participants, enabling to think about and judge their work in different ways. Working with space provided additional opportunities to review how participants saw their practice and its value.
I also employed quantitative techniques within both of the qualitative research methods, by counting terms and ranking categories, to support my research and enable different types of comparison. I selected these approaches to gain insight into the way that the terms, policy practices and participant-generated practices are valued differently when considered from different perspectives. The rankings and counting activities supplemented my investigation into the ways that value is allocated and communicated.

The purpose of this chapter is to foreground the analyses in subsequent discussion in which I seek to explore how ECEC professionals identify in their profession and organisational position relative to policy, significant reform, and trends toward integrating services for children and families. In describing my methods, I highlight the possibilities for exploring issues important to my study. My interactive focus groups and reflective interviews also provided opportunities for participants to reflect on their roles and their positions differently.

I have developed my qualitative methodologies building on the assumptions that underlie poststructuralist and critical perspectives. Through this I hope to gain greater insight into the experiences of ECEC professionals working in integrated settings and responding to significant policy reforms. I seek to uncover power in operation by identifying influences that drive policy.

My policy analysis and participant data analysis provide opportunities to explore compatibilities, tensions and emerging differences between them. This is a rich area for exploration that I build on in the remaining chapters. In these chapters, I discuss findings from my interactive interviews and focus group data, and from my policy analysis.
In this chapter, I introduce the research participants and present a profile of each of them derived from data collected during their first interview. The design of my interview questions draws on the model of *professional inclusion* constructed from Fraser’s (1995, 2009, 2013) concepts of ‘recognition’, ‘redistribution’ and ‘representation’, along with Lynch’s (2013, 2009, 2012) concept of ‘relationality’. I use this model to investigate participant experiences of performing their professional roles. I explore concepts of recognition by analysing participant descriptions of how their contributions and the work of their profession are valued. I follow by seeking their perspectives on ways that important qualities, knowledge and skills are [re]distributed throughout the ECEC sector. I further examine the ways in which participants experienced representation through decision-making in their setting, relative to policy reforms. Finally, I explore relationality through participants’ descriptions of their workplace effort, and of how their relational connections were understood.

A specific focus of my discussion is an examination of the interactions between (the ‘what’ of) policy and (the ‘who’ of) practice. I explore the ways that participants ‘read’ and enact their profession. I pay attention to the negotiations participants undertake between the values that they take into their practice and the values discursively inscribed in policies. I explore the implications that this values negotiation has on the ways that participants construct and describe their professional identities.

**THE PARTICIPANTS AND PROFILES**

The six female participants in this study all worked at the same integrated service setting. They held different positions within the setting, with an even split between ‘leadership’ positions that had a focus on management and supervision, and ‘on-the-floor’ positions that worked directly with children. I did not specifically seek demographic information within the interviews, relying rather on the participants to self-identify, revealing what was important to them when describing themselves and their role.
Below I have provided each participant’s pseudonym, their role, and a brief description of their background, along with key elements or features of their work. I built these profiles from data gathered in interviews. The interviews were designed to enable the participants to emphasise what they believed was important in describing themselves, their profession and their background.

I have used this data to construct a visual profile for each respondent, imitating the genre of social media profiles. I include these profiles directly below each of the participant introductions. In the following section I introduce each of the respondents, using an infographic to assist in my account. I have summarised the participants’ backgrounds using small icons at the top of each infographic. I have listed the number of years in ECEC alongside a ‘clock-face’, their work history alongside a ‘briefcase’, their qualifications next to the ‘mortarboard’, and their country of birth by the ‘flag’. In the bottom section of each infographic, I have assigned a ‘thumbs-up’ rating, or ‘likes’ to sum up the level of confidence and engagement they expressed in relation to leadership, policy awareness, and level of influence that the various participants described. Participants self-assessed their level of leadership, policy awareness, and engagement, and the level of influence that they believe they exert in relation to their work and in relation to enactment of policy. I have constructed the ‘ratings’ based on the level of engagement and interaction with policy and leadership that each of the participants demonstrated in their accounts. This is not an assessment of their competency or knowledge, but rather an effort to represent the emphasis that they placed on, or interest they showed in, these elements of their work. I also selected a symbolic icon for each profile, seeking to capture a professional characteristic that each respondent emphasised throughout their interviews. I use these icons to capture the ways in which each participant expressed particular priorities when sharing perspectives about their professional identity. I also asked participants to share what they thought was important more generally for those working in ECEC. I have depicted these responses in the ‘tools’ category under the spanner and hammer icon in each profile, representing in summary the kinds of work that participants saw ECEC professionals in general being called upon to do.
**Carol**

As depicted in the top section of the infographic, Carol is Second in Charge, a leadership role that supports the Team Leader and program staff. Carol has been working in ECEC for eleven years. She changed careers, having previously worked in administration and retail, when she had her children. Prior to moving to Australia, Carol lived in the United Kingdom where she worked in Nursery Schools, as well as working in services that were establishing integrated settings. In Australia, Carol has worked in Kindergarten and Long Day Care programs.

Figure 7.1 Carol’s Profile

She has developed a passion for her work in Early Childhood over the years. The idea that she will never master it, and will always be learning, excites her. Carol spoke about integrated settings, respect for diversity, being welcoming, promoting connections, and having a relational focus to her work. The icon I selected for Carol includes an image of a hand-shake, reflecting the emphasis that she placed on ‘welcoming’ families. Carol was tentative and precise in her responses. She joked that she had recently been interviewed for her role and consequently felt well-rehearsed for this interview.

The ‘likes’ ratings reflect Carol’s descriptions of her level of leadership (three ‘likes’), policy awareness (four ‘likes’) and level of policy influence (two ‘likes’). Although Carol’s
position is a recognised leadership role, she believes that all staff are equally significant in children’s lives, regardless of the role or qualification they have. Aware of government policy, Carol feels that the practices described in The Framework are in alignment with her practice. She describes her level of influence in the sector as being able to practice policy, but not necessarily influence it.

The ‘tools’ (depicted as a spanner and hammer) that Carol believes are required to work in early childhood are: a good understanding of early childhood development, open-mindedness, ability to communicate and work in a team, a welcoming manner, and an understanding of the community context.

**Toni**
Toni is a Room Leader. As shown in top section of the infographic, Toni has worked in ECEC for eight years and was “just an assistant” in both Kindergarten and Long Day Care programs. At the time of the interview, she had just completed her Diploma in ECEC and became a Room Leader.

Figure 7.2 Toni’s Profile

Toni described herself as a single mother with three children who started by ‘helping out’ as an act of parent involvement, before she was encouraged to gain a qualification. She commented that she had always been involved with children and had looked after
her friend’s children when they went back to work. Toni believes that to work in ECEC you need to be open-minded and supportive, and to have knowledge of the community. Supporting children is most important to Toni. The icon I selected for Toni includes an image of a crossed-out book, reflecting her focus on ‘natural’ approaches in place of policy and framework texts. Toni spoke freely about her experiences and views in the interview, noting that she would not usually speak this way in front of all of her colleagues.

The one ‘likes’ rating for leadership reflects the low level of interest Toni described as having in relation to the leadership elements of her position. She felt that she carried the least influence in the management and administrative side of her work. Toni described a higher level of awareness of policy (three ‘likes’), but described a level of discomfort with the direction of policy, particularly the idea of being directed in regard to something that for her is ‘natural’. Toni feels bound by the regulations rather than being able to influence them (one star).

When describing the ‘tools’ needed for her role, Toni spoke mostly about being a mum and working with children as being natural for her, as well as talking about her dislike of paperwork and regulations.

**Megan**

As shown in the top section of the infographic below, Megan is the director of the integrated service. Megan has worked in ECEC for seventeen years. She was a Kindergarten teacher “a lifetime ago”, working since in a variety of roles, including Victorian Government-funded ECEC, and has delivered early childhood intervention services through the Specialist Children’s Services team in both Central Intake and Preschool Field Officer roles. She says it is the variety of roles that has led her to this point and is the reason that she can occupy her current role.

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3 Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) are Victorian State Government funded services that support children with a disability or developmental delay in the years before formal schooling. ECIS are funded through the Department and delivered by Specialist Children’s Services teams along with external community service organisations (DET, 2015, p. 19). The Preschool Field Officer Program, also funded by the Victorian State Government, provides “consultative support, resourcing and advice, to kindergarten teachers to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in inclusive kindergarten programs” (DET, 2015, p. 25).
Megan is passionate about supporting the achievement of outcomes for children and families, and about empowering families. Megan enthusiastically shared her story; she was clearly passionate about her work. While Megan did not present herself as an expert, she had clear and high expectations about what integrated services should be and what they should achieve. The icon I selected for Megan includes an image of a DNA strand, representing the culture that she was trying to support through her leadership.

Megan’s high five ‘likes’ ratings in all three areas reflect her strong interest and engagement with leadership and policy. Megan is responsible for leading the model of integration at the centre and is deeply committed to this role. She is also very familiar with the policy environment, *The Frameworks*, and the issues associated with the implementation of 15 hours of preschool. Megan feels influential in the field through her practice and through the profile of the centre which she believes provides an important demonstration of how services can work collaboratively.

She mostly spoke about the challenges of achieving ‘true’ integration and about developing and embedding the service model when describing her role. Megan believes that the ‘tools’ needed to work in ECEC are engagement in continuous learning, willingness to fail, and a commitment to outcomes for children.
Joan

Joan is the Team Leader of Early Childhood Programs in the setting. As shown in the infographic below, she has a long history in ECEC, having worked in the field since she was 15 years old, and having held roles in Family Day Care, Supported Playgroups and Inclusion Support as well as having worked in multi-service, planning and project roles.

Figure 7.4 Joan's Profile

Joan describes herself as an Australian-born girl who grew up with ‘traditional’ expectations. She has worked in ECEC since she was 15 years old, as this was an acceptable career for her to have. She felt at home in ECEC settings, gradually becoming aware of the impact ECEC could have, particularly in a low socioeconomic context. Joan spoke at length about her experiences, opting to extend her allocated time for the interview to continue her discussion. The icon I selected for Joan is an image of a brain, representing the ‘thinking’ and reflection that she emphasised and prioritised in her interview.

Joan encourages shared decision-making and ownership in her leadership role, her four ‘likes’ rating reflecting her description of being highly engaged in her new role. Joan is aware of and enthused by enacting the new policies (five ‘likes’). She commented that The Framework provides language for advocacy, bringing practitioners onto the ‘same
page’ because “unfortunately we have to be political”. Joan described feeling empowered to influence the sector and has had experience of being influential (four ‘likes’).

Joan spoke most about advocacy, inclusion of the community, mentoring and professionalism when describing her role. Joan was also passionate about her field. She thought deeply about her work, often pausing to consider her responses.

Joan identified the following ‘tools’ needed to work in ECEC: relationships, reflection and evaluation, advocacy skills, contemporary and historical knowledge, knowledge of context/community and need, people development, and willingness to be available and accessible to families.

**Yasi**

Yasi is a Floater or Reliever\(^4\). She has completed a diploma qualification and worked as a casual relief\(^5\) educator in a number of settings. Yasi was born and lived in Sri Lanka where she was a teacher.

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\(^4\) Floater and Reliever are terms used to describe a staff role in centre-based ECEC in which an educator works across the setting, relieving breaks and planning time, rather than working in one room.

\(^5\) Casual Relief is often managed through recruitment agencies to fill short-term, fixed-term or emergency relief positions.
She spoke about having a child with a disability and the impact this had on her choice to work in the field. Her experience of migration and her culture featured heavily when she told her story. Yasi was eager to share her experiences and to be heard. She used the interview as a platform to share ideas and values about her work. She was also eager to demonstrate her knowledge of her field. The icon I selected for Yasi is a heart-shaped image, representing her emphasis on empathy and love.

Yasi’s low, single ‘likes’ rating in relation to leadership reflected the difficulties she experienced in the setting. Although Yasi is responsible for the room when she covers the room leader role, she didn’t always feel listened to or respected by her peers. Yasi was aware of the policy environment (five ‘likes’) and the trends in the field. Yasi is aware of *The Frameworks* and uses them in her work. She seeks out knowledge and information about the sector and approaches. While she sees her work as a contribution to society by building empathy and love, she did not feel equipped to influence its direction (one star).

Yasi spoke most about the impact of culture, inclusion, citizenship and the ability to lead and to follow when describing her role. The ‘tools’ that Yasi identified as important
were: building citizenship, friendliness, teamwork, knowledge of development and interests, people skills, empathy, joy, and love.

**Amy**

As shown in the infographic below, Amy has worked in ECEC settings for seven years. When interviewed she was a Room Leader working with three year olds. She has completed a Bachelor Degree in ECEC.

![Figure 7.6 Amy’s Profile](image)

Amy entered the field after exploring options on finishing school. She explored allied health pathways and decided that ECEC was the right path for her. Amy likes to watch children develop and to offer support to families. Amy spoke most about supporting development, being flexible, and having fun when describing her role. Amy appeared to be nervous about her responses initially, taking time to frame her responses diplomatically. She shared strong opinions about how work in ECEC should be done. The icon I selected for Amy is that of an adult holding the hand of a child, reflecting her emphasis on supporting children in the environment.

Amy held a leadership position but didn’t describe having a strong interest in leadership in the setting (two ‘likes’). She entered the field at a time of reform and as such did not experience this as a change (three ‘likes’). She commented on the difficulty of
implementing *The Framework* and getting the correct balance between no structure and too much structure. From Amy’s perspective, *The Framework* is misinterpreted; as a result programs are too flexible. Amy is not interested in influencing policy or the field, preferring to practise in it instead (one star).

She believes that the ‘tools’ you need to work in ECEC are: fondness for children, communication skills, an understanding of specialist services, ability to work in teams, knowledge of children’s development, and the capacity to have fun and be flexible in working with children.

* These profiles highlight the diverse range of experiences, roles and backgrounds this small group of participants reflects. The participants each have different vantage points from which they understand and view the influence and impact of policy. This provides insight into the ways that participants construct their professional identities and experience the influences of policy through their enacted performances of professional identity.

The participants each brought unique characteristics, histories and motives into their profession. Common to all participant descriptions of their work was a focus on children and teamwork. A key distinction between leadership and ‘on-the-floor’ participants emerged when reviewing the icons that characterise them. Megan and Joan, each with recognised leadership roles, had a greater interest in external policy issues and leadership; as such their icons reflected these broader issues. Joan, as ‘the brain’, gave greater consideration to what policy meant for practice, while Megan, as the DNA, focussed on the how the work they were doing could influence policy change through leadership. Whereas Toni, Amy, Yasi and Carol who favoured interpersonal relationships had a greater focus on their practices with people in the setting. The icons that I selected for the ‘on-the-floor’ participants demonstrated this relational focus, or, in Toni’s case, what kept her from it.
ENACTED INFLUENCE: PERFORMING AS PROFESSIONAL

In the following section I use the model of *professional inclusion* that I introduced in chapter 5 as a lens through which to explore participants’ descriptions of their practice, and as a way to focus on the intentions and values that underpin their professional performances. I draw on Butler’s concept that identities are constructed and maintained through repeated acts and performances (Butler, 1990). Through this metaphor of performance, I explore policy reform as the conditions or norms that enable or regulate performances and create the conditions for counter performances that critique and destabilise the regulatory power of norms (Butler, 1990, pp. 185-189).

**Recognised contributions of the role and profession**

In order to explore experiences of recognition, I asked participants to describe why they chose to work in ECEC settings, to explain the ways in which their work contributes to society, and to discuss how they think their work is valued by others.

Reasons for choosing to work in the field of ECEC varied from having a sense that working in the sector felt ‘natural’, to wanting to provide a safe environment for children. All participants commented on their ‘passion’ for working with children and families:

“I think this is not a job, this is a service and actually to become an early childhood educator you have to have a passion for the children. I strongly believe it, without having a passion for children you can’t do it” (Yasi).

All participants asserted that the greatest value that their work produced was apparent in their impact on the children with whom they worked. Such impacts included: achieving outcomes, helping children to develop their self-esteem, and happiness. I drew from participants’ descriptions a general focus on supporting children as developing people alongside an emphasis on developing relationships with children that would positively affect their lives. Participants also described bearing witness to children’s development as one of the benefits of their role. Participants described working with children as the part of their work that they most valued.

Participants also described their interactions with families as another important component of their work. Joan spoke about the expectation she had that the service would give families a voice: “I see my role [and] the staff’s role to advocate for the
families and children”. There was a strong emphasis on influencing the lives of families and communities for the better, as well as contributing to the safety of families. Megan talked about the importance of the ECEC setting “empowering families” and having a “family-centred approach”, while for Carol “making people feel welcome” was an important component of her role; this would ensure that families had a sense of “belonging to somewhere and knowing that they’ve got a voice and the contributions that they make are important contributions”.

Participants linked this work closely with the way they operated in the community, describing a strong desire to make a positive impact on the community in which they operated. Toni, for example, asserted that ECEC professionals had a responsibility to “actually understand and know your community”. She described ECEC services as belonging to the local community. For Joan, this included involving community leaders as well as other services in the community: “I think all of our community could have a role to play in this place”.

For Yasi, the impact that she could have on society through her work with children was most important. Yasi saw her work in the ECEC sector as making a direct contribution to improving society, in particular in affecting the quality of the relationships between children: “I always encourage children to share and build up empathy to others, be nice to others”. Yasi positioned her work as instilling more empathy in the world through day-to-day interactions with children.

The contributions that participants described provided an indication of the value that they attributed to the ECEC profession. There is a strong alignment between participants’ ideas about their work with children, families and communities and those expressed in policy and the ECEC literature; for example, participants demonstrated the influence of the evidence base that links high quality ECEC with improved child outcomes (AIHW, 2015, pp. 9-10). Similarly, they mirrored the language of investment present in the pervading policy focus on ‘good citizenship’ (Brennan, 1998, COAG, 2009, Productivity Commission, 2011). Participants’ strong focus on ensuring that families could access additional support through their work reflects notions of what Brennan (1998, p. 121) describes as the “dedication” and “service” associated with the ECEC
industry. Participants described the support they offered to children and families in the context of their community as being core to their practice contributions.

In contrast, parental [maternal] workforce participation, while a key goal of investment in the early years (COAG, 2009), did not feature in participants’ descriptions of the contribution that their work made despite catering for this through their LDC program. This omission indicates that this policy intention is distanced from the practices that these participants described. They instead emphasised the impact they could have on children’s future outcomes through their work.

**Professional goods [re]distributed in ECEC**

Participants described a range of qualities that related to the ‘type’ of person that one needed to be to work in ECEC. These were primarily relational qualities. Amy, for example, argued that liking children was important, while for Carol being positive and patient was important in performing their work.

When it came to identifying skills, participants identified skills relating to working or interacting with children such as guiding and initiating play, supporting needs, and guiding behaviour. In addition, participants highlighted skills such as creativity, advocacy and self-care. Participants included generic skills relating to communication and teamwork, along with time management.

Participants also identified a variety of ‘technical’ and content knowledge that was required to work in ECEC. This included knowledge of the regulations and frameworks that apply, along with knowledge of child development and developmental stages and play spaces. Additional content knowledge included an understanding of children’s cues and interests, children’s wellbeing, special needs, and knowing what is in the child’s best interest. Joan discussed the importance of having contemporary and historical knowledge of ECEC and of the associated research, along with knowledge of developmental and socio-cultural theory, stating that “It’s important to understand where things have come from and why they’ve changed” (Joan). These technical skills and knowledge are associated with ‘technical performances’ of their practice.

The participants described a complex merging of a broad base of professional goods, including technical, relational and ethical performances required to deploy their
knowledge and the skills that are required for working with children. The qualities that participants identified through their interviews, such as liking children, being ‘positive’, ‘open-minded’, ‘approachable’ and ‘patient’, signify a moral imperative associated with ‘ethical performances’ of the work of ECEC professionals. These descriptions of ‘ethical performances’ are reminiscent of the way that Brennan (1998) describes the pervading image of ECEC professionals as “merely warm-hearted people who are fond of children” (Australian Pre-Schools Committee, 1974 in Brennan, 1998, p. 84); however, participants described these qualities as being essential to performing the other technical and skill-based components of ECEC. Rather than “merely warm-hearted”, they performed technical roles relationally. Participants considered their ‘relational performances’ as skill-based and just as important as undertaking their ‘technical performances’.

Participants referred predominantly to children in relation to their wellbeing and developmental needs. Approaches to and conceptualisation of children appeared to be pragmatically blended rather than distinct and defined. The work of ECEC was predominantly positioned by participants as an intervention into children’s wellbeing and development, an intervention deployed through play and interest-based approaches that were aligned with The Framework and The Standards.

Participants’ focus on children’s development and future achievement, facilitated by ‘technical performances’ associated with content knowledge, aligns with the neoliberal discourses of productivity, quality, early intervention and investment located in the policy texts. Participants, by contrast, articulated additional relational qualities that were apparent in the performance of their work. Their accounts elevate relational discourses that circulate through their practice, discourses that in policy texts are often only associated with routine activities. Participant descriptions of ‘relational performances’ differ from policy descriptions of care as routine-based. Participants’ saw their roles in nurturing relationships with children and families as a core element of their roles.

Participants demonstrated the blending of ‘technical’ and ‘relational’ performances differently, based on their position and priorities, all participants talking about child development as core knowledge for ECEC, for example. Amy, who prioritised
interactions with children, linked this to being flexible and having fun. Similarly, Yasi (the heart) described being led by children’s interests to bring joy and love, while Toni (crossed-out book) prioritised the physical and relational support that children needed. In contrast, Joan and Megan linked their prioritisation of children’s development to the way that the centre operated and the ways the team were supported to learn and develop. Megan linked her priority for children’s development to their outcomes; she worked to embed this in the operation, or ‘DNA’, of the centre. Joan, meanwhile, represented by the ‘brain’ icon, linked this to her role in supporting knowledge of historical and contemporary child development.

**Representation in decision-making**

I explored participants’ perceptions of their opportunities to be represented in decision-making within their role in ECEC. Rather than addressing broader concepts of political representation, I asked participants to reflect on the decisions that they could make or influence in their setting or in the sector. Below, I discuss their experience of influence and power, providing examples of when participants felt equipped to influence and when they did not. I do this by exploring their descriptions of day-to-day experiences of participation in decision-making about their work alongside broader opportunities for influence in the sector.

**Experience of autonomy**

Two of the participants, Megan and Joan, described experiencing a high level of autonomy in directing their work. Joan, for example, said “*Most of my work’s directed by me but influenced by my values and beliefs*”. Similarly, Megan noted that half of her work was driven by her and the other half was driven by the board’s expectations. These expectations aligned well with her values. She gave an example: “*I started reading about integration and started thinking oh, that sits with me, family partnership sits with me so that’s why it sort-of works*”. Both Megan and Joan acknowledged that while their roles were influenced by other factors and people, they nevertheless felt a high level of control over how they directed their work. The ‘other influences’ fortunately aligned with their own values.

Their experience of ‘self-directedness’ didn’t always translate into how participants allocated their time. While Megan, for example, could direct her own work, she also
described times when other tasks overtook her role in a way that did not allow her to focus on what was most important. Amy and Carol shared this experience. For them, it was a critical reflection of how they would prefer things to be rather than how they were.

Joan, however, while describing similar pressures, talked about dedicating most of her time to what was most important to her. She also spoke of the personal costs of doing this. For Joan, it was the personal time cost involved in maintaining her focus on relationships with the children, families and her colleagues: “I am tired at the moment... I’m doing some long days at the moment but I think the benefit of a long day now far outweighs the other problems”. By prioritising and allocating time to developing positive relationships, Joan experienced time pressures and worked more hours to compensate.

Yasi also described having some negative experiences of influencing decision-making, her role largely following the plans of others:

“Mostly I’m covering the room leader’s position, so when the room leader leaves the room I ask them what I have to do, so she directed me what to do so I follow what she ask me to do” (Yasi).

She elaborated on some of the interpersonal challenges that accompanied this role:

“...my position is a little bit challenging because I have to go to one room and relieve that staff member... I’m covering the room leader’s role so it’s fairly challenging because sometimes the other staff members may like me or may not like me and sometimes they might not like to listen to me... sometimes I have to shut my mouth... but if it’s very dangerous for the child I really speak up, I’m not a person just kept quiet” (Yasi).

Yasi spoke of employment insecurity as a personal cost that affected the extent to which she would participate in influencing decision-making. As a casual employee in a different setting, Yasi had been terminated when she raised a concern about the practices of permanent staff in relation to children.

In describing her ability to direct her work, Toni referred to the many ‘bosses’ to which ECEC professionals must answer: “We have a lot of bosses... the children, the families, we have our own bosses, then there’s the Department and... The Framework, oh don’t
forget that Framework...". Toni’s comments indicated that she felt bound by the levels of authority and regulations that were external to her day-to-day work. She reflected that the ‘obsession’ with ‘doing things right’, that she linked to the implementation of The Framework, had negatively impacted upon genuine interactions with children. Toni talked about prioritising more authentic relationships with children, the personal cost being they might not be reflected or visible in her plans or documentation.

While each participant experienced their level of autonomy differently, it was evident that while Joan, Yasi and Toni were able to direct their work towards their priorities, they did so at a personal or relational cost. Joan worked additional hours to ensure that she could perform her role well, including by developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with children, families, colleagues and partners. Yasi, aware of the insecure nature of her role, was selective with concerns or issues that she raised, at times remaining silent. Toni went to extra effort to engage in authentic interactions while still having to implement and document her practice in relation to The Framework and The Standards.

**Experiences of influencing change in their environment**

Joan and Megan were more optimistic in describing their ability to influence policy. Megan described the possibilities for advocacy that accompanied operating a unique model of integrated ECEC. She described the various meetings and forums she had attended and been invited to because of the integrated model that she led. She further spoke of people that would seek out both her and the integrated setting in order to see the model in action. Joan also described a number of avenues that she felt were opening up to ECEC professionals. In her interview, Joan described similar experiences to Megan of engaging in sector consultation and advocacy. Joan observed that the voices of ECEC professionals were starting to be given more respect in such forums, but wasn’t sure that the sector was ready to engage this way:

“I’m not sure that everybody in the profession is used to having that powerful stance... I think it’s growing in the profession but I’m not sure that all of our colleagues have that confidence” (Joan).

Consistent with the icons assigned to Megan and Joan, ‘DNA’ and ‘the brain’, these participants prioritised broader systems issues.
Carol demonstrated this issue of ‘readiness’ in her interview: “I don’t think how I would influence it but I think I would be able to practise it” (Carol). Carol located her impact within her interactions but couldn’t articulate ‘how’ she would influence policy. Amy described feeling that her voice could not be powerful beyond her setting, largely because of the way ECEC “is still portrayed as just playing”. For Amy, this type of advocacy was a departure from the role of ‘educator’, requiring additional postgraduate study or involvement in a union. Joan, however, described the opportunities she saw for educators to use inquiry-based learning projects as a means of having broader sector input. Joan and Megan’s positions as leaders, both in the integrated setting and in the broader sector, enabled them to navigate and bridge the space between policy and practice differently – enabling forms of representation that their colleagues had not experienced.

This analysis reveals the different ways that participants experience influence. Those in recognised leadership roles described having a greater level of impact on the sector than those ‘on-the-floor’; however, participants who worked ‘on-the-floor’ distanced themselves from these leadership roles and thus distanced themselves from enjoying this type of broader influence. Those who worked ‘on-the-floor’ described having their greatest influence in their interactions with children, families and within the service, rather than having an influence on decision-making. This is consistent with the valuing of the interpersonal demonstrated by the icons I assigned to participants in these roles: Yasi’s ‘heart’, Toni’s ‘not by the book’ approach, Amy’s focus on ‘interactions’, and Carol’s ‘welcoming hands’ prioritise relational approaches. While they were describing their ‘influence’ or ‘impact’ on children, they further distanced themselves from performances of external or policy influence. Despite this, I also identified a range of strategies that participants adopted to enact influence, overcome constraints, or assert their autonomy. These included formal processes of advocacy along with interpersonal or indirect approaches. Some examples of this were enacted through self-sacrifice, vocal objections, or exercising a powerful voice or position. Here it is possible to view the “micro dynamics” that Gore (1990, p. 11) observed in the negotiations of actions in
context, in this case via professional interactions rather than broader political representation.

**Perceptions of the relational work of ECEC**

The way that the work of the ECEC profession is perceived by people outside the profession affects the ways that participants perform and experience their professional identities. I asked participants to talk about their experience of other people’s, or the outside world’s perceptions of the contribution of ECEC. Participants noted some positive commentary, stating that ECEC services, particularly integrated service settings, were seen as a ‘good thing’ for families. Participants also remarked that people generally recognised the value of providing services and spaces for children. Participants commented that, for many of the cultural groups attending the service, their expertise and status as ECEC professionals is considered to be highly valuable. Participants also commented that the service and staff had become an extension of the family and support network for some families utilising the service. Amy described ECEC as the start, or as one of the building blocks, of education.

Participants also reported some negative perceptions of the work of ECEC professionals, the most common being that the work of the sector is still largely misunderstood or undervalued. All participants recalled hearing comments about their profession - such as: ‘you just play with kids all day’ or, that childcare workers are ‘glorified babysitters’ - comments which diminished the value of their role and therefore their work. Amy noted that “Play isn’t really seen as learning for some people... Kinder, you get more respect, but childcare it’s still, yeah”; however, she also noted that even Kindergarten is treated as just ‘something’ that is done before school, like a hurdle, and that its importance too is not well understood. Some of the other negative perceptions noted by participants were related to the payment of expensive fees for ‘babysitters’ or when people had had bad experiences or received poor-quality care and assumed that this was the standard of practice. Rockel (2009) describes ECEC as the “image of protective care” that focusses on “managing tasks efficiently” in the absence of parental [maternal] care. These perceptions in the ‘outside world’ prevent the broad acceptance of ECEC as a profession.

There was also a distinction that some participants made between Kindergarten and Childcare in their interviews. Megan described the challenges of the different operating
frameworks and her perception of the ‘work-ethic’ within childcare as compared to Kindergarten. Megan also noted differences in the conditions and cultures:

“I really struggle with the childcare mentality… there is a bit of a culture that, you know, oh it’s 6 o’clock, we need to sign out… then at the same time understanding they earn such poor wages… [and] that at 5 past 8 at night you don’t want to be here, you want to be at home with your family.” (Megan)

Childcare was a contentious or problematic area for Megan, especially when it came to operating an integrated setting. She noted that there were observable differences in the operation, ethos and conditions of workers between the two services that hindered full integration between the service types. Amy shared her contrasting experience working, training and progressing through different positions in both Kindergarten and Childcare roles (from an assistant, to diploma qualified, to room leader). Amy commented [almost apologetically]: “I actually really like childcare, I don’t have a problem with it”, when describing her experiences. She commented: “I think it’s more about the people in the centre rather than what type of setting it is”. Despite Megan’s desire to bring the operation of childcare and Kindergarten programs closer together, there were key differences in participants’ references to roles and the operating structure of the setting relative to the two service types. This distinction mirrors the ways that ‘education’ and ‘care’ have been historically and politically recognised as either “skilled” or “emotional and relational” identities (MacDonald & Merrill, 2002). This separation is laden with issues of policy intention, professional status and gendered expectation relating to care effort.

My analysis has identified some early tensions between the values that the participants bring into their work, the level of influence they experience, and the ways that they are recognised. The values that participants bring to bear in their work are not necessarily matched by opportunities to influence; nor are they reflected in external perceptions of the value of their work. Nonetheless, participants exercised their influence by engaging in decisions that mattered to them, though this, at times, came at a personal cost.
All participants were acutely aware of the implementation of policy through the *National Quality Framework* and implementation of *The Standards*, and early years frameworks—both national and state versions. The influence of policy was also evident in some of the previous descriptions that participants gave about their work and the ways that they identified in their profession. I asked participants to identify the policies that had had the greatest impact on their work and to discuss their interaction with those policies. Below, I discuss participants’ engagement and connection to the reforms, exploring ways that their performances relate to the policy texts and discourses.

All participants spoke of *The Framework* having the biggest impact on the way they undertake their roles. Participants saw it as both a positive and negative influence. They reflected positively that *The Framework* had brought ECEC professionals onto the ‘same page’ and through this provided the sector with political advantage. Joan commented that it “gave us a common language for us to strengthen our sector”. While Carol embraced *The Framework* as ‘the standard’ against which to measure practice, she also acknowledged that it scared many ECEC professionals: “a lot of staff are still like ‘oh I don’t understand the frameworks... it’s how you interpret it and I just think it’s having the confidence to do that’.”

All participants described some sense of alignment with the descriptions of their work presented in *The Framework* and *The Standards*, while noting limitations to their alignment. Amy, for example, remarked that the additional work undertaken in supporting families was not visible within the descriptions of practice in *The Framework* or *The Standards*:

“*The Standards* has relationships with families and children but I don’t think it really quite recognises that you can spend two hours with a parent crying because they’re struggling to cope, that’s not documented in there. It’s just how you get them to participate in the centre” (Amy).

Amy also highlighted the differences between ‘parent-involvement’ in the program and supporting parents. Noting the financial hardship that some families experienced, Amy pointed out: “it’s a low-income area, so that’s a challenge... a lot of them can’t afford to take time off work to come participate in activities during the day”. Participants
described their practice in relation to the type of support that they offer children, families, and the community, more specifically than The Framework and The Standards describe such practice. In their responses, participants focussed on the referral and advocacy roles that they played in relation to supporting children and families in the context of community.

While participants described The Frameworks and standards as influential to their daily work, they saw them as validating what they were already doing rather than as influential in changing their practice. Megan, describing the impact of The Framework, noted that if you were a ‘good’ teacher or educator The Frameworks would reflect how you practise. Megan and Joan noted that there was still more work to do to elevate the profile of ECEC and to promote integrated service provision. They felt that the direction of the sector represented the way that they practice. Joan suggested that while she felt represented, she also felt that other ECEC professionals needed to speak up more.

Revisiting the participant profiles, it is possible to see the different perspectives, influences and beliefs that drove their practice. These influences stem from multiple sources including personal experience. Factors such as place of birth and upbringing helped to form what was important in their work, their practice, and their professional identities.

While there are similar emphases across participant descriptions of what is important in their work, different priorities emerged. Megan and Joan, from recognised leadership positions, prioritised areas of work that contributed to the systems or approaches that impacted upon children. While Megan progressed this in the structures of the integrated setting, Joan focused on her engagement with members of the team. Carol, Yasi, Toni and Amy progressed their commitment to children through direct interpersonal engagement with children and families.

While all participants had an acute awareness of the level of reform associated with their sector and expressed some connection and commitment to the field that aligned with recent reforms, the level to which participants celebrated reforms depended on their experiences; for example, Joan’s experience of The Framework as validating her years of effort differs from Toni’s experience of it as limiting her ‘natural’ approach to working with children. Although participants recognised The Framework as having the
biggest impact among the reforms on their work, they noted that it had done little to change practice – because, in most instances, their practices and values already aligned with *The Framework*. What also stood out in participant descriptions of their connection to policy was that their practices, particularly their relational practices, exceeded the policy descriptions and standards.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR ENACTED PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

I found that the participants emphasised *relational performances* alongside *technical performances* when describing the qualities, skills and knowledge required to work in ECEC. Their descriptions provide insight into the way that they define the content of their work as including child development, education, care and support. They presented their profession as a complex balance of relational qualities and skills that blend with technical skills and knowledge. Lynch et al. (2012) note that relational and social-emotional interactions often give way to “the systems world of measurable productivity” (p. 199). There was a strong stance asserted within their descriptions of practice that positioned their relational skills as equally important to their technical ones. This stance counters the narrative uncovered throughout the literature in chapter 4 that gave greater status to educative practices than to care. Further, participants described the ways that they contributed to children, families, community and practice as an ‘ethical performance’, contrasting this with their experience of the ways that the outside world both understood and misunderstood the importance of their work. The importance that participants placed on their ‘relational’ and ‘ethical’ performances and the value it produced, contests the more heavily economic leanings of policy associated with investment and workforce participation, leanings that were evident in the exploration of the policy context that I conducted in chapter 1. This re-positions their relational effort as valuable in contrast to external perceptions of care that compared it to ‘baby-sitting’.

Participants also highlighted a range of tensions related to some components of the work. ‘Childcare’ emerged as a contested space that needed variously to be ‘defended’ or ‘developed’. For Amy, the service was something to be defended because of the
opportunities that its structure provided, while for Megan the childcare model represented some problematic practices and approaches.

Despite conversations about the relational value of their work, I also located performances that mirror the discourses of neoliberal productivity evident in the policies (chapter 1). This was apparent in the ways that they described their work as contributing to children’s future achievements, their communities, and to society in general; however, while participants mirrored some of the policy language of ‘investment’ in children’s outcomes and described the ‘technical performances’ associated with them, they also emphasised their ‘relational’ and ‘ethical’ performances as core skills that enabled their effort. Osgood (2012) points out the challenges and tensions that this can present when blending “technicist” approaches and “ethics of care” (p. 139).

Quality practices and quality standards are important mechanisms which both generate and regulate ECEC practice. Toni’s reference to The Framework as one of her “many bosses” demonstrates the way that quality standards and policy scripts act as “technologies of surveillance” that project a normalising gaze (Foucault, 1972, p. 184). The Standards and The Framework render practices visible relative to their [mis]alignment with descriptions of quality practices. This demonstrates the pervasiveness of accountability practices, a pervasiveness that enables the reduction of ECEC knowledge to a singular neoliberal truth of what constitutes observable quality practices. The descriptions of professional performances that I have outlined both reinforce scripts of policy directions and contest them, revealing counter performances and distinct practice discourses.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I introduced the research participants, providing an overview of how they understood the influence of policy and their capacity to influence their environment through interpersonal relationships or through policy formation. I have explored the ways that participants identify with and define the content of their work in relation to both policy and practice. In doing this, I identified the complex relationship between the personal and relational qualities and the technical skills and knowledge
required to undertake work in ECEC. The ways that participants identified what was important to them at an individual and group level provided insight into their practice values and beliefs. This revealed key tensions between the ways that participants prioritise their work, based on their values and beliefs, and the demands of implementing reforms and the related policies. The participants’ experience of influence and autonomy was also subjective. Joan, for example, described experiencing autonomy through practising what is important to her, despite the personal time cost, while for other participants this time pressure was experienced as a constraint that limited their ability to be led by their values. Those in leadership positions expressed greater levels of influence than those working ‘on-the-floor’.

The experiences of participants are powerful in shaping their professional identities alongside and in contrast to the directions of policy and reform. Participants chose and enacted diverse positions and practices in relation to policy. These practice positions are powerful mechanisms through which people both comply with reforms and resist policies as the authority over their work. While I found evidence of policy influence through participants’ descriptions of their practice, I also uncovered evidence of the ways in which they exerted their own influence through professional performances which, in some cases, countered the policy narratives uncovered through my literature review. Examination of the complex ways that participants perform their roles reveals the intricate processes through which participants determine and construct their professional identities in relation to policy.

In the next chapter, I explore the discourses housed within the policy texts, further interrogating the intended influence of policy, in order to prepare the ground for a more detailed examination of the micro practices through which participants embrace and resist policy imperatives.
Chapter 8 | Policy Analysis: Intended influence of policy

Policy reform is designed to impact the way that professionals view and undertake their roles in ECEC. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ways that selected policies are influenced by dominant discourses. To do this, I examine five key policy texts which capture different stages of reform in ECEC within the timeline from initiation (2009) to implementation (2012). I track the use of four key terms: ‘children’, ‘care’, ‘education’, and ‘education and care’ to highlight the ways that they form the ‘problem’ of policy. I analyse the problem, or problems, that the selected ECEC policies address through their articulated purpose. Following this, I present my analysis of the practices contained within each of the texts to highlight their impact on the work of ECEC professionals.

POLICY AS TEXT IN CONTEXT

In doing this, I focus on the policy texts as “textual interventions into practice” (Ball, 2006, p. 46). I draw on concepts from Rizvi and Lingard (2010, pp. 54-55) who refer to “policy and textual” issues relating to the “discursive formation of policy and policy problems”. Given the textual nature of policy, my work focusses on careful readings of the policy texts to identify the emphasis and meaning given to specific terms within the documents. The policies that I have selected are specifically linked to processes of reform and change agenda that commence with the publication of the Early Years Strategy. Each text, associated with a specific stage of reform, has potentially significant impacts on the practices of ECEC professionals. My analysis identifies the values that are emphasised in the text of policy. While governments and policy-makers intend policies to be read with ‘true’ or correct’ meanings, they are always open to interpretation (Ball, 2006, Osgood, 2012). Exploring policy reform documents enables examination of them as parts of political processes by which government and interest groups seek to influence change.

Policy is a formal mechanism of power that is applied authoritatively to ECEC practice. The strategies, frameworks and standards intervene, textually and structurally, to direct effort in ECEC. Foucault (1972) describes ways that discourse operates to produce “self-evident” truths through the presence and continuity of statements, which are deployed through and beyond text and language (pp. 23-28). Ball (2006, 2012) along with Rizvi...
and Lingard (2010) build on these concepts applying them to policy discourses that transmit values and become the ‘unquestionable’ conditions for practice. Policy, through discourse and directives, authorises professionals to act through networks of formal and informal power relationships. These relationships are reinforced textually through language and knowledge that are presented in policy as unquestionable ‘truths’.

Further, some of the visual features of policy texts, such as logos and stylised formats, combine to reinforce the legitimacy and authority of the texts and, in turn, are influential to practice. References to government departments and the inclusion of logos on some of the documents are explicit markers of government and departmental authority, or jurisdiction, over the texts. Features of formatting reinforce this authority locating the documents in broader government bodies and initiatives. The texts function to communicate government endorsed actions and become influential in describing expected practices supported by the use of the authorising features. I have summarised some of the visual features of the five selected policy texts in the table below. I map out how these visual features combine to reinforce the legitimacy of the documents and proceeding policies.
Table 8.1: Visual and Authorising features

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<tr>
<td>Visual Features</td>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simple cover-page with a navy blue panel</td>
<td>• Highly stylised – uses colours and images</td>
<td>• Similar format to other Victorian DEECD documents</td>
<td>• Stylised cover page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Printed</td>
<td>• Printed</td>
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<td>• Date range included</td>
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- **Authorising Features**
  - • No Logo
  - • Copyright symbol and message
  - • International Standard Book Numbers
  - • Acknowledgement of author (Commonwealth of Australia)

- **Authorising Features**
  - • No Logo
  - • Copyright symbol and message
  - • International Standard Book Numbers
  - • Acknowledgement of author (DEEWR) and commissioning body (COAG)

- **Authorising Features**
  - • Logo included
  - • Copyright symbol and message
  - • International Standard Book Numbers
  - • Acknowledgement of project team by name

- **Authorising Features**
  - • Logo included
  - • Copyright symbol and message
  - • International Standard Book Numbers
  - • Work developing the strategy attributed to ECDWG

The policy texts that I selected form a policy ensemble, or “a collection of interrelated policies” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 8), with explicit and implied links to a broader productivity agenda. Through my close readings of this policy ensemble, I explore the ways that power operates through policy, privileging some policy or practice concepts while silencing or omitting others.

**Context: A productivity agenda**

While these texts, as an ensemble, exist within the confines of ECEC it is possible to track them across a broader political space and agenda—one of productivity. The level of interest in the development of policies in ECEC demonstrates the farther-reaching context in which they are located and highlights the focus on productivity that underpins
them. The *Early Years Strategy* document establishes this link explicitly: “effort to improve child outcomes will in turn contribute to increased social inclusion, human capital and productivity in Australia” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). Thus, it explicitly links efforts, or investments towards ECEC reform to an agenda of productivity for the nation. This agenda frames the way in which early childhood and ECEC services are described and how policies for the sector are written. For example, each policy text selected for analysis references the COAG vision outlined in the *Early Years Strategy*.

Barnes et al. (2009, p. 5) discuss the National Quality Framework and *The Framework* in the context of the ‘productivity’ agenda, which formed a part of an election commitment for the incoming Labor government in 2007. This agenda focussed on “strengthening Australia’s economy through increased investment in social and human capital” and included “a commitment to improving the quality of ECEC through a range of reforms, including a proposed National Quality Framework” (Barnes et al., 2009, p. 5). This type of productivity aligns with the ideas of developing a ‘knowledge economy’, one that serves national competitiveness by ‘investing’ in skills and in knowledge:

“Education and training dominate policy agendas focused on upskilling new knowledge workers and developing research and thus the knowledge that will secure success (OECD, 1996). Productive knowledge is believed to be the basis for national competitive advantage within the international marketplace... Knowledge production is brought into close relationship with economic policy—what matters is what works for the economy”. (Ozga & Jones, 2006, p. 6)

ECEC is seen as a foundation for this investment to “ensure Australia is well placed to meet social and economic challenges in the future and remain internationally competitive” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). *The Standards* explicitly names the contribution of early years as a strategy “to ensure the wellbeing of children throughout their lives and to lift the productivity of our nation as a whole” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 7).

In this section, I have demonstrated ways that policies are interconnected with explicit and implied links to a broader productivity agenda. By identifying the focus on productivity, I have further located these policies within a neoliberal frame.
LOCATING DISCOURSE: THE TERMS IN EACH [CON]TEXT

As part of my analysis I reviewed references to five key terms across the documents, identifying the ways that each term is used and to locate emergent discourses. I explored references to and descriptions of ‘children’, along with the uses of and purposes attributed to the terms: ‘care’, ‘education’, ‘education and care’, and ‘integration’ (I pay closer attention to the term integration in chapter 9). I selected these terms because they are broadly applicable and not limited to Australian state or federal jurisdictional use. I did this to identify the emphasis of the documents as a set and explore the ways that references to the terms help to discursively form and shape policy ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’. I analyse the emergent themes and explore ways in which the texts work to form policy. I drill down into the use of each term to locate the discourses that circulate and operate to shape the field and professional practice. By identifying the specific terms emphasised, the purposes and meanings that are ascribed to them, and the discourses that shape these meanings, I draw out the policy intention implied through different uses of the key terms. In doing this I pay attention to the meanings given to the terms in each document. This enables me to locate emphases and omissions and explore what the resulting emphasis might signify.

An overview of my analysis of the key terms is illustrated in appendix 8.1 and 8.2. Below, I provide a detailed outline of my analysis relating to each term and discuss the ways they link to the broader discourses of neoliberal productivity identified in my review of the policy literature.

Policy Discourses of Children

In this section, I analyse the different uses of terms relating to ‘children’ and ‘childhood’. I located two key ways that discourses shape the descriptions of and responses to children. The first, includes discourses that position children as ‘vulnerable’ and ‘in-development’. The second are discourses that position children relative to their role in Australia’s productivity agenda through use of a language of investment and early intervention.

Children as ‘vulnerable’ and ‘in-development’

The Early Years Strategy and The Standards, determine that children’s learning and development should be supported by adult-led interventions that are appropriately
targeted and of high quality: “quality matters when it comes to the child’s learning environment, including the quality of the home learning environment and the early years of primary school” (COAG, 2009, p. 9). Embedded in the text of the strategy is a strong focus on the impact that adult caregivers have on children’s outcomes. In addition, they outline some of the specific elements of quality:

“Aspects of quality include the capacity and engagement of parents in their child’s development; stimulating play-based learning activities; higher qualifications of early childhood professionals; lower child-to-staff ratios and a strong relationship between the child and a stable caregiver” (COAG, 2009, p. 9).

In *The Standards*, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of quality programs supporting or enhancing children’s learning. *The Standards* emphasises the role of evidence in identifying what works to support children achieving positive outcomes:

“The development of the National Quality Standard was informed by research on best practice and the way in which high-quality education and care contributes to positive outcomes for children” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 8).

This is consistent with its purpose of providing quality standards for ECEC practice.

*The Standards* and *The Framework* are more specific than the *Early Years Strategy* in relation to the practices relating to children. *The Standards*, like *The Framework*, bring many ECEC practices and concepts to the fore in relation to children. The detailed descriptions of practices and approaches included in *The Standards* position children relative to the practices of professional educators.

“The National Quality Standard contains 18 standards with two or three standards in each quality area. These standards are high-level outcome statements.

Under each standard sit elements that describe the outcomes that contribute to the standard being achieved. There are 58 elements in total” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 9).

*The Standards* also highlight some of the other important roles that ‘educators’ play in their work with children.
The Standards emphasise the practices of educators that provides ‘support and encouragement’. For example, Standard 1.1.5 states that “Every child is supported to participate in the program” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 10). The Standards also focus on ‘relationships and interactions’ with children when delivering programs for children. For example, Standard 5.1.1 states that “Interactions with each child are warm, responsive and build trusting relationships”. This text positions children as recipients of these professional practices, while reemphasising the relational elements of the role that support children’s learning and development - set out in the Early Years Strategy.

The Early Years Strategy has been used and cross-referenced as a framing document that “focuses on how Australia’s early childhood development system aims to engage with and respond to the needs of young children and their families” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). The Early Years Strategy targets ‘early childhood development’ departments, programs and services to implement a strategy that responds to these needs. By interrogating the references to departments and roles (such as parents and carers) that hold responsibility for children, I have identified a hierarchical relationship originating from the COAG authored Early Years Strategy, flowing to ‘the system’, then to families, and then to children as service recipients. References to children position them as recipients of ECEC programs and opportunities and gives significant attention to the departments that hold responsibility for providing these programs. I found a consistent focus on meeting needs of children through departments and services relevant to children, specifically through the ECEC workforce. The role of parents and those who support them are also highlighted as a target of the strategy (I explore this further in the next section in relation to care roles). These roles make important contributions to children’s development, care and protection.

Discourses of childhood tend to emphasise both children’s potential and their vulnerability. Through this lens, children are viewed as ‘in need of protection’, ‘in-progress’ and ‘in-development’. This image of childhood invites interventions that focus on children’s potential as learners or as future, rather than current, citizens.

As a “textual intervention” (Ball, 2006, p. 44), policy is used by governments and authorities to exert power over ECEC as a “field of knowledge” (Foucault, 2003, pp. 184-185) making available the language of practices and criteria that practices are measured
against. The set of policy texts position children as ‘learners’ and ‘in-development’ through frequent reference to their ‘outcomes’ and to them as recipients of quality services and opportunities. The Early Years Strategy cites evidence that supports the impact of such interventions:

“There is good evidence that quality maternal, child and family health, early childhood education and care and family support programs make a significant difference for improving outcomes for children. There are particular benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Strong evidence suggests that targeted early childhood approaches are also cost-effective” (COAG, 2009, p. 8).

By reviewing the different uses of the term ‘children’ in these texts, I found that children are positioned variously as ‘learners’, ‘program recipients’ and ‘participants’, and that they are frequently referred to as part of a broader effort to define and describe adult responsibilities in relation to them.

Children’s role in Australia’s Productivity
The Early Years Strategy focusses on gains for children’s outcomes “for themselves and the nation” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). The effect of this is to position children and their needs firmly within the scope of a productivity agenda. This productivity agenda is reinforced through references to children as ‘learners’ and to the professional practices that support children’s learning in order to meet their needs and achieve outcomes. I have located a particular focus on early intervention and investment relating to children[‘s outcomes] within the texts.

Early intervention
The Early Years Strategy presents ‘A Case for Change’ that outlines the evidence base that supports the strategy. This section describes the benefits of positive early childhood experiences and costs of poor ones. This argument is supported by the inclusion of an appendix in the Early Years Strategy that outlines the ‘evidence base’. I have located a consistent emphasis on early intervention approaches across the documents. The Framework, itself named as an action of the Early Years Strategy, does this by reinforcing “conclusive international evidence that early childhood is a vital period in children’s learning and development” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). Early intervention approaches are further reinforced in The Standards that cite “clear evidence that the early years of
children’s lives are very important for their present and future health, development and wellbeing” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 7). The Workforce Strategy also describes “the need for action” being linked to “a skilled workforce” to deliver “high-quality ECEC services... improving outcomes for vulnerable children” (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 4) as well as outlining the evidence base supporting the reform as an appendix.

These references reinforce a policy message of ‘getting in early’ for children to support their development.

**Investment in children**

The term ‘investing’ within the title of the *Early Years Strategy* positions it within an economic frame. The document goes further by referring to the “cost-effectiveness—of ensuring all children experience a positive early childhood” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). This statement places the *Early Years Strategy*, along with the proceeding documents and National Quality Framework reforms, within a set of political strategies “to create a better future for themselves and the nation”. Both the ‘evidence-base’ and discourse relating to cost-benefit and investment continue as a focus throughout the documents. The consistent rationale offered is that future social and economic costs can be prevented if interventions are deployed earlier. Each policy demonstrates a need for action and identifies subsequent actions to address social and economic concerns as policy problems. The dominant references to children that I have found throughout the policy texts reinforce both the policy problem of poor development and the message that intervention through high quality programs will address the policy problem. The texts operate to consistently position children as learners and to highlight programs and opportunities as interventions for them.

My analysis uncovered mutually reinforcing discourses of ‘children in development’ and ‘neoliberal productivity’ that position children as learners, in need of protection and in-development that require investment, quality programs, and early intervention. By positioning children as learners and referring to the range of programs available to them the policy texts begin to define and determine the policy problem of ‘children’ as an economic one. The *Early Years Strategy* establishes the policy problem that without *Investing in the Early Years*, Australia will not keep pace in a competitive global economy. I have also located this rationale embedded in the text of the subsequent
documents. Policy discourse of ‘children’ contains a strong discourse of investment that flows, unquestioned, through the rationales of the texts. Through this lens, children are considered in relation to their utility to the economy and the future of the nation. Conceptualisations of children that challenge notions of vulnerability, such as those raised in chapter four, remain absent in policy. The policies promote the message that intervention, by improving the system and children’s outcomes through high-quality programs, will address the economic policy problem of children.

**Policy Discourses of Care**

While none of the policy texts are very descriptive in relation to the term ‘care’, I located a range of ways that the term is used throughout the texts. I discuss examples from across the texts that frequently conceptualise ‘care’ as: a *specific service type*, for example, Long Day Care or child care; a *role*, such as ‘care-giver’ or ‘carer’; or an *approach or attribute* – a ‘careful’ act undertaken by a ‘caring’ person.

Labelling the role of ‘care-giver’ functions to allocate and determine responsibility as well as to define the scope of the responsibility of government. The *Early Years Strategy* states, “Raising children is the prime responsibility of families, parents and carers” (COAG, 2009, p. 4) and positions government responses, in the context of the strategy, as secondary or supplementary responsibilities to support for parents and carers in fulfilling this role. Another manifestation of the problem of care is an underlying emphasis on the need to preserve and protect children. Policy is enacted to do this by allocating responsibility (to parents, communities, professionals and departments) and determining standards of quality and practice required in relation to care.

The policy problem of care that I have identified is evident in the emphasis in the text on the matter of allocating responsibility between governments, caregivers, carers and parents. The *Early Years Strategy* demonstrates this, describing the function of ‘care’ as supporting ‘workforce participation’ and productivity:

“[having] access throughout early childhood to the support, care and education that will equip [children] for life and learning, delivered in a way that actively engages parents and meets the workforce participation needs of parents” (COAG, 2009, p. 13).
The terminology of care subtly positions its functions as supportive to children’s education and to parental [maternal] workforce participation. Discourse of neoliberal productivity support positions of consumerism and ‘care as a consumer service’ that circulate in ECEC and position the profession as a service provider. To service productivity demands, ECEC services enable parents to temporarily transfer care responsibility to the service and are thus enabled to participate in the workforce. *The Framework* includes lists of the various service types that are included within its scope. This claims authority over practices of these services.

The discourses of care that I located in the texts, particularly those associated with caring attributes or careful work, are deeply linked with gendered effort. The effort associated with caring and nurturing, or what Fraser (2013, p. 162) refers to as “pink-collar” industries, is often un[der]recognised or under-valued as unskilled labour and seen as a private matter (Butler, 2004, Fraser, 2013, Lynch et al., 2012, Osgood, 2012).

Although the purpose of care is not well articulated across the documents, the term ‘care’ is often used as a label to describe a service type or for the title ECEC sector. There is limited specificity relating to the work and role of care in the ECEC sector. This is particularly prevalent when associated with the role of care within the title ‘ECEC’ and within the reform agenda. References to care in *The Standards* are consistently linked to education, as such *The Standards* position care to support children’s learning and provide a service. The term care is variously used to describe a type of service, a role, an approach and an attribute, while subtly transmitting a message of [maternal] responsibility for care.

**Policy Discourses of Education**

The purpose of education is also not explored in great detail. However, it is stated in the *Early Years Strategy* that “[t]here is good evidence that early childhood education programs are effective in improving outcomes for young children” (COAG, 2009, p. 9). The main references to ‘education’ in the texts were ascribed to: the departments that hold responsibility for the delivery or oversight of education, a range of education programs for children, and the role of ‘educators’ as a primary role. I have included a diagram in Figure 8.1 that I designed to visually represent the quantitative summary of
references to the term ‘education’ (I have included the same style of diagram for each term in appendix 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Total references to ‘education’ across texts

This diagram is useful because it demonstrates the frequency of use of the term ‘education’ across the texts, showing greater use of the term in *The Standards* and fewer references to it in the *Children’s Centre Evaluation*. This diagram shows only the gross use of the terms across and in each of the texts, rather than providing any context.

I found frequent references to education relative to the role of ‘educators’ within *The Standards*, *The Framework* and, to a lesser extent, *Workforce Strategy*. Out of 853 references to education across the texts, 622 of them refer to the role of ‘educators’. Of the 622 references to the role of ‘educator’, I found 434 in *The Standards*, 135 in *The Framework* and 53 in the *Workforce Strategy*. The role of ECEC professionals as ‘educators’ is reinforced throughout the texts providing insight into how the role is framed, its purpose, and relative importance. This position is further supported when considering the significantly high references to children relative to their ‘learning’ and ‘development’ throughout the policy and reform texts. Discourses of childhood operate to position children as learners and subjects of education and recipients of the actions of ECEC professionals as ‘educators’.

Through my analysis of the policy texts, I have identified the problem of education as an issue of opportunity that connects strongly with children’s learning and the achievement of outcomes. While government policy seeks to address issues of opportunity, educators
are the facilitators of educational achievement. The emphasis of policy implicitly positions the function of care to support this purpose by undertaking these tasks carefully, and by preserving and protecting children in the process.

In *The Standards*, the role and purpose of education is strongly linked to children’s learning and development outcomes. An example of the attention given to education can be seen in the following statement from *The Standards*:

“Critical reflection and careful planning increase the value of children’s time in education and care by ensuring that the educational program and practice responds to children’s interests and scaffolds their learning” (ACECQA, 2011, p. 19).

Access to ‘education’, and to ‘education and care’, are highlighted as important in the ‘early years’ for future success and for achieving outcomes. Learning is, unsurprisingly, emphasised in the Early Years Learning Framework, followed by the experiences that will deliver this learning, and the roles that educators play. Use of the term ‘educator’ to refer to those working in early childhood settings identifies ‘education’ as the priority for this role. As such, the uses of the term ‘education’ across the texts are distinct through a stronger emphasis on children’s learning and outcomes.

**Policy Discourses of Education and Care**

The use of ‘education and care’ as a term occurs less frequently than the other terms. The term ‘education and care’ is used to name or label the sector or field and encompasses a range of services and professionals within it. The uses of term ‘education and care’ that I located across the documents, group and simplify the often diverse and complex area of programs and services that interact, intersect and [at times] compete in ECEC.

The *Early Years Strategy* refers to the benefits of quality ‘educational programs’. It also promotes arrangements for quality assurance and regulation that are “straightforward, appropriate and consistent across all levels of government” and supports “the use of the nationally agreed Early Years Learning Framework” (COAG, 2009, p. 18). There is only one reference to ‘education and care’ in *The Framework*, however it also reinforces the quality and learning experiences for children:

ECEC is described as the setting for the experience of ‘quality teaching and learning’ while care experiences are not explicitly described.

Evidence is also used to promote and support the approach to investment in the early years and the part that ECEC plays. There is a particular focus on the potential for a positive return on the investment in ECEC services in the Early Years Strategy (COAG, 2009, p. 9), again, reinforcing the productivity gains of the strategy.

The policy texts describe the problem of ‘education and care’ as the need for improvement to it via provision of quality programs. In this, policy positions ‘education and care’ as a programmatic response that is the subject of reform that seeks to improve quality. While the importance of high quality ‘education and care’ is established within The Standards, the use of the term in the text is used as a descriptive title or label of the services that children are accessing. I did not locate a clear description of the purpose of ‘education and care’, however the Children’s Centres Framework positions it within the Victorian Government’s “five-year agenda... of reform to improve outcomes for children and young people” (DEECD, 2010, p. 3). Quality ‘education and care’ services are positioned as a required core of the children’s centre model put forward in the Children’s Centres Framework (DEECD, 2010, p. 3). The Children’s Centres Framework focuses on describing a model of planning for the integration of services for children and families in a community context. By referring directly to the vision set out through the Early Years Strategy, the Workforce Strategy builds on its rationale and positions ‘education and care’ services within a strategy for the development of children and the nation articulated as a “case for change” (COAG, 2009, pp. 6-12).

My analysis of references to ‘education and care’ in the policy texts shows this term is predominately used as a service label. In addition, references to ‘education and care’ often position it in relation to quality provision or improvement, the integration of ‘education and care’ within the sector, and relative to the evidence that supports it. ‘Early Childhood Education and Care’ is used to categorise services. References to ‘education and care’ link it with discourses of neoliberal productivity, while the label
that the term has come to represent classifies a suite of practices, policies and standards, that at times exist in conflict, under a generic title.

By paying close attention to the discourses that influence the way that policies allocate values, I uncovered ways that the terminology signals the discourses in operation in policy. Focussing on the ‘discursive formation’ and ‘textual considerations’ of policies has revealed the ways that policy problems are framed and identified, and used to justify the associated policy response. My analysis of terminology within each text has demonstrated the ways that policy ‘positions’, limits, and enables possibilities for identities and practice in the ECEC profession. In the next section, I explore the implications that this has on the formation of policy.

DEFINING POLICY PROBLEMS
My analysis has revealed a common thread that that permeates uses of each of the terms throughout the policies, linking them to a broader dominant discourse of neoliberal productivity. References to ‘improvements’, ‘quality’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘achievement of outcomes’ across the texts position the policies within a broader agenda focussed on productivity. In the previous chapters, I identified the pervasiveness of neoliberal discourses throughout policy texts and framings of professionalism. It is then not surprising that there are references to technologies of accountability, professionalism, quality, investment and early intervention embedded throughout these policy texts.

I located discourses of childhood that significantly influence the ways that children are ‘understood’ and that impact policy responses. Robinson (2013) explores the discourses of childhood that limit the imagination of children’s capability:

“The hegemonic discourse of childhood is intimately linked with the concept of innocence, which is equated with purity, naivety, selflessness, irrationality, and as state of unknowingness, or of being less worldly – all of which characterize the child as vulnerable” (p. 42).

Discourses of children-in-development are reinforced by terminology, or policy scripts, that position children as learners, recipients of services, and in need of protections.
When the texts are viewed through this lens, it becomes evident that “Children’s production of knowledge has been dismissed and disqualified” (Robinson, 2013, p. 29).

In many ways, the policy problem of children-in-development sets the scene for the ways that my terms of interest are used throughout the policy texts. Neoliberal discourses of productivity are pervasive in the ways that children are problematised for policy.

I identified the different ways that key terms are used in each policy text and tracked the problems that policies are positioned as a response to. Through my analysis, I uncovered discourses of ‘childhood vulnerability’ that positions children as learners, in-development, and as a strategy for Australia’s productivity through early intervention and prevention. This highlights the problem of children as one of future competitiveness that requires improvement to systems and children’s outcomes. Further, I located discourses of ‘care’ that position it as a label for a ‘service’ or as an approach that supports children’s learning and development along with parental, or maternal, workforce participation. The related problem of care is one of allocating responsibility of raising and protecting children, which requires allocation of responsibility for the protection of children. In contrast, the policy discourses of ‘education’ position it as a response linked to access and opportunities that contribute to individual and societal future success. The associated problem of education relates to issues of ensuring access to opportunities to achieve learning. With a somewhat different emphasis, policy discourses of ‘education and care’ position it as a label for a type of service and link it with a quality and improvement agenda. The problem of ‘education and care’ relates to the standard of programs on offer requiring strategies to improve the quality of programs. This ensemble of policies, as a “textual intervention” (Ball, 2006, p. 46), respond to an underlying problem of ‘productivity’ as the ‘true’ purpose of policy. This limits the strategies and policies that are possible by creating “a system for possible statements” (Foucault, 1972, p. 30) in early childhood policy that focus on the outcomes of early childhood and particular types of gains for productivity. Meaning that policy is powerfully and politically determining what ECEC is and what it can be.

‘Education and care’ when referred to together are also most frequently referring to a service, sector or program type. Citing Foucault (1979), Osgood (2012) describes ways
that ECEC professionals are “positioned within a regulatory gaze” (p. 19) as a result of the marketization of early years provision. Osgood (2012) discusses the ‘hardening’ relationships between the parent “customer” and the “service provider” in the childcare market through increased “[n]eo-liberal emphases upon choice, accountability, consumer rights and customer satisfaction” (p. 19). ‘Care’, as a service, serves productivity by providing service options that temporarily transfer parental [maternal] care responsibility to ECEC services that support workforce participation. ‘Education’, in contrast, is described as a program in which it is desirable for children to participate, however is offered within a suite of options for parents to select from. This reinforces the scripts of neoliberal consumer choice in a market place. Accountability for delivering children’s outcomes is allocated to various roles. While the Early Years Strategy allocates the primary responsibility of care to parents, responsibility for education is allocated to professionals and government departments and programs.

This detailed analysis of the meaning and emphasis of key terms demonstrates shifts in the way in which the policy problem has been identified and defined, and how the policies work together, as ensemble, to address this problem. In the diagram below I depict the way that I have analysed and interpreted the interaction between the selected texts and in relation to the broader productivity agenda. The Early Years Strategy is situated within the productivity agenda alongside a range of other strategies and plans that span different sectors and industries. The proceeding policy text that I have selected form a subset of strategies that pertain to specific outcomes related to and contained within the broader Early Years Strategy. The Early Years Strategy prioritises early childhood outcomes, the subsequent documents work to positively impact on children’s outcomes in different ways, the: The Framework targets practices; The Standards addresses quality standards; Children’s Centres Framework focuses on integration; and Workforce Strategy targets the workforce.

I have diagrammatically summarised the ways that the discrete work of each policy fits within a frame of outcomes set out in the Early Years Strategy, and how this strategy is

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6 Or, more accurately, mothers, which is influenced by gendered discourses
situated within a broader productivity agenda that encompasses a range of strategies applicable to various sectors and industries.

Figure 8.2 Mapping the Productivity Agenda

The implication of this shapes the discourses of policy framing the work of ECEC professionals as an economic intervention, which has limiting effects on the ways that children are *recognised* through policy.

These policies also seek to remedy inequality experienced in early childhood. I draw on Fraser’s (2009) along with Lynch and Colleague’s (2009) terms to explore these responses. Policy effort places importance on the *cultural* status of children in society and seeks to address structures that materially impact their health, wellbeing and development. Children are predominately recognised in policy in relation to their needs.

The focus on Early Intervention approaches, presents a *redistributive* strategy that seeks to redress impacts of inequality. This is framed *economically* as an investment in the nation, rather than in children individually. Within this policy context, *representation*, through strategies of recognition and redistribution, occurs on behalf of children. *Relationality* for children is considered through policy as a foundation for their protection and development and in relation to balancing care roles and workforce
participation. Policy interventions represent the interests of children, which are defined relative to their needs and the national interest.

In the following section, I discuss explicit references to practice within the policies to explore ways that these documents act to affirm and emphasise particular ECEC practices.

**POLICY-ENDORSED PRACTICES**

The ways that policy texts prioritise practice helps to shape what the ECEC profession is comprised of and how ‘professionalism’ is performed in day-to-day practice. Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p 55-56) describe “implementation and outcomes” as key policy issues. Policy texts can work to imply the “ideal professional practitioner” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p 55). Policy shapes and forms practices through text in a variety of ways as I have shown in the previous sections analysing the ways that key terms form and signify policy intention. By exploring the practices and approaches that are explicitly and implicitly written into policy it is possible to identify not only the promoted [or acceptable] forms of practice but to further identify the intention communicated through policy and its emphasis.

In this section, I engage in further policy analysis to explore the ways that the policies describe and prioritise practices. I identify a range of practices prioritised by policy as ‘policy-endorsed practices’. Foucault (1972) describes ways that discourse operates to enable “classification” and “categories” that produce “truth” through the interaction and presentation of knowledge and language. These 'policy-endorsed practices' become categories that discursively shape practice and are also powerfully and discursively positioned in the early years “field of knowledge” or “discipline” with legitimacy and authority (Foucault, 2003, pp. 184-185). Imposed through political technologies of policy, ECEC professionals evaluate their own actions against the rules that are applied through the 'policy-endorsed practices'. 'Policy-endorsed practices' are subtly prioritised and assumed ‘requisite’ to work in ECEC through repetition of them in policy. Butler (1990, pp. 202-203) argues that it is repetition of performances that enable norms to be constructed. Through repetition in the texts, 'policy-endorsed practices' and their
associated skills become recognised practices that ECEC professionals measure and regulate their professional performances by.

**Practices versus strategy**
I start this section discussing a key distinction that emerged between ‘practice’ and ‘strategy’ when I analysed references to practices across the texts. Each of the policy documents was developed around the priority of improving children’s outcomes, particularly relating to learning and development. *The Framework* and *The Standards* are practice-focused documents that function as key tools of implementation for the *Early Years Strategy*. These documents describe and frame quality practice in ECEC. In contrast, references to practice in the *Early Years Strategy* are applied to a broad range of policy and service responses, giving it a broader strategic focus. However, while the *Children’s Centres Evaluation* and *Workforce Strategy* have a strong strategic focus, they each contain a more specific planning focus as applied to service delivery, and to the sector workforce.

**Endorsed practices**
I developed a list of ‘policy-endorsed practices’ by identifying practices across the policy texts. I have presented the thirty-five 'policy-endorsed practices' in Table 8.2 in order of frequency of use across these policy texts and have included the number of references to each of the practices in column on the right (labelled ‘Count’). I derived this list by searching each text for phrases that made reference to practices and grouped them into categories.
Table 8.2: ‘Policy-endorsed Practices’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Policy-endorsed Practices’</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Developing relationships (including partnerships, interactions, teamwork and communication)</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A focus on outcomes for children</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Valuing diversity and inclusive practices</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Observation, monitoring and assessment</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Managing and implementing routines (meeting needs: sleep, feeding, changing, toileting, physical activity, nutrition)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Facilitating learning through play and experiences.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. [Collaborative] Decision-making and ownership (in curriculum)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Being responsive to children’s interest, needs and learning</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Engaging families</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Community engagement (reflecting the community and engaging services)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Planning, documenting and evaluating</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Supporting continuity and transitions between services</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Implementing frameworks for practice</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Embedding educational concepts and practices (delivering content: numeracy, literacy, science)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Facilitating learning and skill development (non-educational content)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Leadership and management</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Generic Education and Care practices</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Supervision</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Critical Reflection</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Behaviour management</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Risk Management</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Modelling – approaches or skill development</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Continuous improvement and professional development</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Environmentally sustainable practices</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Evaluating quality ECEC</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Management and accountability</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Scaffolding</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Protection of Children</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Hygiene practices</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Intentional teaching</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Implementing Best Practice</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Ethical Practices</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Developing or reflecting Philosophy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Developing curriculum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Promoting Agency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alongside each of the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, I categorised the skills required to adopt each of the practices (see appendix 8.3). I identified a strong emphasis on practices that required communication skills to support ‘interpersonal’ interactions and ‘rapport building’, ‘work in teams’, and ‘giving feedback’. Another set of skills that were closely associated with the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ were related to planning and documentation, which incorporated ‘assessment’, ‘observation’ and ‘evaluation’. In addition to these sets of related skills there were diverse skills associated with content knowledge required, for example, ‘implementation’, ‘curriculum knowledge’, ‘organisational skills’, and ‘facilitation skills’. Skills associated with cultural competence also supported a range of the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ and content knowledge required.

The emphasis that I found through my analysis of these skills and practices promote characteristics of ECEC professionals who are able to undertake cyclical observation, planning, and assessment, based on their knowledge of content and practice frameworks. Further, they require the ability to communicate effectively and inclusively with children, families, communities, peers, and others in the sector with high levels of organisational skill.

In further analysis, I counted the frequency of references to the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ in each policy document, and across the five texts to identify the practice priorities (see appendix 8.4 for a break-down of references to ‘policy-endorsed practices’ for each text). Through this, I identified the three most heavily emphasised ‘policy-endorsed practices’ to be ‘developing relationships’, ‘focus on outcomes’, and ‘valuing diversity’. I discuss these top three practices in the following section.

**Developing relationships**

‘Developing relationships’ was prioritised as the key practice across the collected policy texts. *The Framework* and *The Standards* included the most references to this practice. The *Children’s Centres Evaluation* also had a high proportion of references to this practice, which is not surprising given its focus on developing integrated approaches in ECEC settings. The types of relationships referred to across the documents includes a range of professional interactions between ECEC professionals along with those involving families, children, the community, peers, and other professions. Relationships
also spanned a spectrum of interactions from close relationships that support children and families, to functional exchanges between other professionals or peers.

**Focus on Outcomes**
A ‘focus on outcomes’ was the second highest reference to practice. The *Early Years Strategy* and *Workforce Strategy* had a higher proportion of references to a ‘focus on outcomes’ compared to the practice documents. This aligns with the emphasis that the *Early Years Strategy* places on the achievement of positive outcomes for children and its role in setting the directions for the succeeding policies. In addition, many of the references to other practices, such as those to ‘developing relationships’ that I located in the *Early Years Strategy*, are framed around the idea of achieving outcomes. This is evident in the *Early Years Strategy*:

> “Children have better outcomes when they form a secure attachment with a carer who understands and responds to their physical, emotional, social and learning needs with consistency and warmth” (COAG, 2009, p. 8).

The importance of ‘developing relationships’ in the *Early Years Strategy* is cast in the context of achieving positive outcomes for children. Other practices that I located in the *Workforce Strategy* focus on outcomes through references to ‘learning and skill development’, ‘continuous improvement’ and ‘evaluating quality’. This is consistent with my previous reading of the policies that revealed a focus on outcomes as a priority for productivity.

**Valuing diversity**
I identified ‘valuing diversity’ as the third most frequently referred to practice across the documents. The policy texts emphasise a need to target effort to specific needs or groups within the community or society. The focus across other documents, however, varies from the *Early Years Strategy* which urges the service system to “make services responsive to different family situations” (COAG, 2009, p. 12), to *The Framework*, that emphasises practices that “value children’s different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families’ home lives” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13). Practices of ‘valuing diversity’ are framed as responses to diversity in culture, ability or values, alongside diversity in relation to individual family need. The impact of this is that ‘valuing diversity’ includes responses relating to service planning and individual interactions with children and
families, further highlighting the differences between the strategic focus of the *Early Years Strategy* and the practice focus of *The Framework*.

**Positioning children, positioning practice**

As outlined in the previous section, children have been positioned in policy as learners, ‘in-development’ and in need of protection, alongside discourses of neoliberal productivity. As such, the policy problem of ‘children’ is commonly defined as an economic one. Many of the frequently referred to 'policy-endorsed practices' mirror references to children in the policy texts. While the policy documents support a wide array of practices, they tend to direct ECEC professional effort toward achieving productivity goals. In this they position ECEC relative to neoliberal discourses of childhood. This neoliberal policy intention is reinforced when reviewing the skills associated with the 'policy-endorsed practices'. Just as children are positioned relative to their learning and development, ECEC professionals are similarly positioned by their skills and practices in relation to their role in facilitating children’s learning and developmental outcomes. Participants described doing this through a range of intricately balanced relational and technical professional performances.

Analysing the ways that participants enacted their priorities through their work, and in relation to policy, revealed complex performances of ECEC professionalism. Butler (2014b, online) argues that performances require a stage or context in which to be grounded. The developmental discourses of childhood and discourses of childhood vulnerability and innocence identified in my policy analysis furnish the stage for neoliberal scripts of investment, quality, accountability and early intervention. This positions education, within the label of ECEC, as a pervasive priority, casting ECEC professionals as ‘educators’ that service this priority. The purpose of ECEC as serving the future of the nation is normalised to the extent that it is unquestioned. Participants described their strong commitment to this purpose through their descriptions of their work.

* My analysis highlights the ways that the strategy and practice documents operate with different effects, especially in relation to shaping practice. In particular, the *Early Years Strategy* is significant in shaping the practices of the subsequent texts around delivering
positive outcomes for children. Practices such as ‘management and leadership’ and ‘engaging families’ are prioritised or emphasised in the Early Years Strategy to direct effort toward achieving positive outcomes for children. Protecting children is also emphasised as an important outcome alongside achieving positive learning and development outcomes for children, which is established as the primary emphasis of the Early Years Strategy. The Early Years Strategy, by highlighting ‘valuing diversity’ as a key practice, identifies its target group. It further identifies a range of key transition points in the service system, namely the early years and ECEC services, identified risk areas for children and families that it seeks to address by directing practice to support ‘continuity and transitions’. The emphasis of the Early Years Strategy is supported by more specific practices in subsequent documents.

The differences between the strategic and practice focuses of the documents have significant implications when it comes to translating strategies into practice.

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have analysed five key policy texts which operate as a policy ensemble. This enables me to explore the way that they work to position professional practice. I have demonstrated the ways that these policy texts position ECEC professional practice within a productivity agenda. This agenda is transmitted via the strong focus on children’s learning and development, by naming the range of programs that contribute to achieving ‘positive outcomes’ for children, and through policy emphases on workforce participation. In addition, I identified a strong emphasis on the role of ‘quality’ ECEC in supporting the achievement of outcomes for children, amidst limited descriptions of approaches to ‘education and care’.

My analysis of the frequency and usage of key terms has enabled me to identify not only the stated purposes of each document but also the relative emphasis in and across the policy texts. This analysis has revealed key differences in emphasis between the practice-focused language used in the texts of The Framework and The Standards, and the language of service development, planning and strategy used in the Early Years Strategy, Children’s Centres Framework and Workforce Strategy. It has also highlighted the shared emphasis across the texts on children as in-development, and some
consistent references to the work of ‘educators’ working with ‘families’. This provided insight into how the language of policy works to position children as recipients of services and programs, allocating responsibility to adult parents and carers and government departments for their outcomes.

Through my analysis of practice I have demonstrated ways that its emphasis positions practice to shape the image of an ‘ideal’ ECEC professional. Through exploring the 'policy-endorsed practices' I have identified specific practices, emphasised in policy, that are significant in implementing the reform agenda. These 'policy-endorsed practices' are powerful for policy implementation and in shaping the performances of ECEC professionals in [and out of] integrated settings.

The policy-driven trend towards provision of integrated services amplifies the factors that participants face in forging and re-shaping professional identities. I use the next chapter to explore the ways in which particular discourses shape participants’ performances within an integrated setting. I use the interview and focus data to explore ways in which the concept of integration, as expressed in policy, is both affirmed and resisted in practice.
In this chapter I build on my analysis of fieldwork and policy data from the previous two chapters to examine the complex interaction between integration-in-policy and integration-in-practice. I analyse ways in which policy constructs the concept of ‘integration’ by exploring use of the term in the policy texts. I return to participant data to discuss the ways that policy and practice intersect to form the ‘problem’ that, it has been argued, integrated service delivery will solve. Building on the discussion in chapter 7, I examine the skills participants identify as being important in an integrated service setting. Finally, I examine the participants’ descriptions of, and views on how the services and professionals in the setting work together, and explore areas of tension related to this emerging form of integrated work.

## CONCEPTS OF INTEGRATION

Integrated services are positioned in policy as an early response to adversity experienced in childhood. They are intended to prevent or reduce costlier intervention later in life (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, p. 54). Designed as a response to the problems of disadvantage and social exclusion, integrated services are promoted as sites of early detection in seeking to meet the needs of children and families (McInnes & Diamond, 2011, Sims, 2011a). Simplifying service access for families is a core driver for developing integrated services which aim to reduce the burden that families experience in navigating a complex service system. Implicitly, the aim of integration acknowledges the limitations of the current service system relative to the demands upon it.

Integrated services seek to improve outcomes for children by joining up services and responses as early intervention. Early intervention prioritises the functions of assessment and detection to identify issues or potential issues and act to prevent them from occurring or to reduce the intensity of impact. Within the integrated approach, emphasis is placed on the skills professionals require, not only to work in more joined-up ways, but also to assess and detect social and developmental risks, vulnerabilities and concerns. Developing this capacity has required a range of interwoven strategies.
As discussed in the literature review, the trend towards integrated service delivery has a significant impact on the way that practice and policy are both formed and performed. What is evident in the literature is the positioning of ECEC practice to provide early intervention and prevention activity and achieve specific ‘outcomes’ for children, families, communities and society more broadly. A persistent issue, however, is a lack of evidence ‘proving’ the effectiveness of integrated service delivery in achieving these outcomes. Instead of providing such evidence, the literature and practice documentation emphasise the process of implementing integration. In the next section, I locate the emphases and meanings ascribed to the term integration in the policy texts to determine its intended influence on shaping the practices of ECEC professionals. This analysis of the policy texts then enables me to compare the way policy positions professionals with the ways professionals conceptualise their roles within an integrated setting.

**Locating integration in the policy texts**

I examined references to integration throughout the selected policy texts. My analysis revealed both direct references to integration that name or label integrated services or approaches, and indirect references to integration that imply or infer integrated approaches. I located references to terms concerned with ‘integration’ more frequently in the strategy-based documents (*Early Years Strategy, Children’s Centre Framework* and *Workforce Strategy*) than in the practice-based documents (*The Framework* and *The Standards*). This suggests that ‘integration’ is more a policy goal than a set of specific practices.

The term ‘integration’ is used inconsistently and interchangeably with other terms such as ‘collaboration’ and ‘partnership’. In the *Workforce Strategy*, for example, I located use of the term ‘integration’ under the heading of *A Collaborative Workforce*, which suggested that ‘integrated’ and ‘collaborative’ are, at times, synonymous. The texts also use the term ‘integration’ more broadly to describe an approach taken to service delivery or a type of setting. The term ‘integration’ is also commonly used as a label for a type of service or setting rather than describing a specific set of practices within the ECEC settings. This is similar to the use of the term ‘education and care’ as a label for a broad service type. Considering that ‘integration’ features as a key priority area in the
Early Years Strategy and Workforce Strategy documents, I found relatively few references to integration across the texts in comparison to the other terms of interest for my research such as ‘children’, ‘care’, ‘education’, and ‘education and care’.

The less frequent use of the term ‘integration’ indicates that the concept is not a primary focus of policy. This positions practices of integration outside core ECEC practices. In the following section, I discuss findings from my policy analysis alongside analysis of participant data to explore how policy texts function to position practice.

FORMING THE ‘PROBLEM’: THROUGH POLICY AND PERFORMANCES

My policy analysis reveals diverse definitions of ‘integrated’ service delivery in the early years. I found the term ‘integration’ used to describe services, models and systems with:

“A focus on the whole service system, covering both universal and targeted supports and services, across sectors and levels of government, including non-government agencies” (COAG, 2009, p. 4).

In addition, I located references to the ‘integrated’ approach of governments in developing the strategy, with an emphasis on the ‘shared vision’ of the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments (COAG, 2009, p. 4). This defines integration as a system response to the complex needs of families.

Integration is also defined as an approach to working across service types and service settings. The Children’s Centre Framework has strong links with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), which, as previously noted, extends its reach to all professionals working in early years services. This document is explicit in its descriptions of the reach of integrated services to:

“other early childhood services, such as maternal and child health, early childhood intervention and co-location with schools” (DEECD, 2010, p. 3).

The VEYLDF makes further links to other Victorian state-based child protection and family support services along with other projects and initiatives that are deemed valuable in an integrated model (DEECD, 2010, p. 3). In the Workforce Strategy, integration is also used to describe an approach that ECEC services can offer. The
Document states that a goal of the strategy is to “support ECEC staff to work in a more integrated way with the broader early childhood development workforce” (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 3). These documents promote a way of working between professionals as the defining element of integration.

While the Early Years Strategy has references to specific services such as Child and Family Centres (COAG, 2009, p. 4), it further differentiates integration as existing beyond physical proximity. This expands the definition to:

“includes integration where services and professionals across health, early childhood education and care, family support and specialists work very closely together, regardless of whether they are co-located or not” (COAG, 2009, p. 12).

Key transition processes for children and families between these services are promoted as priorities for integration. Integrated services are situated in geographic locations or community contexts, not explicitly centre-based. ‘Integration’ also refers to a site of practice.

The diverse definitions and descriptions of integration presents a challenge to the “effective early childhood development system” (COAG, 2009, pp. 17-18). Anning et al. (2010) describe a model for integration in the UK known as ‘the onion’ that encompasses “governance, strategy, process and front-line delivery” (p. 114) to achieve outcomes for children, families and communities. The image of ‘the onion’ symbolises the layers of effort and activity required for the effective integration of services ‘on-the-ground’, indicating that integration is not solely a practice nor simply a policy intervention; rather, it is an intricate and complex blend of the two. The inconsistent definitions of integration in the policy texts limit descriptions of specific approaches and practices for integrating practice in ECEC settings. As a result, a range of terms are used interchangeably and inconsistently, meaning that integration as an approach, a site, or set of practices is difficult to specifically define. There is a danger of over-simplifying the term integration to the degree that it is only generically understood. Integrated approaches, for example, rely on collaboration; however, collaboration alone, as Anning et al. (2010) argue, only represents one level, or component, of integration, alongside other multilayered processes and strategies of policy and practice.
Direct references to integration
I found direct references to integration in the *Early Years Strategy* and the *Children’s Centre Framework* that specifically discuss interdisciplinary approaches. In the *Early Years Strategy*, COAG refers to ‘integrated services’, ‘collaborative practices’ and ‘joint approaches’. It also refers to the physical location and design of services linked in integrated models. References to integration that I located in the *Early Years Strategy* position it as an explicit priority of policy and strategy for the early years. The terms *integration* or *integrated services* are used in the *Children’s Centre Framework* to describe services, models, qualifications and practices.

The *Children’s Centre Framework* uses the term integration to intentionally position professionals in a way that extends beyond their immediate professional reach, calling on them to look beyond their role. The purpose of integration is described directly within the *Children’s Centre Framework*:

“The Victorian Government regards the integration of early childhood services and the increased collaboration between services as integral to both addressing and supporting the needs of children and families” (DEECD, 2010, p. 3).

The *Children’s Centre Framework* is used to promote the integration of services as a planned and intentional act that requires a range of supports, strategies and collaborative effort to succeed.

References to integrated approaches in the *Workforce Strategy*, despite making direct references to the term, define it in limited detail. There are consistent references to collaboration with other professionals and agencies throughout the text, with one element of the strategy focussing entirely on *A Collaborative Workforce*. The *Workforce Strategy* states that the purpose of integration is to improve coordination of the sector and services to better respond to the needs of children and families. This purpose is linked back to the vision set out in the *Early Years Strategy*. These references are explicit in describing integration and connecting it to the strategies that support these approaches, thus emphasising it as a practice.

Indirect references to integration
In contrast, I found only inferred or indirect references to integration in the two practice-based documents—*The Framework* and *The Standards*. The only term that I found in
The Framework that links with the approaches of integration is ‘collaboration’. I located integration only as an inferred priority within The Framework, evident through references to broadening practice to encompass family and community contexts. Similarly, in The Standards I found references to other terms that can be linked to integrated approaches or practices, such as ‘collaboration’ or ‘joint work’ with other professionals.

Although The Framework doesn’t include the term ‘integrated’ when describing the work of educators, it does refer to ‘working with’ other professionals and agencies. It also refers to broadening practice to encompass family and community contexts. The Framework describes the purpose for collaboration as helping educators to plan and respond to the needs of children and families within a community context. Similarly, I found references to collaboration or joint work with other professionals, but found no reference to integrated service delivery in The Standards. The purpose of working or planning collaboratively with other professionals, described in The Standards, is for the benefit of children and families.

While ‘integration’ is described as a priority in the Early Years Strategy and Workforce Strategy, neither The Framework nor The Standards specifically describe the types of practices or funded programs that support an integrated approach. It is significant that these two practice documents omit explicit discussion of integration. ‘Integration’ is not described as a practice of The Framework; nor is it a function against which quality is measured in The Standards. As such, describing integrated approaches as non-mainstream practices warrants, indeed necessitates, specific documents such as the Children’s Centre Framework to guide practice. This is a significant limitation because these documents, widely distributed to educators, refer to specific practices and approaches by which quality is measured.

The concept of ‘integration’, described in policy and in a range of literature, represents a broad base of strategies for service collaboration and coordination; it is used in very different ways within the sector. Defining, describing and agreeing to what specific practices constitute ‘integration’ is therefore problematic. This may provide some explanation for its lack of inclusion in any detail in The Framework and The Standards. The term’s omission may have been an intentional strategy to emphasise the new
practices promoted through the National Quality Framework reforms, rather than to introduce ‘integration’ as a ‘new’ (and complex) term. It is also possible that the term’s de-emphasis was not intentional.

Policy makes integration available as a solution discursively through explicit and implied references to it. While policy texts describe and position integration as a solution to limitations in the service system, this is complicated by inconsistent and indirect references to the term. In the next section, I explore how this inconsistency compares to participants experiences of implementing practice in an integrated service.

**Experimenting – participant responses**

Despite the absence of specific practice descriptions, participants had an acute awareness that their ‘integrated’ work was an emerging and important area of practice. Some participants inferred that they were engaged in a form of experimentation, in an effort to ‘do’ integration. In this section, I compare and contrast the ways that integration, as framed in policy, informs the performances and experiences described by participants. I draw on interview data to explore what participants perceived as important for implementing practice in integrated settings.

Megan saw a preparedness to innovate or experiment and learn through practice as especially important when working with other professionals in integrated settings. She particularly emphasised the importance of being willing to fail and to try again:

> “I keep saying to our staff down there, I don’t care if you fail... just give it a go, be creative, be resilient and go back to the drawing board” (Megan).

The gap between policy and practice experienced by the participants is not surprising given the absence of practice guidance evident in *The Framework* and *The Standards* texts.

The concept of experimentation featured differently for participants, depending on their interactions with other professionals in the setting. Amy, for example, commented on her relationship with maternal and child health nurses located in the centre over time. She specifically mentioned her relationship with the ‘newer’ maternal and child health nurses: “we used to know all the nurses and be able to chat about different things”. Amy’s comments demonstrate two key points: first, that they had developed a
positive relationship, and second, that previous maternal and child health nurses ‘understood’ the approaches that had been developed in the setting. By comparing the previous nurse with the new one, Amy highlighted the difference between the standard approach and the non-typical way of operating that had emerged through relationships in this integrated setting. It was an approach that needed to be learned and experienced. Amy’s experience was consistent with previous descriptions of the limited and emerging evidence base available to inform and guide the implementation of integrated approaches.

Megan, in her final interview, demonstrated this point when describing some of the negotiations that took place when engaging a new partner:

“…yesterday I met with our new counsellor and she was asking ‘well what’s your expectations?’… I was trying to say no this is not about you coming in and being the expert… she said ‘would it be OK if I came for an hour?’, I said ‘no it wouldn’t be OK because that comes from a power of being the expert’… I said ‘I want you to come and play, these families need to know you’” (Megan).

Megan described being concerned about embedding this approach because it relied on the leadership of the setting rather than relying on a formalised ‘plan’ or ‘guideline’. Anning et al. (2010, p. 85) argue that professionals in multi-professional settings require flexibility and the ability to ‘re-affiliate’ with a new professional identity by ‘letting go’ of their previous professional identity, while also having their specialisation, or professional history, acknowledged. For Megan, understanding the concepts and approach of the setting meant operating differently and supporting professionals to [re]affiliate with the ethos of the setting. Further, being aware that integration was an emerging area of work, was important for her when interacting and engaging with other professionals.

In participant interviews, I noticed a reluctance to overstate the impact of integrated services. This reluctance also appears to reflect the emerging nature of the evidence available to guide practice in integrated services. Anning et al. (2010) comment that integration is often associated with improvement to the process of service access that can enhance outcomes for children and families; however there is no conclusive evidence to support this. Despite this reluctance to overstate the outcomes of
integrated services, Joan reflected that there is broad acknowledgement that it is ‘a good thing’:

“There’s a growing body of perception about the integrated service and the benefits for families as a one door, a no wrong door policy, those sorts of things. I think there’s a perception around that that is a really good thing for families” (Joan).

A tension arises because there are direct references to integration as important in strategy documents, but there are mostly only indirect references to it in the practice documents (The Framework and The Standards); thus, it appears that experimentation has emerged as a practice response to the lack of explicit description and guidance in the guiding framework or standards. My analysis uncovered the limited direction provided to guide efforts toward integrating practices, and it revealed the participant practice responses to policy ambiguity arising from limited descriptions and resourcing of integration in practice.

Responding to need to address system limitations
Participants placed a strong emphasis on describing their work as meeting the often complex needs of children and families, and on the linking of their work with other services to meet this need. Participants demonstrated their knowledge of the ‘needs’ of the demographic in their local area, readily identifying environmental factors and circumstances that placed children and families at risk, factors such as child abuse and neglect or domestic violence. Participants described working to provide for children and families’ additional support needs.

Megan, for example, spoke of a mother and her children who came to the centre after leaving a violent partner, describing the relationship that developed over several years. Megan spoke of the time it took to develop trust with the mother and of the work that they, as a service, did to support the developmental needs of the child in the context of harm caused by the abuse:

“we saw her through four years here... her youngest child was going to school... and she stopped in and she said I can’t say goodbye to you ‘cause I just can’t bear the thought that you won’t be in our lives” (Megan).
She reflected on meeting the mother by chance on a school visit and being hugged and thanked by the mother for the support that she offered. Megan described this situation as an example of the type of complex needs to which the service aims to respond. She also lamented the difficulty of ‘evidencing’ the impact of such work as this was recorded and reported anecdotally rather than systematically: “And ‘cause it’s something really hard to get tangible results... how do you record other than anecdotally how you’ve supported her” (Megan). Megan’s comment indicates that there is no mechanism in the current quality assurance systems through which to measure or make visible this kind of additional effort and relational support.

Participants also commented on the cultural diversity in the area. While participants saw working in inclusive ways as important in all ECEC settings, Toni highlighted that there were specific needs associated with some families’ refugee experience and past trauma. Toni commented on the particular importance of services being accessible, welcoming and supportive in meeting the needs of refugee families attending the setting, “Cause some of these people have not come from very nice places at all. I could never imagine it ‘cause I’ve been lucky enough to be here but, yeah” (Toni). The participants emphasised that providing welcoming and supportive places for those experiencing complex needs was a distinctive feature of their current service, different from their previous experience of working in stand-alone settings.

Participants identified additional approaches that were required because they worked in an integrated setting. These included having knowledge of other fields and the community in which they worked, along with having the ability to create connections and networks. In addition, being flexible and willing to try new things were more important in an integrated setting. Participants all noted that these approaches were applicable to providing high quality ECEC, while acknowledging that there was often a specific need for these approaches in an integrated service. Creating connections and networks grew out of necessity attached to the relationships that their work required.

While they did not explicitly claim this, participants evidently responded to needs that were not adequately addressed through the service system. They demonstrated it by re-telling their practice experiences as an enacted acknowledgement that the services ‘needed’ are not always available or accessible in their community. All participants
described experiences of working with families ‘at risk’ in the context of a service system that is unable to adequately meet the need. The ‘extra’ work that they described is an enacted response to fill gaps that they identified in the service system.

**Service system limitations**

The *Early Years Strategy* promotes integration as the favoured approach to service delivery. The intention of integrating services is to better meet the needs of children and families. This intention intersects with policy emphasis on addressing service system limitations. I developed my policy analysis to explore the ways that integration is framed as a response to service limitations in the policy texts. The *Early Years Strategy* cites emerging evidence to support the development and implementation of integrated services:

> “While there is a lack of evaluation comparing integrated and fragmented service delivery, most evaluations to date indicate that service integration can make a positive difference to outcomes for families and children (with the main influence on outcomes being the quality of the actual services delivered)” (COAG, 2009, p. 12).

There are consistent references within the *Early Years Strategy* and *Children’s Centre Framework* to evidence that supports the development of integrated services relative to its benefits to children. This further reinforces the message of investment and intervention. There is a particular focus on “integration... that encourages interdisciplinary approaches to meeting the needs of children and their families” (COAG, 2009, p. 18).

COAG identifies in the *Early Years Strategy* “signs that the service system is struggling to meet the diverse needs of families today” (COAG, 2009, p. 11). It proposes integrating services to address these limitations and better respond to and address increasingly complex needs. The *Early Years Strategy* prioritises integration as a strategy for early detection and intervention, arguing that “some of the pressure in the system could be alleviated through a greater focus on prevention and better assessment and referral to early intervention services” (COAG, 2009, p. 12). This nests integrations firmly within the broader productivity agenda.
When participants spoke about meeting the needs of families, they highlighted the proximity and relevance of other professionals to children and families and their ability to address their needs as an indicator of their importance in the setting. Participants experienced in their work the ‘complex need’ and ‘disadvantage’ described in policy, describing ways that integrated settings could better work to address some of the complexity that families were facing.

**Working with other professionals**

To address the needs of families, in a context of service limitations, participants described ‘linking’ with other professionals to develop ‘inter-professional’ relationships as a key strategy within their service setting. They talked about the importance of identifying ‘what’ or ‘who’ was ‘out there’ for children and families in their community in addition to the programs that the setting provided. Participants also described reaching beyond their role or their setting to create networks and connections that supported families. The emphasis on linking was particularly important to participants in addressing the needs of children and families who experienced ‘disadvantage’ – thus integration was reckoned as a set of redistributive strategies.

I asked participants to describe their inter-professional work and how other services came to be involved in the setting. All participants indicated that it was important that professionals were able to deliver services relevant to the children and families who attended the centre. The setting had no formal criteria to determine what type of external services could be involved, but participants shared a view that these services should meet the needs of children and families. Megan led and negotiated partnerships between the centre and external providers. She highlighted the importance of being “philosophically aligned”, being strengths-based, flexible, able to work with others, and contributing to supporting children to achieve their outcomes, for example. Joan noted the importance of working toward the same goals: “we’re all working in the same community... I think we have similar goals”. The external providers’ ability to form positive relationships with families was more important to participants than the provider’s qualifications or professional background. Participants emphasised the importance of developing trust and connection between professionals and families that better enabled them to meet families’ needs.
Participants also described their relationship with other professionals as important for enabling or hindering support for children and families. Megan, Joan, and to a lesser extent Amy and Toni described closer connections to the other professionals working in the setting, with the strength of the relationships varying. Amy noted for example that having a maternal child health nurse on site was “helpful”, while indicating that the connection between the services was weaker than she would like. Amy, Toni, Carol and Yasi identified their most important professional relationships as those with maternal and child health nurses, the toy library and playgroup coordinator, and allied health specialists. In contrast, Joan and Megan, who worked more closely with professionals across the setting, identified external stakeholders, such as family support agencies, community leaders and the local council (I have included a list of ‘other roles’ brainstormed by participants in a focus group activity in appendix 9.1). Carol and Yasi described undertaking their roles with less connection to external professionals and referring rather to connections within their immediate team, including the director, team-leader, kindergarten teachers, assistants, the cook and administration staff.

I asked participants to think about possible services that could be integrated into their setting. Participants identified a range of possible service delivery partners, including specialist services for children, counselling and psychology services, the police, legal services, and housing support. In addition, Joan identified community leaders or elders as potential partners. Joan, Carol, Toni and Amy all noted a need to balance risk when involving other services and parts of the community. They expressed hesitation, for example, in relation to providing legal services or rehabilitation for alcohol and drug addictions, because these services might attract ‘criminals’, ‘undesirables’ or ‘dangerous’ characters; however, their view was that anyone could be involved if they offered a service that met the needs of children and families, or of the community.

There is a complex interaction between the policy conceptions of integrated service delivery and the experience of participants as they implement the approach. My analysis shows the ways that participants make connections that meet the needs of children and families in response to participants’ experience of the limitations of the service system. This is further complicated by the limitations of the guiding policy and practice.
documents that obscure participant effort through ambiguous statements supporting integration.

Implications for integrated practice
Through my analysis of the policy texts, I identified the following three patterns: ‘defining integration’; a mixture of ‘direct and indirect’ references to integration; and responding to the demands on the ‘service system’. The three themes that I distilled from my analysis of the qualities, skills and knowledge that participants described are: an emphasis on ‘linking’; the concept of ‘need’; and the ‘experimental’ approach. Participants’ emphasis on linking with other professionals in order to meet child and family needs correlates with the policy emphasis on system limitations, while their experience of experimenting through their work highlights the policy ambiguity surrounding integrated practice.

The references to integration throughout the policy texts reflect the literature relating to targeting system-level improvements to meet the complex needs of children and families (Anning et al., 2010, McInnes & Diamond, 2011, Sims, 2011a). The arguments for integration are consistently situated within investment discourses, nested in discourses of neoliberal productivity. The lack of consistent use and definition of the term, however, appears to place a limit on the practices and approaches ‘endorsed’ by policy. The indirect nature of references to integration in The Framework and The Standards makes defining its purpose - and actions required to achieve it - unclear. While these references to integration ‘make room’ for integrated approaches, they do not describe them explicitly, leaving room for interpretation. Quality Area Six in The Standards, for example, promotes “Collaborative partnerships with families and communities” (ACECQA, 2011). In practice, this could mean developing an understanding about the experience of torture and trauma that a family may have experienced while seeking asylum, then working to ensure that services were welcoming, available and accessible. Alternatively, it could mean inviting the local fire service to the centre to learn about people in the community. These two scenarios

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7 An example that many participants gave.
present very different images of what integration and connection to community might encompass.

While I am not advocating for policy-prescribed approaches, the indirect references to integration in the practice documents risk a failure to translate broad concepts into endorsed [and funded] approaches for practice in ECEC settings. Descriptions of integrated approaches lack specificity, resulting in policy ambiguity. This limitation positions integration as beyond mainstream practices and identities of ECEC professionals.

By using terms like ‘knowing the community’ and ‘being inclusive’, participants indicated that they internalised the practices described in The Framework and The Standards relating to meeting child and family need. Their practices, however, exceeded those in the practice documents by demonstrating a broader focus on addressing more intensive needs. Among the skills that participants emphasised as required for working in integrated settings were ‘looking outward’ and ‘being flexible’. While participants described needing these skills to work in integrated settings, they maintained that they would not be out of place in any ECEC setting. These practices are consistent with the broader triple focus of The Framework that Sims (2011a, p. 91) describes as a focus on the child, the family and the community. This also connects to the concept of a ‘hybrid’ or ‘hybrid-type’ professional described by both Moore (2008, p. 40) and Anning et al. (2010, p. 85). Moore (2008, p. 40) describes a professional who can ‘facilitate joint working’ through their skills, knowledge and approach, while Anning et al. (2010, p. 85) describe a professional who is capable of affiliating beyond their professional background in multi-professional teams. In contrast, participants in this study viewed their additional practices as core ECEC practices. This significantly limits the visibility of the additional effort undertaken to work in integrated ways, effort already obscured by ambiguous policy references.

INTER-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION
Enacting the concept of integration requires working in collaborative ways with a range of other professionals. In this section, I explore the way that participants experienced inter-professional collaboration using interview and focus group data to explore these
relationships in this integrated setting. Tracing inter-professional relationships offers insights into inter-subjective recognition among these groups (Butler, 2004, Honneth, 2004).

**Interactions that supported integration**

The ways that participants interacted with other professionals varied, often depending on their role. The participants working ‘on-the-floor’ chiefly engaged in informal inter-professional interactions on a needs basis. They might, for example, seek advice from a maternal and child health nurse about a specific child. These participants described their role as having more of a focus on learning and education programs than on children’s more specialised health and development needs. They recognised Megan and Joan’s role in coordinating these inter-professional relationships and facilitating contact between the services. Megan made a similar observation about her role, referring to ‘bringing it all together’ and describing having a focus on the overall philosophy of the setting as a distinct element of her role. Similarly, Joan commented:

> “I’m able to be fluid throughout the whole service so I can build relationships with everybody, but the girls right down the back in room 6 with the nurses who are working up here in an office with families, you know, the door’s closed for most of the day, there’s not a lot of opportunity for them to build a relationship together so it’s my job to facilitate that relationship” (Joan).

Amy and Toni used descriptions such as working ‘on-the-floor’ to emphasise their close proximity to children and families compared to those in other roles. They perceived that those in leadership and other professional roles had less direct contact with children and families.

Participants referred to formal and informal structures that supported collaboration and communication. These included specific inter-staff and leadership meetings supported by phone calls, emails, and other contact methods. Participants spoke also of incidental interactions that occurred through sharing facilities such as lunch-rooms and meeting rooms. In Amy’s second interview she reflected on different levels of interaction that she had with the maternal and child health nurses over time:
“At the moment, not a lot of interaction. At the moment we sort of only really see the nurses when they come down and have their lunch and that’s pretty much it at the moment, whereas at the start... [the maternal and child health nurse] was trying to do a bit more integration... ’Cause some of the newer nurses I don’t really know them, it’s like oh yeah that’s the new nurse but that’s as far as it goes, where we used to know all the nurses and be able to chat about different things when they came for lunch, but now it’s sort of silence [laughs] some days, yeah” (Amy).

Amy’s reflection shows the merging of professional and informal interactions. Amy’s comments about knowing all the maternal and child health nurses and being able to ‘chat’ to them links with the concept of integration which encompasses being able to informally share information. Anning et al. (2010) describe the importance of both formal and informal knowledge exchange to break down barriers between multi-professional team members in integrated settings. Amy’s comments about ‘not really knowing’ the ‘newer’ nurses reinforce the importance of personalised inter-professional relationships for working in integrated settings.

Participants described their roles as supporting families to navigate service access and seek information. Joan described the benefits of having information, skills and ‘new approaches’ readily available to share with families. This extended the possibilities available to, and improving access for families. The relationships participants had with families allowed them to act as conduits to services in the community. Megan noted this as especially important when considering the challenges related to blending different philosophical perspectives through inter-professional collaboration - an ‘expert’ approach compared to a ‘strengths-based’ approach, for example. The participants saw themselves and the service as part of the community and as facilitators of connection between families and services.

**Status in integrated settings**

Relationships were important for inter-professional collaboration. One of the complications of an integrated setting that affects the quality of these relationships is the different perceptions of the status attached to the different professional backgrounds of those working there. I used a range of ranking activities through my
focus groups to explore participant perceptions of their professional status compared to that of other professionals with whom they worked (See appendix 9.3). I facilitated three ranking activities that asked participants to plot the roles identified in the integrated setting onto a triangle shape to represent a hierarchical structure, where the tip represented the most important role and the base the least important. First, each participant undertook this activity from their own perspective, placing roles that they had identified in their setting in a hierarchical order of importance. They then repeated the activity imagining that they were in the role of a maternal and child health nurse, and finally in the parent role. I asked participants to draw on their knowledge of, and interactions with the maternal and child health nurses and families to undertake these ranking activities, and to consider how these parties would allocate value.

The participants prioritised children and families, placing them at the top of the structure. Participants ranked the status of other professionals based on the strength of their relationships with children and families. The less direct their interaction was with children and families, the lower their position was in status. The participants ranked those that they worked directly with ‘on-site’ at the same level as themselves, labelling the services that they collectively provided as ‘core’ services. Participants posed two questions to each other when ranking the status of other professionals: ‘what do families use?’ and ‘what would families miss if it wasn’t available?’ They ranked allied health professionals as lower status because they were on-site less frequently, and because there were eligibility and assessment criteria which meant they were relevant to fewer families. While the participants saw themselves and the other professionals as partners in delivering a service, they acknowledged their own role in connecting families to these other professional roles, affording status to their role.

When undertaking this activity from the perspective of maternal and child health nurses, participants in direct delivery roles perceived that their role would be considered lower in the hierarchy. Participants thought that the maternal and child health nurses would consider their own role and those with health backgrounds as having higher professional standing than that of educators. In the interviews, some participants also noted differences in relation to the status of their roles. Amy commented that, “In the order of things, I suppose childcare’s probably still down the bottom”. Megan, in contrast to the
rest of the group, noted that she had observed the nurses consulting and asking for additional information from educators when they worked with children attending the service.

Finally, I asked participants to consider professional standing from a family’s perspective. Participants thought that families would place higher value on the services with which they interacted most frequently compared to other services that they might view as distant, or that were needs-based or referral-based. Participants considered relationships and access as most important when ranking from families’ perspectives. They placed ECEC roles at the top of the structure, followed by other roles with which they interacted such as playgroup facilitators, the toy library coordinator, and the maternal child health nurses. They then positioned allied health professionals below these roles based on their availability to them on a day-to-day basis. Participants noted stronger relationships between service providers and parents when they had informal and frequent interactions compared to appointment-based interaction.

A common theme that emerged from the ranking activities was the importance that participants place on relationship when determining professional status in the setting. I discovered that participants did not necessarily determine professional status by the occupational prestige or the seniority of the position; rather, they allocated status based on their relevance and accessibility to families. The interactions that participants described having with other professionals were relational, often on behalf of children and families. This relational experience created an informal hierarchy within the setting. The less direct their interaction with children and families were, the lower their status was.

In this section, I discussed the respondents’ relationships with other professionals in their integrated services in order to understand the importance placed on collaborative work in this setting. I focused on the interactions that supported integration, participants’ interactions with other professionals in the setting, and their experiences and perceptions of status in integrated settings. Participants measured the professional status of other professionals by their relevance to children and families. When describing inter-professional practice, participants discussed their roles as being conduits between families and other professionals – drawing on the strength of their
relationships with children and families. This reflects a form of “inter-subjective”, or inter-professional, recognition that establishes the ways that participants are valued in their setting and in their roles through experiences of respect or disrespect (Honneth, 2004, p. 354). Participants used their formal and informal relationships with other professionals to meet the needs of children and families. These relationships developed based on alignment with the approach and philosophy of the setting and shared awareness of the specific needs in their community. Alignment with this redistributive purpose is the basis of recognition within the setting; it provides the ‘moral anchoring’ that Honneth and Farrell (1997) argue facilitates inter-subjective forms of recognition. Working in these inter-professional ways also reveals the separateness, and different experiences of power and status, between the ECEC professional ‘subject’ and the ‘other’ professional (Butler, 2004).

CONCLUSION
In this chapter, I explored the ways that integration is framed as a solution to a policy problem of system limitations and complex family need. Participants reported that the high levels of need that children and families experienced in the community prompted them to develop inter-professional relationships. They prioritised relationships that were relevant to, and met, child and family needs, and they embraced an alternative hierarchy of relative professional status that countered traditional hierarchies based on positional or professional prestige. Higher importance and status was ascribed to those who could best meet the needs of children and families; those with the strongest relationships gained the most respect. In contrast to external perceptions of ECEC discussed in chapter 7, the direct and positive relationships that participants had with children and families placed them in valued positions. While this hierarchy of contribution was based on their perceptions, it demonstrates that participants recognise and value the contributions that they make through their strong relationships with families. This form of inter-subjective recognition is drawn from affirming relationships between participants and families; it informed the ways that participants recognised other professionals.
My consideration of policy texts in relation to practice experience also revealed a range of tensions that emerge as a result of unclear and ambiguous policy definitions of integration. The key practice documents that guide participants’ work under-describe integrated approaches when compared to the significance allocated to the approach in the *Early Years Strategy*. This not only left the practice setting as a site for experimentation and flexible delivery, it also obscured practice effort within the measures of quality implemented through *The Standards*.

Participants discussed the importance of external professionals being aligned with the integrated approach and philosophy of the setting, particularly because of the emerging and experimental nature of the work. Working with professionals that ‘understood’ the intention of the service to meet needs flexibly, as distinct to those who did not, emerged as an important marker of value in the setting. The connections with other professionals, as re-distributional acts, created access for families to services relevant to their needs. Participants valued this relevance when creating inter-professional relationships, and further when ranking other professionals’ status in the setting. Participants noted that much of the effort towards integrated practices ought to apply not only to the context of integrated service delivery but also within broader ECEC settings.

In the previous two chapters, I examined ways that participants have enacted their responses to reforms, and explored ways that terms emphasised in policy reveal policy intentions and ‘problems’. In this chapter, I applied this to the specific example of integrated services delivery. I am also interested in ways that practices comprise professional performances and shape identities. In the next chapter, I present my analysis of different ways that practice is categorised. I draw further on a combination of my policy analysis to identify ‘policy-endorsed practices’ that have been emphasised across the policy texts and ‘participant-described practice’ in their context.
Chapter 10 | Comparison of Participant and Policy Priorities for Practice

In this chapter, I examine the impact of policy reform on the ways that participants describe, prioritise and categorise their practices. First, I discuss the data from focus group activities in which I asked participants to describe their practices (‘participant-described practices’) and rank them variously by ‘importance’, ‘time spent’, and ‘experience of implementing The Framework and The Standards’. Next, I discuss ways in which participants compared these ‘policy-endorsed practices’ to their work and priorities, identifying some of the compatibilities and tensions that existed for them in enacting policy. Finally, I compare the ways that practices are described and prioritised by participants with those promoted via policy, discussing the tensions, similarities, and differences.

I sought participant descriptions of the ways that they value, prioritise, and implement practices in order to gain insight into how they interpret policy and put it into practice. Foucault (1972) argues that discourse operates to classify and categorise knowledge through the use of language that is deployed to exert power through definition. ECEC, as ‘knowledge’ or as a ‘tradition’, is documented and categorised through policy. Policy references itself as the authority over the tradition of ECEC, creating what Foucault (1972) refers to as “self-evident” truth. Policy language defines the ECEC field in ways that make practices possible. Acceptable practices, such as those described in The Framework and The Standards, are coded as norms or rules or standards, which then become subject to surveillance and enforcement (Foucault, 1977).

In doing this, I seek to gain insight into the ‘rules’ by which ECEC professionals are governed and, in turn, govern themselves. I work to combine policy analysis and practitioner perspectives in this chapter to explore the interface between policy and enactments in practice.

PARTICIPANTS PRACTICE: DESCRIPTIONS AND RANKINGS

In order to gain insight into their priorities and practices, I designed and facilitated a range of activity-based focus groups in which I asked participants to collectively describe
and then rank key practices, both those are standard in ECEC, and those specific to their work in an integrated setting. I refer to this data as the ‘participant-described practices’.

I first used brainstorming with the participants to generate a list of practices, and then introduced a series of ranking activities to explore relative priorities and time spent on the different sorts of activities. I used this generative participatory method because it has been found to be useful in eliciting judgements within qualitative research and to assist participants to organise and report on complex ideas and relationships (Colucci, 2007).

**Participant practices**

In the first focus group (recorded via video), I asked participants to list the various functions and tasks that they performed as a part of their work, and then to cluster them into categories of practice. In the first part of the activity, participants focused on identifying and noting down standard ECEC practices. Next, they focussed on adding any specific additional practices related to working in an integrated setting. It is important to note here that the categories defined, and the subsequent rankings, were named and negotiated within a group context. As they were agreed and articulated by participants at a point in time, they do not reflect a static representation of ECEC practice. These agreements and articulations were also subject to dynamic processes of negotiated power and voice within a group dynamic and context.

As they engaged with this task, participants discussed a range of practices and approaches that they viewed as standard across ECEC settings. Some of the categories that they used to group these practices were broad: ‘care’, ‘education’, ‘support’, ‘communication’ and ‘ethics’, for example. Other categories that they constructed contained more specific practices, such as ‘health and safety’, ‘learning and reflection’, and ‘children’s development’. There were also categories devised to characterise general approaches, such as ‘strengths-based’, ‘respect for diversity’ and ‘flexibility’.

The additional practices that participants identified as specific to their work in an integrated setting included the ways they worked with each other and other services. Additional categories identified here included ‘linking’, ‘teamwork’, ‘collaboration’ and ‘broadening services’. Alongside these approaches, participants described categories of
practice that were important in a community-based integrated setting, including ‘being welcoming’, ‘information gathering’ and ‘leadership’.

Table 10.1 presents the standard ECEC categories of ‘participant-described practices’ in the first column, with those additionally related to working in an integrated service setting in the second column.

Table 10.1 ‘Participant-described Practices’ defined by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard ECEC Categories of Practice</th>
<th>Additional ECEC Categories of Practice required in Integrated Settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Welcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths-based</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate</td>
<td>Information gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Linking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Team work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s rights</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Broadening services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships and partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the listing and categorisation work, participants undertook three ranking activities. First, they ranked their ‘participant-described practices’ according to their negotiated perception of each practice’s ‘importance’. They then re-ranked the same ‘participant-described practices’ by the amount of ‘time’ they allocated to them. Finally, they ranked them in relation to their perceived consistency with their ‘experience of implementing The Framework and The Standards’.

‘Participant-described Practices’ ranked by importance

In ranking the ‘participant-described practices’ by importance, participants positioned ‘children’s rights’ as the most important, followed by the categories ‘welcoming’, ‘care’ and ‘relationships and partnerships’. In doing this, participants noted that many of the
categories ‘overlapped’. Joan, for example, commented in the session: “I had difficulty separating children’s development from education... and care”. Participants described ‘ethics’ and ‘children’s rights’ as over-arching concepts that provided a foundation for other practices. While participants initially placed ‘ethics’ alongside ‘children’s rights’ at the top of the list, they eventually decided that ‘children’s rights’ should be elevated. For the participants, this ranking activity provided a way of extending consideration of the two categories that they described as interconnected and equally important. It consequently elicited further discussion about the importance of rights-oriented approaches, and their relationship with ethical practices.

‘Participant-described Practices’ ranked by time spent
In the second ranking exercise, I asked participants to consider an average day when calculating how much time they spent on each of the practices. In ranking according to time spent, participants ranked ‘care’, ‘role modelling’ and ‘education’ as the three highest categories. While completing this activity, participants challenged and questioned each other to report on how they actually spent their time rather than ‘idealising’ their work.

Participants described allocating time to ‘immediate needs’, such as ‘care’, remarking that at times they were unable to get to the previously identified ‘higher importance’ practices such as work that explicitly focused on progressing children’s rights. The group discussed circumstances when taking time to respond to children’s immediate needs limited what else was possible in the day. They noted that this often meant the abandonment of the educational experiences or program plans they had developed.

‘Participant-described Practices’ ranked by experience of implementing The Framework and The Standards
In the third ranking activity, participants re-ranked the ‘participant-described practices’ from most to least important in relation to their experiences of implementing The Standards and The Framework. In this activity, they placed ‘care’, ‘leadership’ and ‘teamwork’ as the three most important ‘participant-described practices’ from their experience of implementing the quality and practice frameworks. Participants ranked ‘flexibility’, ‘role modelling’ and ‘strengths-based’ practices in the lowest positions alongside ‘information gathering’, ‘linking’ and ‘broadening of services’. These last three lowest ranked are amongst the categories specific to operating as an integrated setting.
Participants explained the lower placement of these three concepts, arguing that integration was not specifically included in the framework.

The participants ranked ‘flexibility’ in the lower third of the framework-centric list, reflecting that *The Framework and The Standards* were seen as something to ‘follow’ or implement, especially for documenting practice. This indicates that their experience of flexibility was low in relation to their efforts to implement the policy imperatives that specifically focus on practice implications.

Figure 10.1 shows the three sets of participant rankings, according to ‘importance’, ‘time spent’, and ‘experience implementing *The Framework and The Standards*’. The top section contains the practices ranked in the highest positions, followed by the middle and bottom rankings in the subsequent sections. I provide a more detailed discussion of data generated within the ranking activities in the following section.
Figure 10.1: ‘Participant-described Practices’ ranked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Time spent</th>
<th>Experience implementing The Framework and The Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modelling</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Relationships &amp; partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Respect for Diversity</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships &amp; partnerships</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Relationships with families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Children’s rights</td>
<td>Children’s rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Welcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Learning and reflection</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with families</td>
<td>Relationships &amp; partnerships</td>
<td>Learning and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with families</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Children’s Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Information gathering</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and reflection</td>
<td>Broadening of services</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Role modelling</td>
<td>Linking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modelling</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadening of services</td>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>Role modelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Strengths-based</td>
<td>Strengths-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking</td>
<td>Information gathering</td>
<td>Information gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking</td>
<td>Broadening of services</td>
<td>Broadening of services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The material generated within the ranking by importance provides insight into the ways that this group of ECEC professionals value and recognise their practices. Within this activity they emphasised a range of relational and ethical practices and approaches alongside other technical and process-related practices. The secondary ranking activities revealed ways that they [re]distributed these practices depending on the circumstances confronting them, while also demonstrating an emphasis on affective values in their practice decisions.

Comparison of practice category rankings
The ranking activity revealed the greatest consistency between the participants’ ranking of practices by ‘time spent’ and by their ‘experience of implementing The Framework
and *The Standards*. Eleven (almost half) of the twenty-three categories were most closely aligned when comparing these two lists. Participants ranked practices of ‘care’, ‘communication’, ‘teamwork’, and ‘education’ higher for both time spent and consistency with *The Framework*. They ranked practices of ‘relationship with families’, ‘welcoming’, and ‘children’s development’ in a similar midpoint. Practices of ‘support’, ‘strengths-based’, and ‘broadening services’ were ranked similarly low by participants in both lists. Five categories were ranked in the same position across these two lists: ‘care’, ‘relationship with families’, ‘children’s development’, ‘support’, and ‘broadening of services’.

The similarity is weaker when comparing the rankings ‘by time spent’ and ‘by importance’. There are no directly equivalent rankings between time and importance, and only a third of the categories share similar positions on the lists. Practices of ‘respect for diversity’, and ‘flexibility’ ranked higher, while ‘leadership’ ranked in the middle, and ‘health and safety’, ‘evaluation’, and ‘linking’ were low across these two lists.

There was the least alignment between the ranking ‘by experience of implementing *The Framework* and *The Standards*’ and ‘by importance’ lists. The four that most closely aligned were ‘relationships and partnerships’, ‘learning and reflection’, ‘role modelling’, and ‘information gathering’. Of these, only two practices shared the same rankings across lists, ‘relationships and partnership’, and ‘learning and reflection’.

The ranking activities enabled participants to notice immediately that the position of children’s rights was inverted when comparing side-by-side the lists ranked by ‘importance’ and ‘time spent’. They noted that while much of their work contributed to enacting children’s rights, not much of their work could be explicitly labelled as children’s rights work. On reviewing the meaning of children’s rights as a group, they determined that while the basic rights of the child are being met through their programs, some of the ‘deeper’ concepts and understandings of rights were not included. What is relevant here is the difference, or distance, between what the participants said was most important to them and how they allocated their time, or arguably, how they are able to allocate their time. Joan commented that “The thing that we really value we’re not practising, that’s what it’s telling me”. The activity provided an opportunity for this
group of ECEC professionals to reflect on and discuss how they would ideally prioritise their work compared to how they currently were enacting their work.

Participants commented that the rankings ‘by importance’ and ‘time spent’ change depending on the circumstances. They also reflected on different times and situations that would require different prioritisation and allocation of time; for example, participants noted that priority could vary depending on professional role and position. Megan reflected on ways that she prioritised her work when the service was in its establishment phase and resources were limited, stating that: “at the end of the day I don’t care if the children are educated, as long as they are cared for and nothing is broken... I should be careful on camera, shouldn’t I?” (Megan). She light-heartedly commented on the impact that ‘being filmed’ had on her description of her practice. (Here she was referring to the video recording I was making of the workshop.) The implications of being observed were raised in the group discussion. Participants all agreed that if the service was undergoing its quality assessment and rating review, they would be likely to allocate time differently. Participants also noted differences between what may be important to ECEC professionals in their practice and parent expectations. The group discussed examples of common parent concerns that usually related to their child’s safety and care rather than the type of curriculum decisions that educators made. Parent expectations had a significant impact on how participants allocated their time.

Participants not only demonstrated that their priorities changed depending on circumstances, but also indicated the significance of The Framework and The Standards in influencing the ways that they allocated their time. In adapting their priorities to align with perceived policy and parent expectations, the participants are undertaking self-surveillance and self-regulation (Foucault, 1977). Foucault (1988b) describes these efforts in self-shaping as ‘technologies of the self’ whereby ‘rules’, in this case of policy, are adopted through a process of self-examination and monitoring and via sets of practices or disciplines. This process of internalisation and enactment demonstrates how policy discursively shapes the practice norms by which professional performances are measured. Ball (2006) notes that this process of ‘regulation’ reduces professionals’ experience of decision-making and autonomy, resulting in professionals scrutinising their effort through the lens of real or perceived policy imperatives.
While these rankings indicate that participants perceive their own professional priorities as having less influence on the ways that they allocate their time than does policy, this data should be read with caution. The results of the ranking activities are complex and specific to a small group of participants at a point in time. While it is possible to gain insights from comparing the lists, the intention was not to establish a definitive description of the way that ECEC professionals perform their roles; rather it was intended to explore the complex and contingent perceptions and performances of ECEC professionalism. While the focus group activities identified some incongruence among participant priorities, it also enabled participants to reflect on, relate and explain their practices and their values.

POSITIONING IN POLICY: PARTICIPANT COMPARISONS

In this section I compare the ‘participant-described practices’ and ‘policy-endorsed practices’, using data collected in the second focus group. In this focus group participants reviewed and ranked a set of ‘policy-endorsed practices’ that I had generated from the policy analysis, considering them in relation to perceived importance in their work. They then compared their ranking of the importance of the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ with the priority or frequency of usage order that I derived through my policy analysis (outlined in Table 10.2).

These ‘policy-endorsed practices’ are categories that are powerfully and discursively positioned in the early years’ ‘field of knowledge’ or ‘discipline’ with legitimacy and authority (Foucault, 2003, pp. 184-185). Through repetition in the texts, which Butler (1990, pp. 202-203) argues enables norms to be constructed, ‘policy-endorsed practices’ are subtly prioritised, becoming the rules and standards by which ECEC professionals evaluate their own actions.

‘Policy-endorsed Practices’: participant rankings

I presented the participants with the thirty-five ‘policy-endorsed practices’ printed on small pieces of paper and asked them to rank them in order of importance to them. They discussed and clustered the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ drawing on their recent experience of undergoing their assessment and rating review. Participants ranked ‘developing relationships’ as most important, followed by ‘leadership and
management’, ‘management and accountability’, ‘planning, documenting and evaluating’, and ‘implementing best practice’ as the top five most important practices for them. They observed that some of the categories overlapped, so they negotiated positions in the ranking based on the extent to which these ‘overarching’ practices supported other practices. Participants used the ‘policy-endorsed practice’ of ‘protection of children’ as an example to discuss the links between it and other categories. The participants agreed that without ‘developing relationships’, ‘planning’, ‘being responsive’ and having a ‘focus on outcomes’, ECEC professionals might not identify a need for protection. Table 10.2 shows the participant ranking of the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ alongside the order of emphasis by frequency of usage that I found within policy texts.

Table 10.2 ‘Policy-endorsed Practices’: Participant rankings and policy emphasis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Policy-endorsed Practices’:</th>
<th>In order of participant rankings</th>
<th>In order of policy emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Developing relationships (including partnerships, interactions, teamwork and communication)</td>
<td>1. Developing relationships (including partnerships, interactions, teamwork and communication)</td>
<td>A focus on outcomes for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Leadership and management</td>
<td>2. A focus on outcomes for children</td>
<td>Valuing diversity and inclusive practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Implementing Best Practice</td>
<td>5. Managing and implementing routines (meeting needs: sleep, feeding, changing, toileting, physical activity, nutrition)</td>
<td>Facilitating learning through play and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. [Collaborative] Decision-making and ownership (in curriculum)</td>
<td>7. [Collaborative] Decision-making and ownership (in curriculum)</td>
<td>Being responsive to children’s interests, needs and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Evaluating quality ECEC</td>
<td>8. Being responsive to children’s interests, needs and learning</td>
<td>Engaging families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Policy-endorsed Practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In order of participant rankings</th>
<th>In order of policy emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Being responsive to children’s interests, needs and learning</td>
<td>10. Community engagement (reflecting the community and engaging services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Continuous improvement and professional development</td>
<td>11. Planning, documenting and evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A focus on outcomes for children</td>
<td>12. Supporting continuity and transitions between services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Facilitating learning through play and experiences.</td>
<td>14. Embedding educational concepts and practices (delivering content: numeracy, literacy, science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Risk Management</td>
<td>15. Facilitating learning and skill development (non-educational content)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Embedding educational concepts and practices (delivering content: numeracy, literacy, science)</td>
<td>16. Leadership and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Protection of Children</td>
<td>17. Generic Education and Care practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Intentional teaching</td>
<td>18. Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Facilitating learning and skill development (non-educational content)</td>
<td>19. Critical Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Developing or reflecting Philosophy</td>
<td>20. Behaviour management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Scaffolding</td>
<td>22. Modelling – approaches or skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Engaging families</td>
<td>23. Continuous improvement and professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Community engagement (reflecting the community and engaging services)</td>
<td>25. Evaluating quality ECEC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 'Policy-endorsed Practices':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In order of participant rankings</th>
<th>In order of policy emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Observation, monitoring and assessment.</td>
<td>27. Scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Supervision</td>
<td>29. Hygiene practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Behaviour management</td>
<td>30. Intentional teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Hygiene practices</td>
<td>31. Implementing Best Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Supporting continuity and transitions between services</td>
<td>32. Ethical Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Generic Education and Care practices</td>
<td>33. Developing or reflecting Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Environmentally sustainable practices</td>
<td>34. Developing curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Managing and implementing routines (meeting needs: sleep, feeding, changing, toileting, physical activity, nutrition)</td>
<td>35. Promoting Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants also discussed some of the additional categories from the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ in the context of their priorities. Megan gave an example of discussions with staff leading up to their quality assessment:

“They’re not going to come and check-list hygiene like they used to but they are going to look at the relationships between the staff and the children... and then the same with environmentally sustainable practice, we’d love it but it’s still on our to-do list”.

While Megan described environmentally sustainable practice as important for the team, other practices were higher priorities; as such it was not included in the ‘participant-described practices’ list.

On reflection, participants noticed that while some of the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ were framed differently to ‘participant-described practices’, they nonetheless overlapped. Participants identified the practice of ‘care’, for example, while the 'policy-endorsed practices' focussed on ‘managing and implementing routines’. Other categories that participants had defined as practices associated with integrated service settings were not present in the 'policy-endorsed practices'. This finding further reinforces the group’s perception that integrated services were not specifically included
in The Framework. I discuss their perceptions of the missing and overlapping categories in more detail below, in the ‘comparisons of 'policy-endorsed practices' and 'participant-described practices'' section.

Participants placed greater emphasis on accountability when ranking the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ compared to the way they ranked ‘participant-described practices’. They ranked categories of ‘leadership and management’, ‘management and accountability’ and ‘planning, documenting and evaluating’ consecutively in second, third and fourth positions when ranking with the ‘policy-endorsed practices’. In contrast, when they ranked ‘participant-described practices’, they ranked ‘leadership’ in the mid-section and ‘evaluation’ in the bottom section of the list. Participants ranked the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ in a way similar to their ranking of the ‘participant-described practices’ by their ‘experience of implementing The Standards and The Framework’, where they ranked ‘leadership’ and ‘teamwork’ in second and third position. This seemed to reflect their perception of the expectations of policy rather than their views on what was most important as revealed in the first ranking activity. Participants very clearly gave more importance to accountability practices in their ranking of the 'policy-endorsed practices'.

‘Policy-endorsed Practices’: policy emphasis—participant rankings

After participants had completed their ranking of the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, I presented them with the list of ‘policy-endorsed practices’ in the order of the emphasis drawn from my policy analysis. I asked participants to offer general observations and to comment on the similarities and the differences between the lists. I was seeking here to examine the differences and similarities between participant ranking and the list of 'policy-endorsed practices' in order of frequency to further explore what participants noticed and judged worthy of comment.

Participants ranked ‘developing relationships’ as most important, which mirrored its position in the ‘policy-endorsed practice’ list. They also ranked ‘collaborative decision-making’ in the same position as in the ‘policy-endorsed practice’ lists.

The ‘policy-endorsed practices’ participants ranked as important but which contrasted with the frequency with which they appeared in texts were ‘leadership and management’, ‘management and accountability’, ‘implementing best practice’, ‘ethical
practices’, ‘implementing best practice’, ‘ethical practices’, and ‘planning, documenting and evaluating’. Participants commented that some of the categories such as ‘intentional teaching’ and ‘planning, documenting and evaluating’ were perceived to have greater emphasis in the field than appeared to be the case in *The Framework* and *The Standards*. They reflected this themselves, ranking it higher than its lower position in the ‘policy-endorsed practice’ list. Megan noted that:

“People took things very literally and didn’t realise that if you were a good educator anyway you were probably doing everything in *The Framework*. Suddenly people are doing seven-page program plans instead of one because they think for *The Framework* they have to do that” (Megan).

Participants discussed the perceptions of the ‘new’ expectations set by *The Framework* and *The Standards* and the ‘reality’ of them, suggesting that ECEC professionals started to increase their documentation and change the way they documented rather than focussing on the practices that were already in place. The position of ‘promoting agency’ at the bottom of the list of ‘policy-endorsed practices’ was surprising for some participants as it did not fit with their understanding of *The Framework*.

The participants’ ranking of ‘policy-endorsed practices’ provided an opportunity for them to compare their perspectives on what is important when drawing from a different set of practices. While at times participants were surprised by the differences between their prioritisation of ‘policy-endorsed practices’ and the list derived from my analysis, they too treated policy content differently. Subtly, participants prioritised accountability practices when working with ‘policy-endorsed practices’. This contrasted with their own ‘participant-described practices’ that they ordered by importance. This reinforces the earlier indications that participants’ associate policy authority with accountability practices, further demonstrating the influences of neoliberal policy discourses.

**‘Participant-described Practices’: compatibility and tension**

In the third and final focus group, I asked participants to brainstorm additional roles or functions that would describe the work of others in integrated settings (see Table 10.3). The additional categories that participants identified were services for children, families, and the centre, as well as approaches to working with other partners or stakeholders.
Table 10.3 Additional other categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional other categories</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operation support service</td>
<td>Service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Development of philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s additional support</td>
<td>Stakeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Resource partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and administration</td>
<td>Support services for community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I then displayed all of the 'participant-described practices' and 'policy-endorsed practices' used throughout the focus groups on a table. I asked participants to arrange the most compatible categories together by sticking them on the wall. They then used the opposite and adjacent wall of the room to separate categories that were less compatible. In setting this task I was seeking to explore compatibilities and tensions between the practices, using the physical space.

Participants placed most of the practices relating to their work with both children and families together at ‘wall A’. This included categories of practice relating to children’s ‘education’ and ‘care’ and the practices that supported it, such as those relating to safety, hygiene, and implementing routines, along with practices associated with planning and documentation. Next, they added practices related to their work in engaging and supporting families. Participants described this as the core work of ECEC professionals: supporting children and families.

I then asked participants to use the opposite wall, ‘wall B’, to cluster practices that were less compatible with those clustered in ‘wall A’. Participants placed the categories of practice relating to ‘leadership’, ‘management’ and ‘accountability’ practices, along with those relating to ‘partnership’, ‘linking’ and ‘broadening of services’, furthest from these practices at ‘wall B’. These were the practices that they held to be least compatible with the ‘core’ work of ECEC.

Participants also used the wall space in between these categories, ‘wall C’, to position ‘community engagement’, ‘support services’, ‘valuing diversity’ and ‘developing philosophy’. Participants’ used this wall to group categories of practice that focussed on values-based planning and development. This included the ways that the community
was engaged and respected, along with ‘developing philosophy’ and decision-making. Notably, none of the ‘participant-described practices’ was included in ‘wall C’.

The goals of integrating services, for this group of practitioners, were least compatible with their day-to-day practice with children and families. While these integration practices were valued and prioritised by the participants in previous ranking activities, they were seen as different to the practices of working with children and families. Participants referred to this work as ‘Megan’s job’.
### Table 10.4 Compatible practices - Wall A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Practices</th>
<th>Policy-endorsed practices</th>
<th>Additional categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard ECEC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Ethical Practices</td>
<td>Children’s additional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s rights</td>
<td>Developing relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>A focus on outcomes for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with</td>
<td>children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>families</td>
<td>Hygiene practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s development</td>
<td>Engaging families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Embedding educational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>concepts and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships and</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partnership</td>
<td>Implementing Best Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Promoting Agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for diversity</td>
<td>Environmentally sustainable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths-based</td>
<td>practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>Being responsive to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modelling</td>
<td>children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Implementing frameworks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Reflection</td>
<td>for practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific to integration</strong></td>
<td>Observation, monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering</td>
<td>and assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming</td>
<td>Generic Education and Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Managing and implementing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>routines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protection of Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitating learning and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skill development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitating learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>through play and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intentional teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning, documenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and evaluating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modelling – approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or skill development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating quality ECEC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants positioned ‘care’ at the top of ‘wall A’ and ‘education’ at the bottom. They then positioned all other categories in between, but articulated their view that care was linked to many of the other practices. Joan commented: “I can’t see any that don’t fit with care”. Joan and Toni linked care to ethical practices, as shown in the following interaction:

Joan: *I put ethical practices as a part of care but not directly under care*

Toni: *Yeah true it’s more the official…*

Joan: *Sort of like a…*

Toni: *…standard.*

Joan: *If you didn’t care you wouldn’t practice ethically, maybe…*

Toni: *You have to care about what you do before you can do ethical practice…*

Joan: *Yeah, I think so. I think they’re related, alike.*
Toni: It’s important

This is an important insight into the way that these ECEC professionals think about their work; it illuminates the often contentious differences between the domains of care and education. Participants linked the practices of care and education, positioning them as two ends of the same approach.

After the participants had placed the categories in these positions, I asked them to stand in the place where they felt they most belonged. I did this to gain insight into the ways that participants identified, classified, and associated with their work. Those working ‘on-the-floor’, Toni, Amy, and Yasi, stood closest to ‘wall A’, describing these practices as what they do every day. Joan from a position of team leader stood in between ‘wall A’ and ‘wall C’ but slightly closer to ‘wall A’. She described her role as supporting the team to do what was on ‘wall A’, acknowledging that her role meant that she had leadership responsibilities. Megan initially stood closest to ‘wall B’ and then moved to the most central position. She explained her reason for standing there was her responsibilities being linked to all areas of the service equally. Carol was not present for this part of the activity.

This activity revealed that participants used different criteria to cluster the categories of practice from those used in previous ranking activities. There was a clear delineation between practices that participants associated with their work directly with children and families and practices associated with the management and integration of services. Megan’s choice to move from ‘wall B’ to the centre of the room rejected the other participants’ suggestion that it was ‘Megan’s Job’, but there remained a distinct divide between leadership and ‘on-the-floor’ roles. The work of leadership and integration was seen by participants working ‘on-the-floor’ as separate to the core work of ECEC. In this activity, rather than using policy to prioritise practice, they defined practices as core and non-core. The choices that participants made through the clustering activity, and the positions in which they stood, gave insight into how they classify their work. Foucault (1972) describes ways that discourse operates to enable ‘classification’ and ‘categories’ to form. These categories code behaviours as acceptable or unacceptable. Participants classified work directly with children and families differently to the leadership and integration functions. As such, participants ‘on-the-floor’ govern their professional
performances with greater accountability towards the children and families with whom they work, while ascribing management and integration functions to leadership roles.

**COMPARISONS OF ‘POLICY-ENDORSED PRACTICES’ AND ‘PARTICIPANT-DESCRIBED PRACTICES’**

In this section, I compare the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ with the ‘participant-described practices’ to discuss their impact in relation to professional performances and policy implementation. Through this work, I identify alignment and misalignment between the different categories.

There were a number of missing categories when comparing the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ and ‘participant-described practices’, with some being unique to the respective lists. ‘Participant-described practices’ of ‘flexibility’, ‘strengths-based’, and ‘information gathering’ were not present in the ‘policy-endorsed practice’. Some of the ‘policy-endorsed practice’ categories that participants did not include as ‘participant-described practices’ related to implementation of the frameworks, such as ‘developing curriculum’ and ‘implementing best practice’. Others included ‘risk management’ and ‘management and accountability’.

When comparing their ‘participant-described practices’ with the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, participants noted that the practices did not always align. In the policy texts, for example, ‘managing and implementing routines’ focuses on sleep, feeding and toileting needs associated with children’s care, whereas, for participants, ‘care’ encompassed more than the routine-based tasks. Participants emphasised supporting and caring for children through the emotional and relational elements of their work. This suggests a distinction between what the participants define as ‘care’ and the type of ‘care’ that is described as ‘managing and implementing routines’ in the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ list. This distinction was reflected in participant ranking of the categories; for example, they ranked ‘managing and implementing routines’ last when ranking the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, whereas they ranked the ‘participant-described practices’ of ‘care’ at the top of their list of importance and on their list of ‘time spent’. When explaining their rankings, they argued that ‘managing and implementing routines’ was part of their everyday practice rather than something that was of high priority.
In Figure 10.2 I have sought to represent this analysis by presenting the ‘participant-described practices’ alongside the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, depicted as adjacent train lines. The green line represents the ‘participant-described practices’ and the blue line represents the ‘policy-endorsed practices’. I have mapped out the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ and ‘participant-described practices’, depicting them as stations along the two lines. I do this to highlight the points of intersection between the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ and ‘participant-described practices’. I use the ‘stations’ to connect the two lines and practices in order to represent the points of intersection or connection. I have labelled the station on each side of the tracks to show the specific ‘policy-endorsed practices’ and ‘participant-described practices’ that are connected, and thus represented by the station. I have shown three instances where one ‘participant-described practice’ has connected with multiple ‘policy-endorsed practices’, and have depicted these as branch lines that extend from the main ‘policy-endorsed practices’ line. This demonstrates the high intensity of interconnectivity. Similarly, I included an additional loop on the green line to connect six ‘participant-described practices’ to two related ‘policy-endorsed practices’. This shows where multiple ‘participant-described practices’ relate to two ‘policy-endorsed practices’. I have also shown stations that extend on each end of the lines to represent unique ‘participant-described practices’ and ‘policy-endorsed practice’ as branch lines. These ‘branch lines’ are the practices that were unique to the respective practice lists and have low or no particular connectivity with the other line. This figure represents alignment between ‘participant-described practices’ and ‘policy-endorsed practices’; it doesn’t seek to rank them in any particular order.
Figure 10.2 Unique and similar practices

Green Line: Participant Practices
- = Standard ECEC practices
+ = Additional Integrated practices

Blue Line: Policy-Endorsed practices
Comparing the ‘lines’
Participants described a broader range of practices than were compatible with the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ of ‘collaborative decision-making’ and ‘developing relationships’. This included ‘participant-described practices’ that were standard to ECEC, including ‘relationships and partnerships’, and ‘communication’. In addition, they included practices specific to their work in an integrated service setting, such as ‘teamwork’, ‘collaboration’, ‘linking’, and ‘broadening of services’. I depicted this as an additional loop on the green line (‘participant-described practices’), commencing at ‘collaborative decision-making’ and concluding at ‘developing relationship’. Participants described collaborative and relational practices in greater detail than the two related ‘policy-endorsed practices’. In contrast, the ‘policy-endorsed practices’ located at the ‘participant-described practice’ station of ‘education’ incorporate a greater range of more specific education or educator practices. The blue branch line (‘policy-endorsed practices’) extends from the ‘participant-described practice’ education station to include ‘play-based learning’, ‘learning and skill development’, ‘intentional teaching’ and ‘scaffolding’. Similarly, ‘participant-described practices’ associated with ‘learning and reflection’ and ‘evaluation’ branched out with more specific ‘policy-endorsed practices’.

This comparison reveals a greater level of policy emphasis and specificity related to the ‘participant-described practices’ of ‘education’, ‘learning and reflection’ and ‘evaluation’. Conversely, policy simplifies practices of ‘developing relationships’ that participants described in greater levels of detail. This is similar to the way that a broad range of relational practices of care are simplified in policy when referred to in the context of routines that require management.

Another key distinction was evident in the way that participants described ‘outcomes’. Participants were all committed to the concept of achieving outcomes for children; however, participants described an interconnectedness between the practices of ‘education’ and ‘care’ and children’s outcomes as the core work of ECEC. Relational practices were emphasised as delivering ‘outcomes’ in their own right, rather than functioning as a mechanism to support educational outcomes. While working for outcomes for children was a concept embedded throughout all of the texts, participants
linked this to their core practices, rather than viewing this as an act of accountability to policy intent. This is evident in the way participants clustered the practice categories as supporting children and families, categories that the policy text framed more narrowly as supporting learning and development outcomes. Participants valued and recognised the importance of relational practices in their own right.

In contrast, care practices that have been distributed as ‘routine tasks’ in policy (explored in chapter 8) are de-emphasised by being viewed as standard or naturally occurring practices associated with routines. While care is viewed as naturally occurring, it is not resourced, nor is it associated with valued professional effort. ‘Care’ is often measured only in its absence: from routines for the purpose of rating quality in The Standards, or through the impacts of neglect in the Early Years Strategy.

**CONCLUSION: RELATIONALITY VERSUS ACCOUNTABILITY**

In this chapter, I analysed the tension and similarities between ‘participant-described practices’ and ‘policy-endorsed practices’. I explored the ways that participants described and prioritised their work in different contexts. Similarly, I explored the emphasis of ‘policy-endorsed practices’ in the texts and their impact on participant performances.

Through my analysis of policy I have demonstrated ways that policy emphasis positions practice to shape the image of an ‘ideal’ ECEC professional. By exploring the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, I have identified specific practices, emphasised in policy, that are significant in implementing the reform agenda. These ‘policy-endorsed practices’ are powerful for policy implementation and in shaping the performances of ECEC professionals in [and out of] integrated settings.

Participants, however, categorised and classified the importance of their work in various ways. While participants’ emphasis on accountability practices was evident when they worked with the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, they emphasised relational elements of their work when working with their ‘participant-described practices’. The delineation between accountability and relational elements of their work was further evident in participants’ grouping of practices when they clustered and stood near them as core and non-core to their work with children and families. They grouped practices associated
with management and the work of integration furthest from their core practices. This located the core work of the ECEC profession as work with children and families, while positioning work associated with management, leadership and integration as less compatible categories distanced from core practices.

Through this work I have highlighted what, on the surface, appear to be compatible practices described by participants and drawn from policies. While participants recognised that their descriptions and labels of practice varied from the 'policy-endorsed practices', they identified significant overlap between the two categories. What the focus group activities and analysis revealed were the subtle distinctions between practices that appeared compatible. The activities enabled participants to give rich and detailed descriptions of practice. By examining these descriptions, I have located tensions between participants’ rich practice descriptions of care and integration and the superficial descriptions in policy texts. Similarly, I have located a stronger focus on specific practices relating to education in policy than was reflected in the ‘participant-described practices’.

The results of the ranking activities are complex, and, while it is possible to gain insights from comparing the lists, the intention was not to emerge with a definitive ‘answer’. The activities enabled participants to discuss the diverse ways in which they think about their profession and how they perceive the policies that influence it. The ranking activities directed discussion in a way that challenged and enabled participants to think about and judge their work in different ways. It highlighted to the participants what was important to them, how they spend their time, and how they perceive policy. I located a strong, affective influence throughout participant descriptions and rankings.

Through the methods used, participants constructed a story that revealed high expectations for quality and ethical practice, alongside complexity and competing demands. This was often associated with ‘external’ pressures arising from implementing The Standards and The Framework as policy measures of quality. This tension is important because it makes visible the forces that influence ECEC professional performances.

In the next chapter, I provide a deeper analysis of how these tensions play out. Using the model of professional inclusion, I explore how policy discourses intersect with and
influence professional performances. I draw on the range of data discussed to examine the ways that discourses script the performances of ECEC professionals, and the ways that participants both comply with and resist these scripts with powerful [counter]performances. This provides insight into how policy lives in the micro interactions of ECEC professional performances.
In this chapter, I analyse performances of professional identity by closely analysing the interactions with policy, and the positions of participants’ in response and in relation to policy. I discuss ways in which embodied critiques of policy are enacted through reported performances of compliance and resistance in the practice setting. I examine tensions and compatibilities between the ‘practice-performances’ and ‘policy-scripts’ made evident in my analysis of policy texts, highlighting practices that are emphasised and de-emphasised in the policy texts. I provide examples of shifting, changing and selective performances of practice, and explore some of the possible implications in policy and practice spaces; in doing this I highlight connections and disconnections between policy and practice.

**PROFESSIONAL INCLUSION: AS A LENS**

In chapter 5 I proposed a model of professional inclusion which I constructed from social inclusion concepts of recognition, redistribution and representation (Fraser, 1995, 2009, 2013), along with the concept of relationality (Lynch et al., 2009, Lynch et al., 2012). I drew on concepts of social inclusion because they enabled an exploration of components that enable or impede participation in social life. Concepts of inclusion, using Fraser and Lynch’s terms, seek remedies to injustice located within interconnected cultural, economic, political, and affective domains. The remedies endeavour to achieve parity of participation in these domains, signalling inclusion in society.

In contrast, my research explores the extent to which participants are involved in constructing and influencing their sector through their professional performances. I focus less on issues of participation parity, and more on the cultural, economic, political and affective domains as discourses that circulate and shape identities and practices within the ECEC profession. These domains act as lenses through which professional performances can be analysed and discursive scripts can be traced, as they work to influence these performances. I have visually demonstrated the interconnection of these domains in Figure 11.1.
I constructed this model of *professional inclusion*, using the image of an unbroken, interwoven thread that weaves between itself and the central circle, to create loops in which the cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions are captured. The overlapping threads inside the central circle, labelled recognition, redistribution, representation and relationality, represent performative dimensions that are connected to and influenced by discourses that circulate within each respective dimension. The central circle represents the space wherein the script and [scripted] performances are enacted. The circle acts as a [fabricated] boundary and point of tension in which performances are enacted and experienced. The thread is not static; it can be moved through, in, out of, and around the central circle, showing a shifting degree of influence from one domain or another. I position the enacted practice of ECEC professionals as occurring within the circle – it is the ‘site’ where discursively formed scripts and scripted performances overlap, intertwine, and play out.

I use the metaphor of a script to describe the influences of dominant policy discourses on ECEC professionals. Scripts guide and elicit the performances of actors. The dominant discourses circulate and produce scripts, which in turn influence the performances of...
professionals. I use the term performance in my research to explore the enacted intentions and values described by the participants. By tracing the tensions and movement of power relations between policy scripts and the professional performances and counter-performances of these scripts, I reveal ways in which professional performances work to both reinforce and displace these scripts.

**RECOGNISED PERFORMANCES//CULTURAL SCRIPTS**

Using several examples, I analyse the ways that ‘institutional’ and ‘inter-subjective’ forms of recognition, influenced by cultural scripts that permeate the sector, lead to some aspects of ECEC professional identities being affirmed while others are de-emphasised. ‘Inter-subjective recognition’ deals primarily with identity formation in interaction with people and society (Butler, 2004, Honneth & Farrell, 1997), while ‘institutional recognition’ emphasises the structures that inhibit or enable participation. In the first example, I outline the recognised performance of ‘educator’ that is supported by policy scripts relating to professionalism, qualifications and education. In the second example, I analyse a familiar but less promoted performance of motherhood.

**Professional Educators: Reform as recognition**

Reform has had significant impacts on the ways in which ECEC professionals are recognised. Participants commented on the level of change within the field driven by reforms. Specifically, they experienced the significance, both positive and negative, of *The Framework* on their work. For some participants, this represented and articulated a recognition of the importance of the early years and the work that they did; for example, Joan noted that:

“Having the early years learning framework and subsequently the Victorian early years learning framework gave us some … gave us a tool to enter, to have some legitimacy around our work to say … gave us a common language for us to strengthen our sector. And it in some ways gave many of us permission to enter the other academic fields, the other fields of education” (Joan).

Joan credited *The Framework* with legitimising her work and providing a common language that granted access to ‘other’ areas, strengthening the sector. When describing its impact, Megan, like Joan, referred to the ‘common language’ it provided.
Megan described the importance of linking everyday practice with the language of *The Framework*:

“I guess it impacts at a philosophy level... I’ll write a new document or I’ll write the policies or a new procedure and will often refer back to the framework just to make sure the language is all linked” (Megan).

Joan further described this as relevant to her role in guiding the practices of the educational programs: “I’m more conscious of using language of the framework... It’s influenced the way I interpret play”.

*The Framework* is a significant policy tool for recognising the role of ECEC professionals as ‘educators’ within a professional field. *The Framework* introduced the term ‘educator’, defining it as “early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). References to the term ‘educator’ made up over 70% of the 853 references to the term ‘education’ across the selected policy texts. By recognising the commonalities of a diverse range of roles in the ECEC profession, and reinforcing this through repetition, *The Framework* is a strategy of affirmative recognition serving to produce a “rereallocation of respect to existing identities of existing groups” (Fraser, 1995, p. 87).

For Joan, *The Framework* was a powerful tool for recognising and validating the work and status of the sector. She commented on the strength of *The Framework* in her interview, noting that it was ‘founded in research’. Also reflecting on the importance of the sector, Carol noted:

“Everything that’s written has obviously been very well thought about... it makes you realise why you do the job that you do, the importance and the significance of it” (Carol).

In addition, Megan suggested that the framework reflected, rather than determined, their practice, though it could be used to benchmark or guide practice. Megan explained that:

“If you had a good educator then it really covered what they did anyway, but for those who aren’t it’s given us a framework to be able to say this is what you
should be doing, this is the common language, this is what it should look like” (Megan).

The Standards also provided detailed descriptions of how the role of ‘educators’ contributed to providing a high quality service. Educators are also the primary subject of the Workforce Strategy, which has a specific focus on improving the quality of the sector through improvements to professional practice. Professionalism is a key focus of the Workforce Strategy:

“The concept of professionalism in the ECEC workforce is incorporated into the NQS [The Standards] through references to capability, leadership, teaching and learning. Enhancing the public perception of the profession will assist in attracting and retaining a skilled ECEC workforce... Clearly articulating the opportunities available for educators through updating and increasing qualifications will offer clear goals and reward professionalism, ultimately improving the quality of education and care of children” (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 8).

The ways that the term ‘education’ and the role of ‘educators’ have been framed through policy reform texts have significantly shaped the ways that ECEC professional roles are performed.

The participants’ clearly saw their roles recognised and validated within The Framework: it identified them as ‘good’ ECEC professionals. Policy reform acted as a tool for recognition, affirming the practices and values of the participants, affirming the performance of ECEC professionals as ‘educators’.

**The Framework of Norms: Motherhood//professional**

Toni described her practice as an ECEC professional as different from the practices of The Framework, drawing rather on ‘old fashioned’ practices akin to acts of parenting:

“I do the old-fashioned parenting things, I’m guided by my own mum, my grandparents, myself in the way I raised my children, and I bring that to here as well.”

Toni described this as an alternative set of values to those set out in The Framework and The Standards. Being a mother was core to the way that Toni described herself as a professional, yet Toni did not completely disregard The Framework. She described ways
that her practices were similar to the practices described in *The Framework*, in that she engaged in critical reflection about her practices and how she positioned her work in the context of the community in which she worked. She argued, however, that *The Framework* did not affirm or legitimise her practice or values in the way it did for others:

“It’s not because of *The Framework*, how you value the children, the way you see them and what you would like to see them achieve... It’s got to fit into my morals, my standards, how I feel and then that’s, yeah, what I believe” (Toni).

While *The Framework* represented a tool for validation and recognition for some participants, for others, like Toni, it was more contentious. When describing the reforms that had impacted upon the sector, Toni commented: “Oh, ‘The Framework’, don’t forget ‘The Framework’, how did I forget ‘The Framework’? [whispering] I don’t like ‘The Framework’ neither”. Referring to *The Framework* and documenting children’s learning didn’t fit with Toni’s “morals” and “standards” for raising children.

The common language of *The Framework* reinforced and affirmed ECEC practice by defining ‘norms’ through which ECEC professionals might perform their practice. Butler (2004, pp. 219-221) describes norms as both a mechanism of regulation and as socially and politically binding. The norms set by the common language of *The Framework* foreground the recognised performances of ‘professional educators’. This provides a pathway to inclusion and recognition in ECEC that is also a process of coercive normalisation (Butler, 2004, pp. 219-221). The practice framework, like norms, reinforces what is common in ECEC while also creating conditions to exclude what is uncommon, or ‘unnatural’. The *Early Years Strategy* responds to the policy problems of [maternal] workforce participation and children’s positive outcomes through its focus on productivity. The term ‘educator’, however, is used as a unifying term that describes all who work in ECEC, largely ignoring any tension that exists between the productivity goals of providing ‘substitute’ parental care and providing education. While the use of the term educator aims to increase respect for those working in the field, recognition of the role of ‘care’ has been subsumed into the role of ‘educator’; recognition for ‘education’ has been heightened while recognition for ‘care’ has been de-emphasised.

Toni was aware that identifying with maternal care and ‘old fashioned’ practices transgressed the recognised expectations of ECEC practice; however, this did not
diminish her view of her own professional status. Historically, alongside moves to ‘professionalise’ ECEC, motherhood and maternal care have been distanced from ECEC practice as non-professional or informal care roles. Osgood (2012, pp. 113-116), in her research with Nursery Workers in the UK, found that these workers separated their professional identities from their maternal identities. Osgood (2012) noted that the Nursery Workers would often describe - and exercise the relational elements of their work - in ‘professional’ ways, distancing themselves from what was considered ‘natural’ or ‘unskilled’ labour. In contrast, Toni’s description of practice overtly drew on maternal care practices as a [counter] performance of professional practice. Toni also spoke of being called on in the team as a source of knowledge and authority due to her experience as a mother. Butler (2004) argues that enacting and resisting norms becomes political and that “sometimes the very conditions for conforming to the norm are the same as the conditions for resisting it” (p. 217). Toni’s counter-performance of ‘professionalism’ resists the scripts of the ‘professional educator’ that are increasingly trumpeted through reforms in ways that are distant from ‘natural’ or ‘relational’ care-based performances.

These performances highlight different forms of recognition of ECEC professionals. In the first examples, Megan and Joan perform a script that casts ‘educators’ in roles working to progress children’s learning, development and future outcomes. This performance achieves recognition by attributing the value of ECEC professional performances to economic returns, and in doing so expands the economic loop of the professional inclusion model. The Framework provides the structure for this form of recognition, citing productivity gains set out in the Early Years Strategy. In contrast, Toni performs a different script of ‘professionalism’, one that overtly draws on practices of motherhood and maternal care to contribute to raising children. This role is one which is often silenced in current policy descriptions of ECEC practice. Both examples are professional responses, and both are concerned with the future development of children; however, each example represents different performances of professionalism and offers a different script of recognition. In the context of operating in an integrated

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8 References to the concepts of motherhood and maternal care carry unquestioned assumptions at this point – I return to these assumptions in the final section of this chapter.
setting this illustrates that participants were grappling with their own professional identities while simultaneously participating in integrated practice.

[RE]DISTRIBUTIVE PERFORMANCES//ECONOMIC SCRIPTS

In this section, I analyse some of the economic scripts that are dominant in ECEC policy. In the first example, I locate the influence of neoliberalism on policy scripts and practice performances, identifying the ways that key terms in the policy texts work to reinforce the narrative of neoliberalism. Next, I further explore one way that neoliberalism has been taken up in ECEC through technologies of new managerialism, and I outline ways that participants take up the economic scripts that influence ECEC policy and practice.

Integration: Investing in early intervention

Key policies frame ECEC and integrated services as ‘investments’ in the future through early intervention and prevention. They focus on ‘getting in early’ in order to make a lasting difference to children’s lives. In the texts, early intervention in an early childhood context is associated with the concept of ‘readiness’ – whether for school, work, or life. ECEC, especially ECEC offered in integrated settings, is thus identified as a core avenue of early intervention.

Megan described her current effort, as the leader of the setting, as supporting her staff to respond to the developmental needs and norms of children. She added that, while the service operated in integrated ways, not all of the staff were aware of the operating model or vision for integration:

“Staff probably don’t have that knowledge of integration because we were just so busy trying to focus on developmental norms” (Megan).

For Megan, it was a gap in the capabilities of her team and, increasingly she found, for new graduates entering the field. This made the role of leadership crucial in expanding the knowledge of staff.

Knowledge of, and capacity to assess children’s developmental needs is embedded in early intervention approaches. The Early Years Strategy presents evidence that justifies investment in reforms based on the capacity of early intervention and prevention services to ameliorate future social problems. It does this by arguing the ‘cost-
effectiveness—of ensuring all children experience a positive early childhood’ (COAG, 2009, p. 4). The Early Years Strategy proposes a model for more coordinated and integrated services that are “delivered in a way that is accessible and seamless from the user’s perspective” (COAG, 2009, p. 18). It further describes the importance of integrating services for children and families:

To meet the diverse and complex needs of children and families and stop those most in need falling through the cracks, services overall need to be more coordinated, comprehensive, interdisciplinary and flexible. Additionally, some of the pressure in the system could be alleviated through a greater focus on prevention and better assessment and referral to early intervention services (COAG, 2009, pp. 11-12).

Although the need for greater connection and coordination between services and the functions of assessment and referral are priorities in the policy documents, Amy commented on some of the limitations that she faced in progressing this kind of work. She was critical of the current connections between services, particularly links with maternal and child health services. In her second interview, Amy noted that there was “not a lot of interaction” between educators and the maternal and child health nurses. This contrasted with her previous experience where she “used to know all the nurses and be able to chat about different [work-related] things”. Amy noted the weaker connection with other services as a limitation to information-sharing in relation to her work with children and families.

While Megan and Amy highlight some of the tension related to where and how integration should occur, they both demonstrate a desire to perform their role in an integrated way to achieve better outcomes for children and families. They linked their making a priority of connections between services with the importance of early detection and assessment. Both Megan and Amy were critical of perceived barriers to working in integrated ways. Megan talked about ensuring that ‘core’ skills, such as knowledge of ‘developmental norms’, were first developed in the team before introducing concepts such as integration. Amy spoke of the importance of the connection between services in supporting informal information-sharing. The motivation for both of these approaches mirrors the policy intent - that is, to improve
their ability to assess and monitor children’s development and to improve connection with other services. Participants saw this as an opportunity to enhance their ability to ‘get in early’ to respond to children’s developmental needs.

The *Early Years Strategy* locates ECEC firmly within a neoliberal frame by articulating strong links between investing in ECEC and improving national competitiveness, casting children as members of the future workforce and as future innovators. In the following statement, Amy demonstrates how this script is taken up in the language of ECEC professionals:

“You would hope it would be towards building a better society... you work on all parts of building up a person... Like with kinder you’re getting them ready for school but then school gets you ready for uni or whatever you’re gonna [going to] do after that” (Amy).

*The Framework* and *The Standards* as key practice documents are important drivers in directing the effort of ECEC professionals. Moss (2014) notes that, increasingly, early intervention programs are becoming more tightly controlled, their practice descriptions more explicit so as to ensure they deliver returns; however, the reverse is true when it comes to describing the practices of integration in these documents. While the policy texts have an explicit focus on ‘improvement’ and ‘quality’, it was the language of investment that came to the fore in these examples. Participants performed the economic scripts of investment to improve national competitiveness that are embedded in the *Early Years Strategy* through their redistributive acts of professionalism. This was visible in their descriptions of their practices relating to ‘getting in early’ to help children to achieve outcomes.

**Education as an Economic Intervention: Neoliberal framings**

My analyses of policy and practice have highlighted the extent to which ECEC professionals are influenced by neoliberal values that are transmitted through government reforms and policy. The result is that ECEC, and education more broadly, is increasingly being described and measured in terms of economic intervention or investment.
Participants described implementing high quality practice in relation to aligning with and being guided by *The Framework* and *The Standards*. Toni described the level of scrutiny associated with implementing practice standards identified in *The Framework*: “...you’re always checking, is this right, am I following this one right, you know, am I following *The Framework*?” (Toni). These performances reflect accountability practices associated with delivering high quality services for the purpose of achieving children’s outcomes. Such performances require that participants have an understanding of *The Framework* and *The Standards* and that they ensure their practices are performed and documented in alignment with them. Yasi provided an example of her process of planning and programming for children’s experiences:

“If I have to program, [I] always link with *Early Year Learning Framework* and learning outcome... that is how we observe and see the children interact and then how we can increase the play experience” (Yasi).

For Yasi, this performance was linked with achieving outcomes for children and was an unquestioned part of her role. Accountability practices extend beyond frameworks for monitoring quality and into the approaches adopted in ECEC settings.

Neoliberal approaches call for different relations between policy [development and reform] and the operation and governance of services. *The Standards* provide a nationally regulated framework for accountability and assessment; they define the quality standards that ECEC settings are required to meet to achieve a quality rating. This has resulted in increased accountability practices in ECEC settings, often associated with assessing and documenting practice aligned with quality areas set out in *The Standards*. Lynch et al. (2012) explore the rise of ‘new managerialism’ in education, describing it as an entire system of operation and decision-making based on demonstrating performance and accountability. Lynch et al. (2012) note that “New managerialism [is] not just about management, it [is] about establishing new sets of values and practices embedded in a complex series of social, political and economic organizational changes” (p. 4). *The Framework* and *The Standards*, in articulating the practices and standards by which quality is assessed, are entwined with systems that regulate ECEC operation.
The use of measurement as a technology of control in education, such as those used in quality assessment, is shifting how authority is allocated. A key function of ‘new managerialism’ is to manage and measure performance using technologies of control such as performance indicators. Joan’s comment below demonstrates how The Framework is used to assess quality practice:

“If I’m not reflecting the practice principles [of The Framework] then I really am asking myself ‘why not?’ because I think they’re a good measure for what we should be doing” (Joan).

By referring to what ECEC professionals “should be doing” relative to the practice principles, Joan deploys surveillance mechanisms. Under a model of ‘new managerialism’, professionals participate in and comply with technologies of control and surveillance that measure performance (Lynch et al., 2012). It is not enough to be able to assess and monitor children’s development; ECEC professionals must also be able assess their performance against the quality measures and standards.

Economic scripts are significant in the ways that the language of investment and accountability is taken up in the performances of ECEC professionals. Participants gave examples of not only performing the future-focused script of policy in relation to their work with children, but also of being critical of their practices and capacity to deliver early intervention through their integrated approaches. Further, participants demonstrated performances of accountability to the practices described in The Framework and The Standards, and to the vision of the Early Years Strategy. The policy documents that follow the Early Years Strategy are intended to be instructive, designed to ensure that “by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). Accountability practices, adopted through a neoliberal lens, shift the frame through which professionalism is viewed, focusing on measures of quality as core guidelines for practice. In this example, the ‘economic’ loop of the professional inclusion model that contains and scripts [re]distributional performances, is stretched to provide a wider lens through which ECEC professionals’ performances are viewed and visible. This also frames the way that practices of integration are viewed and valued as investments in early intervention.
REPRESENTATIONAL PERFORMANCES//POLITICAL SCRIPTS

I explore representational performances and political scripts using participant examples of their opportunities to exercise decision-making in their work and of navigating the expectations of their role. Next, I closely examine an individual example in which Yasi describes experiences of being powerful and being silenced in a variety of work settings. In this section, I discuss what Fraser (2009, p. 5), in a geo-political context, describes as the core questions of representation: “Who counts”?

Decision making and negotiating expectations

I asked participants to discuss the level of influence that they had on decisions made in their work and in relation to policy. Participants described some of the expectations that affected the decisions they made.

Amy described feeling constrained by not having the authority to challenge what she considered misinterpretations of The Framework to which she was accountable. She described being limited in the impact that she could have because she was accountable to the expectations of others: “Sometimes parents, sometimes your team leader or director, all the other specialist services. Sometimes things just have to be the way they are” (Amy). Amy experienced these expectations as limitations on her ability to make decisions in her day-to-day work. Toni described these expectations as the many ‘bosses’ of ECEC, citing accountability to management, families, children and the government alongside those associated with implementing the framework. The level of accountability to the multiple demands associated with her work diluted her experience of having any impact upon decisions about how the sector was structured. Toni and Amy’s examples highlight an inherent tension for representation, that is, to be accountable to a structure and to challenge it at the same time.

I also located performances of accountability within the ranking activities. By ascribing a greater value to some of the ‘policy-endorsed practices’, compared to their ‘participant-described practices’, participants demonstrated ways that they self-impose the policy parameters and values in their work. This was further evident when

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9 Not all were experienced in the integrated setting; however, they provide a direct example of how the reform and policy texts have been used to manoeuvre in constrained and almost repressive circumstances.
participants misaligned the 'participant-described practices' that they ranked as most valued with those that they ranked according to the time allocated and prioritised. While Ball (2006) argues that this level of self-monitoring limits professionals’ experience of decision-making and autonomy, Lynch et al. (2012) notes that this has little impact on what professionals value. Lynch et al. (2012, pp. 15-16) found that, although educational leaders are expected to implement and enact managerial (and broader policy) reforms, these imposed performance measures had little effect on their practice.

These examples demonstrate a persistent underlying tension between what participants believe and what they enact through their professional performances. It also highlights the ways in which accountability to multiple expectations limits access to representational performances. Amy and Toni described [self-]suppressing alternative professional values and performances to clear the stage for performances that meet external expectations.

**Manoeuvring: Using [the language of] policy for influence**

In this section, I analyse the responses that Yasi provided in her interview about the types of representational performances in which she engaged, in a variety of roles.

Yasi described being overlooked for positions for which she was more qualified and experienced than others:

“I don’t know because of my colour or because I come from other country... they won’t give it...I did not do my degree [because of this] ... what’s the point, wasting time and so I just give up” (Yasi).

As a result, Yasi described acting differently when she had concerns about situations or opinions relating to practice. Yasi described a time when she saw practices that were of great concern to her:

“...some centres it was really challenging, really challenging because some room leaders is not nice the way they talk... some centres when I was working as Cert III I have seen some staff members doing something not appropriate” (Yasi).

While complaining about this practice had meant that she could not return to the centre, she described being able to use *The Framework* to raise this concern:
“linking with the Early Years Learning Framework I wrote a big email to the director... this is what happened... this is how they do it... the director wrote back thanking me” (Yasi).

While Yasi described this as an example of being able to influence practice for children, she also noted that she was never called back to relieve at that service.

Yasi’s references to and naming of the seven quality standards and five learning outcomes within the framework, on the surface appear to be a recital of the key policies affecting the ECEC sector. This performance or recital of policy is reminiscent of Ball’s (2006, p. 144) description of performativity in which policy technologies are deployed to ensure self-regulation and compliance; Yasi however also described using these frameworks powerfully to influence practice (albeit at a personal cost).

Yasi provided another example of powerfully using the language of the framework to frame and legitimise her practice. When I asked Yasi why she chose to work in ECEC she replied:

“I think I can do something for the nation being in the child care sector... everything begins with the early childhood age” (Yasi).

On the surface, this statement appears to paraphrase the language of the Early Years Strategy. When Yasi described why her work was important, however, she revealed a different set of motivations:

“If we teach the children something good it will stay in their minds and in their personalities... I always encourage children to share and build up empathy to others, be nice to others, that is most important... having empathy and love towards the others... then they’re building up the good nation... People don’t have empathy to others” (Yasi).

Yasi’s original statement about doing something for the nation at first appears to be a performance reinforcing the messages of reform, yet, when she elaborated, her motives relating to ‘doing something good for the nation’ provided an alternative set of possibilities. Yasi’s citation of the framework’s vision creates the possibility of dislodging it from its ‘original’ context in policy (Butler, 2004, pp. 217-219), one that is firmly placed within a neoliberal frame, and grounding it in a context of love and empathy. In Yasi’s
example, the effort or investment of care results in affective returns. While doing and saying everything ‘right’, Yasi is resisting the deeply economic policy scripts, while diligently performing them. Yasi’s citation of The Framework’s vision, described previously, creates the possibility of dislodging it from its ‘original’ neoliberal context in policy (Butler, 2004, p. 217), and repositioning it in a context of love and empathy. Yasi, perhaps inadvertently, enables interruption and creates new possibilities. She reframes her work as an investment in empathy and love by ‘citing’ statements from policy texts and dislodging them from their original context of productivity (Butler, 2004, pp. 217-219). The vision of a productive society marked by reduced spending on costlier interventions and higher workforce participation as the return on investment into ECEC is substituted by a vision of a more inclusive and caring society that is characterised by more empathic and respectful relationships.

This example shows the ways that everyday practices have the potential to be powerful and political, while also highlighting the risks associated with these acts. For Yasi, these risks had material consequences. Yasi described experiences of having little power to affect decision-making or practice. The experience that Yasi described of using the framework to influence change represented a powerful act. When she leveraged the language of the framework she was able to draw from its authority and legitimacy to enact change, but this ultimately led in some instances to Yasi being overlooked for work. Similarly, Yasi’s [re]citation of the statements in the Early Years Strategy, framed as investments in love and empathy, provide a powerful counter narrative to the dominant neoliberal discourses of productivity. Yasi is able to use the language of the Early Years Strategy, The Framework and The Standards and to draw on their legitimacy to progress her cause of ‘building up the good nation’ with love and empathy. These political acts enable representation in an environment that Yasi has often experienced as repressive and exclusionary.

These examples demonstrate the opportunities for, and barriers to representation in both the political spheres of ECEC and within integrated service settings. Amy and Toni described placing priority on meeting multiple expectations associated with their role, which limited their experience of representation, while, for Yasi, The Framework and The Standards provided powerful and influential tools to support different purposes.
Yasi took a different route to representation that stemmed from her practice as an ECEC professional; she demonstrated the potential for The Framework to be used for multiple purposes. While participants located ECEC reforms in a political context, it was not a lens through which they regularly viewed their work; hence, politically scripted language or performances were not readily accessible to them. Limited access to representational performances of ECEC Professionalism also signals both policy and practice limitations for meaningful participation in integrated practice, particularly relating to advocacy for children and families.

**RELATIONAL PERFORMANCES//AFFECTIVE SCRIPTS**

In this section, I discuss the relational elements of ECEC professional practice. I explore the ways that participants describe their relational performances and compare these to the ways in which ‘relationships’ are framed in policy. I discuss this in relation to the ways that care work is gendered and care roles are disproportionately assigned to women.

**Relational Effort: A supporting role**

As previously outlined, the policy texts have given all the roles of ECEC professionals the title ‘educator’. While the function of ‘education’ is elevated, ‘care’ is subtly placed in a supporting role that is important in relation to its contribution to learning for children. The following quote from The Framework demonstrates how relational practices are prioritised in policy in ways that support children’s learning and development:

“Educators who give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support [care] can assist children to **develop the skills and understandings** they need to interact positively with others. They also help children to **learn** about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as **learners**, and to value collaboration and teamwork” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12, My emphasis).

While this statement prioritises relational, emotional and nurturing responses, it frames them as supporting children’s learning and development. In this way, while policy places importance on caring and relational performances, it rarely does so in ways that
recognise these performances as innately valuable. The function of care, for example, is often associated with managing routines, such as, sleep, toileting and feeding.

This was highlighted by participants when they noted some of the differences between ‘childcare’ (federally-funded Long Day Care services) and ‘kindergarten’ (state-administered sessional programs). Carol spoke in more detail about the links between the different types of ECEC services in the setting:

“Although this is an integrated service it is split up into different areas, and this bit... is where they have the early learning program which ranges from birth to 5 years. They’re trying to avoid defining the two areas as a kinder and a long day care so they’re calling it the early learning program” (Carol).

Carol spoke of how the Early Years Strategy and The Standards were used to promote the message that all ECEC services provided under the roof were equal in value; however, negative perceptions and different conceptions of the services persisted.

Amy described the lower status that the ‘outside world’ ascribes to her work, particularly the routine-based work undertaken in childcare:

“You’re doing nappies and toileting and feeding babies and that... play isn’t really seen as learning for some people, it’s not the same as a classroom where you have a desk and a pen and paper” (Amy).

Toni shared a similar insight, defending the value of ECEC as a profession:

“But there are some people that just think we are just, yeah, here to take care of your kids. We do but... it’s like it’s not a profession, but we are” (Toni).

Toni reflected on the lower status that ECEC professionals are accorded, especially when their work is associated with caring for children:

“I reckon [the outside world] think we’re just glorified baby sitters... they put their dogs in doggy day care but complain about [the cost of] childcare” (Toni).

There was a distinct difference noted in the perceptions of the ‘outside world’ between ECEC professionals’ role in managing routine tasks and their role in functions associated with children’s learning.
Both policy conceptions and participants’ experiences of the outside world’s perceptions of ‘care’ undervalue it. The effort of caring for and nurturing children is de-emphasised in the policy texts and reduced to descriptions of routine physical tasks. Efforts to raise the status of ECEC often focus on the return on ‘investment’ in education, and “raising the professionalism of the ECEC workforce” (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 8). These two arguments, often conflated, align professionalism solely with the ‘educative’ function of ECEC associated with “specialist skills and knowledge to support child development” (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 8). Lynch (2013) argues that when care is ‘professionalised’ within a neoliberal model it is increasingly regulated and monitored in ways that affect the relationality upon which care is built. By focusing on the tasks of care, rather than the act of it, the policies favour elements of care that are more observable and measurable. Lynch et al. (2009) note that the positive and negative impacts of care are often only seen over longer periods of time, meaning that there is no easy measure for “other-centredness” (pp. 37-38). This vulnerability in measurement has significant limiting effects on the extent to which care is referenced and promoted publicly through policy. Thus, shorter-term economic measures associated with readiness and education dominate the policy discourses, stretching the economic loop of the professional inclusion model in ways that prevent care being viewed as an affective expression.

**Gendered stories, pathways, expectations**

The ways in which ECEC professionals understand and value ‘care’ is evident in their discussion of the care responsibilities that both shape the way they work and influence their decision to enter the sector. In these discussions, it is clear that the affective is integral to their work.

Carol and Yasi described their care responsibilities in the context of their work. Yasi spoke of no longer having a care responsibility for her adult children, though they played an important part in her decision to enter both teaching and ECEC. In particular, Yasi mentioned her experience of raising her son who was diagnosed with a “slight intellectual disability” (Yasi), which motivated her interest in the broader service sector surrounding ECEC. Through this experience, Yasi described developing a stronger commitment to inclusion in her work. In contrast, Carol’s experience entering the ECEC field stemmed from a need to meet her family’s child care demands. Coming from full-
time administrative roles, Carol was seeking employment with hours that fitted in with dropping off and picking up her children, so she applied for her first ECEC position on this basis. Since then Carol has been exposed to a variety of ECEC settings and has developed a passion for the work and for the profession. While neither Yasi nor Carol described gendered expectations in their care roles explicitly, they were implied in their remarks.

In contrast, Joan discussed the impact of gendered expectations when describing her pathway into ECEC. For Joan, ECEC was one of only a few jobs that were an acceptable way for her, as a female, to enter the workforce. Joan explained the expectation that girls and women in her family home and rural community would prioritise domestic tasks over paid employment. Joan spoke about her mother’s influence in encouraging her to enter the workforce:

“We were a rural family so dad worked hard and mum stayed home and did the classic traditional housewife duties. In fact, she had the Women’s Weekly annual, you know, to guide her behaviour and put the lippy on before dad came home from work and things like that. It was the classic ‘50s stereotypical family... but my mum stepped out of her world and started working and I could see that there were other possibilities. So, she had quite a big influence” (Joan).

Caring for children provided Joan with an acceptable way to enter the workforce. Joan has worked in early childhood since she was fifteen and has developed a strong passion for the sector. Toni also spoke explicitly about her roles as a ‘single-mum’, coming to ECEC through a range of informal care roles that she took up, looking after friends’ children, and through voluntary work at her children’s Kindergarten. In light of these roles, Toni was encouraged by those around her to undertake training in more formal care roles. Toni describes her mothering role as an important marker of her identity as an ECEC professional. In this context Toni’s act of reclaiming motherhood as the basis of her professional role is a subtle act of resistance.

While I previously discussed the concept of ‘motherhood’ as an alternative professional performance, it is also important to acknowledge the ‘affective inequality’ (Lynch et al., 2009, pp. 1-3) that impacts upon women who disproportionately undertake paid and unpaid care roles. Such roles are often accompanied by lower pay and recognition,
impeding equal access to material and social participation. Fraser (2013, p. 162) notes that issues of lower pay and recognition are common in “pink-collar” industries, such as ECEC, that are female-dominated and involve care-intensive labour. Through the gendered discourses that operate in ECEC policy and practices, care responsibilities and maternal responsibilities are assumed to be synonymous. This can be seen in statements in the *Early Years Strategy*, such as: “more and more families rely on early childhood services to support their workforce participation and the choices they make about how they balance work and family responsibilities” (COAG, 2009, p. 6). While this statement refers to “families”, the *Early Years Strategy* later addresses areas of concern for ‘families’: “More women are participating in the workforce and more people are having children later in life” (COAG, 2009, p. 11). In addition, the role of ‘mothers’ is referred to nine time throughout the document, compared to one reference to the role of fathers. Issues of workforce participation and balancing family responsibilities are communicated as issues for women and mothers.

In addition to the relational work that all of the participants undertake, there is a strong connection between their ‘private’ care roles and their paid positions as ECEC professionals. Lynch et al. (2009, p. 55) point out that, although relationality is important as both a public and private good, the ‘care-world’ and relationality have been successfully categorised as private matters, largely obscured therefore from public sight. The participants’ personal care responsibilities influenced their decisions to enter and to remain in the sector. These examples illustrate the contested state of ECEC as one of multiple values and outcomes. Early years policy has been designed to intervene on behalf of the productivity goals of education and workforce participation; it uses ECEC to address issues of parental [maternal] care responsibility as a barrier to this.

The participant responses highlight the intersection of their own workforce participation demands, their need for flexible care, their gendered expectations of care and domestic responsibility, and their identities as ECEC professionals. ECEC services, as a policy response to workforce participation, makes the issue of the care of children a public matter, while doing nothing to address the underlying assumptions that care is the responsibility of women.
It was evident that participants prioritised their relational performances. Despite this, the work and value of care and relational performances described are rarely scripted affectively. Rather, relational performances are described and scripted in ways that privilege the economic or educational return of ‘care’, meaning that relational performances are predominantly visible or describable through an economic lens. While the economic loop of my professional inclusion model is stretched out to script the relational performances, constraining the affective loop, participants pulled back the loop to re-script their performances with affective intent.

AFFIRMING AND RESISTING POLICY SCRIPTS

Participants both affirmed and resisted policy scripts. The model of professional inclusion that I employed provides a dynamic frame. It illustrates that participant performances can simultaneously affirm and resist policy scripts in a single enactment.

Participants broadly aligned their performances to the dominant policy scripts of early intervention and investment by conceptualising their work with children and families as contributions to the nation and society. By aligning their work with The Framework and with the aim of achieving outcomes for children, they offered policy-affirming performances of the vision of the Early Years Strategy, “that all children will have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (COAG, 2009, p. 4). Their policy-affirming performances reflect descriptions of practice that are very compatible with the scripts and influences of policy. As previously discussed, most participants also experienced policy as affirming their professional status. Participants hold themselves accountable to The Standards as an act of professional commitment. Policy technologies have increasingly forged new ‘neoliberal professionals’ who have become “executors of quality” (Ball, 2006, p. 146). The ways that the participants ensure that they understand The Framework and The Standards, and that their practice aligns with those documents, demonstrates Ball’s (2006, p. 144) concept of performativity associated with self-monitoring and practices of accountability. These practices, deeply entwined with conceptions of professionalism, are tied to the expectations of
‘educators’. For Megan, *The Framework* describes the practices that she expects from a “good educator”.

Acts of resistance were not overt, and were at times concealed behind the unspoken intentions of the participants’ actions that were described in interviews. Yasi’s description of her work as investing in a future society filled with love and empathy, achieved through her work with children, for example, challenged a policy script preoccupied with economic investment. By progressing her own agenda, drawing powerfully on the language of policy, she performs a type of undercover activism. Yasi progresses an agenda secretly, avoiding detection by doing and saying everything ‘right’ – being resistant by being diligent and overtly compliant. Yasi accesses representation, politically, by using recognised language associated with redistributive professional performances. By focusing on empathy and love as investments in a kinder society, Yasi pulls back the threads of [scripted] performances to apply an affective lens to typically economic, cultural and political performances. I show this emphasis visually below in Figure 11.2.
Yasi is able to traverse economic and affective spheres by using the language of investment for an affective return. Cannella and Lincoln (2015) express their “concern that thought/action/language/being are increasingly difficult unless using a neoliberal ‘voice’, and impossible without at least a neoliberal ‘accent’” (pp. 51-52). Yasi claims authority by taking on the language of investment with an affective accent to progress her agenda. By doing so, Yasi is engaging in an act of resistance by “demonstrating other reasonable options” (Cannella & Lincoln, 2015, p. 63). The depiction of the affectively biased model in Figure 11.2, shows that this act does not erase the other scripted performances; rather, it pulls the continuous thread [and scripted performances] into the affective domain to re-interpret and re-deploy them for affective intent. Yasi’s example demonstrates an atypical seizing of opportunities to use policy powerfully to progress values outside of the policy frameworks.
While relational practice is prioritised in policy, it is often scripted to value relational performances as instrumental to educational outcomes, a scripting influenced by a dominant economic policy narrative (shown in Figure 11.3). Recognition is attained via the increased status associated with being acknowledged as ‘educators’, while representation in political spheres is achieved through economic arguments claiming the cost-benefit of ECEC. Yasi’s example of relational performance differs, by applying a strong affective professional accent.

Figure 11.3: Model of Professional Inclusion – an economic emphasis

On paper the loops appear static. In my analysis, however, I trace the movement of the thread that pulls and stretches different performances through the cultural, economic, political and affective domains. Participants navigated this current, ‘switching’ between the scripts of policy and of practice to describe their multiple performances.

**CONCLUSION**

The examples that I have discussed demonstrate the influence that policy scripts have on the professional performances of participants, particularly on the way that these performances affirm and resist policy scripts. These performances highlight the tensions
between policy scripts and the participants’ practices highlighting also the complexity that overlays their efforts toward integrated practice. Participants also created new scripts for alternative professional performances that cannot be neatly compressed into, or contained within existing policy scripts. These performances intricately weave compliance with resistance in ways that both reinforce a policy direction while also resisting the scripts of policy through complex counter-performances.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how policy scripts are influential in determining the performances of professionalism in ECEC; however, I have also highlighted the possibilities for counter-performances and the opportunities to engage in them that participants have identified and taken. The performances often mirror the conditions of policy scripts while applying a different set of values and motivations that better reflect the performances of ‘professionalism’ by individual participants.

In the next chapter I conclude my thesis, drawing together key findings. In my conclusion, I take inspiration from Yasi’s overtly affective professional performances, relating them to Cannella and Lincoln’s (2015, pp. 51-52) concerns regarding a pervading “neoliberal accent” to explore affective professional accents as alternatives to dominant conceptualisations of neoliberal professionalism.
Chapter 12 | Affective Professional Accents

My research explores the impact of policy on practice in the context of the fast-paced change and significant reforms that have characterised the Australian ECEC sector. It specifically examines the impact on the sector of concepts of integration that have been introduced into practice through the language of policy. The question to which my research responds is:

*How are the professional identities and practices of Early Childhood Education and Care professionals in integrated settings influenced by policy reforms?*

My interest in policy and integrated service settings led me in two distinct directions: toward policy and reform texts that influenced the way that ECEC professionals undertook their work, and into the field to explore how participants understood and experienced their own professional identities in these contexts. To accommodate this, my methods and analysis needed to be bifocal.

I structured my thesis to reflect this dual focus on policy and practice by first establishing the theoretical framework within which my research is located, and then by using analysis of theoretical and conceptual literature in my review of policy and professional perceptions and practice. I used poststructuralist theoretical perspectives to frame my research, drawing predominantly on the work of Foucault (1970, 1972, 1977, 1988b) and Butler (1990, 2004, 2014a), to enable my exploration of discourse and identity in ways that accommodated complexity and multiple perspectives. Through this frame, I positioned my conceptualisation of policy as discourse and as text, with consequences in relation to its implementation and its intended outcomes (Ball, 2006, Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Drawing on Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010) conceptualisation of policy helped me to consider not only the problem that the policy addresses, but also how the problem is constructed. Next, I drew on Fraser’s (1995, 2009) concepts of recognition, redistribution, and representation, and Lynch and colleagues’ (2013, 2009) concept of relationality, which I used as lenses through which to explore integrated service delivery and the ECEC profession. Through this discussion, I argued that respect, resources, authority, and connection are allocated to professionals (particularly care-based professionals) differently relative to the program type in which they work. I also explored ways that the sector has been structured as a response to social issues such as
service access and addressing disadvantage. I further outlined critical theories and concepts of inclusion and justice to conceptualise professionalism for my exploration and to construct a model of *professional inclusion*. Drawing on this conceptualisation of policy and the profession, I constructed my methodology to investigate ECEC professionals’ experiences in integrated services in relation to policy reforms.

In the remaining chapters I entwined my analysis of policy and practice. In chapter 7 I explored the ways that participants conceptualised their roles and their profession. In chapter 8 I analysed the discursive formation of policy. In chapter 9 I examined the ways in which policy and professionals conceptualised integrated service settings. I continued to interweave analysis of policy texts and participant responses in chapter 10 by comparing and contrasting the participant and policy emphases on ‘practice’ and the way that these influence professional performance. Finally, in chapter 11, I used the model of *professional inclusion* to trace the ways that policy discourses operate as scripts that shape the performance and counter-performances of ECEC professionals in complex policy and practice settings.

**FINDINGS**

In the following sections, I present the findings of my research.

**A framework and methods for exploring complex professional identities**

My ontological presumption was that professional identity is complex and fluid rather than fixed. I explored how ECEC professionalism is defined and enacted. Using poststructuralist theories to frame my research accommodated this focus as it provided multiple ways of identifying the circulation, navigation, and negotiation of power in shaping professional enactments. Foucault’s (1970, 1972, 1977, 1988b) work relating to governmentality provided the framework to explore the ways that power operates through discourse, language and knowledge to create ‘rules’, categories and standards that work to govern the ways that ECEC professionals enact their roles. Through this prism I considered the consequences of discourses that operate to shape identity through subject formation. Butler’s (1990, 2004, 2014a, 2014b) work relating to performativity and citation further informed my understandings of identity through the lens of performance. This helped to conceptualise the concept of norms and the
regulatory impact that they have, limiting and enabling policy-affirming and policy-resisting performances of professionalism. While poststructuralist thinking and concepts of policy assisted me to account for identity-shaping forces, I sought also to explore ways that ECEC professionals performed policy in their professional life.

I fashioned a model of professional inclusion to provide a lens through which to analyse participant performances. I constructed this model from concepts of social inclusion and theories of justice, combining Fraser's (2009) three-dimensional cultural, economic and political approach to theorising justice with Lynch’s (2013) ‘Affective’ dimension. The use of this model, combining poststructuralist and critical theoretical perspectives and concepts, enabled my analysis of the multiple and competing cultural, economic, political, and affective discourses that work to script the performances of ECEC professionals. Through this I have traced the movement of power between policy scripts and recognised, [re]distributive, representational, and relational professional performances and counter-performances of these scripts.

The mixture of interactive methods that I used to collect data provided opportunity for participants to describe and reflect upon their work in different ways. I invited them to explore their interactions with policy [discourses], articulate their values, and explore the extent to which these values aligned with policy priorities. Introducing findings from my policy analysis into the focus group activities further supported this exploration of the intersection between policy and practice. Reading the participant descriptions against the policy discourses revealed a range of policy-affirming and policy-resisting practices - I pay more attention to these practices later in the chapter. Comparing these data sources has revealed a complex relationship between the relational performances and the technical performances in ECEC.

**Included professionalism**

My policy analysis revealed that the prevalence of neoliberal policy influences ways in which the profession is formed. This emphasis is evident in policy references to the concept of ‘outcomes’ for children and rateable accountability practices associated with ‘quality’ service delivery. This influence was also evident in the ways that participants described their work. I traced the influence of neoliberal policy texts in framing professional practices in ECEC settings, situating this as part of a broader international
trend as well as representing a specific Australian productivity agenda. While policy discourses were influential in shaping practice, participant performances were also powerful in containing and resisting the ways that they enacted reforms. The model of professional inclusion functioned to reveal obscured relational performances in participant descriptions of their practice. These related to their care roles, and to their efforts toward integrating their practice and programs with other services. The limited extent to which relational and integrated practices were described in policies, compared to the detailed descriptions participants gave, was a significant finding of my research.

**Care as professional**

Policy consistently describes care and relationships as practices that support both children’s learning and developmental outcomes and effective management of their routines. In contrast, the ECEC professionals described their care and relational practices as of fundamental importance in their work. The participants’ emphasis on their relational performances reveals what Lynch et al. (2012) describe as the tensions that arise when attempting to translate “person-centred and child-centred value” (p. 183) into neoliberal frameworks of measurement and accountability. I found a lack of adequate language and models within the policy texts to account for the robust relational effort exerted by workers in ECEC settings.

My analysis of participant experiences revealed many examples of affective professionalism that prioritise relational effort: for example, Yasi investing in empathy and love, Toni asserting her maternal identity as her underpinning professional identity, and Amy privileging the structure of childcare because it enabled richer relationships to form. While the affective dimension is often constrained in policy discourses, it is integral to the participants’ definitions of their profession(alism).

Using the Affective lens of the model of professional inclusion to analyse policy discourses and participant performances revealed the extent to which relational performances are de-emphasised in policy. Further, it provided an important tool in uncovering means of making care roles visible in non-typical ways. Lynch et al. (2009) argue that affective justice is imperative because “care work produces outcomes that can be seen and felt if not always easily measured... [care is] often most visible in [its] absence” (p. 38). As Yasi’s example demonstrates, applying an affective lens does not
necessarily replace a focus on outcomes; rather, it can powerfully displace a typically economic focus and reframe ECEC effort for affective intent. Affectively framed concepts of outcomes contrast with highly managerial and compliance-based concepts associated with neoliberal technologies. Lynch et al. (2009) starkly note that “A culture in which care work is not recognised and rewarded also disempowers and impoverishes carers of all kinds” (p. 218), particularly women. Policy mechanisms that value and take account of the relational effort involved in the education and care of children are required to address a current and significant policy gap. The participants described complex relational and technical professional performances. These accounts made visible alternative affective forms of professionalism, not sufficiently accounted for in policy. These performances have been able to shift the frame of neoliberal, economic dominance to enable exploration of components of affective professionalism or affective professional inclusion.

**The hidden effort of Integration**

Use of the model also assisted me to identity ways in which the concept of integration in ECEC is under-described in the policy texts. While the concept of integration in the policy texts is proposed as a solution to issues of ‘system limitation’, ‘complex need’ and ‘disadvantage’, robust descriptions of practice responses were limited in the texts. Participants’ responses to the challenge of disadvantage were described by them as a response to need rather than as being implemented because of any specific policy directive. They used terms like ‘knowing the community’ and ‘being inclusive’ to describe additional practice effort exercised to support families experiencing significant disadvantage, such as family violence or settling as a refugee. Their practice response to these concepts exceeded the depth of practice described in *The Framework* and *The Standards*. The indirect references to integration in these documents ‘make room’ for integrated approaches, but they do not describe them explicitly, leaving the practices of integration open to interpretation.

The intention of integrated service delivery aligns with the broader policy intentions of neoliberal productivity associated with early intervention and investment. When participants framed their additional effort within the language of *The Framework* and *The Standards*, they rendered their affective integrated practices largely invisible. This
meant that the additional effort associated with integrated practice remained under-described and under-resourced. Participants described performing a greater range of and more complex functions when working in an integrated setting, while maintaining that their integrated practice was only a slight extension to the ways that they ‘should’ be practising as ECEC professionals. As a result they are undertaking additional work, driven by a commitment to children and families, with no additional reward, resources or recognition; more simply, they are doing more with less. Greater resourcing and richer descriptions of the additional effort required within integrated settings are required to adequately recognise these roles.

Participants described their relational effort differently to the limited and limiting ways that policy texts describe them. Practices of care and relational work were under-described across the policy texts, representing a significant gap. The participants’ descriptions show that they prioritised their relational work despite the limited policy descriptions. While the context of integration added an additional layer of complexity, it appeared to contribute a sense of purpose across participants that firmly anchored their work to the relationships they held with the children, families and community that they worked with. Policies frequently frame effort associated with developing relationships and integrated service delivery as a strategy for the economic outcome of national productivity. This is an incomplete description of the nature of the work of those in the ECEC profession; it places these practices at risk of misrecognition, maldistribution and misrepresentation in policy and practice discourses.

**ECEC professionals voice in policy**

ECEC professionals are typically positioned as the recipients and implementers of policy. *The Framework*, for example, defines the role of ‘educator’ to those already practising in the field. While participants of this research, except for those in leadership roles, largely described being excluded or detached from policy development processes, my research revealed the diverse and complex ways that participants enacted their engagement with policy - ways that contained, resisted and expanded it. This was evident in participant descriptions of their effort to reflect and implement the policy frameworks. Each participant brought with them values and motivations that shaped their vision for the quality of practice available to children and families within the
setting. They coherently described why ECEC is important to them. Participants also engaged in resistance and critique of some of the components of policy reform. Toni, for example, rejected the policy narrative of *The Framework* and Yasi applied different values to the language of *The Standards*. Participants engaged in rich explorations of the ways that they affirmed and resisted dominant scripts of policy; through this they contributed to defining their profession.

Given that 98% of ECEC educators are women, ECEC professionals are often both implementers of and affected by ECEC policy reforms that aim to increase parental [maternal] participation in the workforce. Participants described their experiences both personally and professionally. Some of the participants, for example, described ways in which increased responsibility for care roles in their personal lives related to their ‘choice’ to enter the ECEC field. They believed that their sector is perceived as a lower status profession by the outside world, a perception that is reflected in lower pay and poorer conditions (Productivity Commission, 2011, SCSEEC, 2012) common in female dominated or “pink-collar” industries (Fraser, 2013, p. 161). This perceived lower status did not limit the ways that participants actively engaged in their profession and enacted policy critiques.

**Powerful, political and strategic performances**

The women who contributed to my research shared rich accounts of their experiences of navigating policy within the integrated service context. Their accounts revealed sophisticated understandings of the professional requirements of their roles which accommodated holding multiple accountabilities simultaneously. These accountabilities often extended to the children, families and communities for whom the integrated services were provided. Participants shaped their performances in response to the requirements of *The Framework* and *The Standards* and aligned those performances with the future focus on investment in the *Early Years Strategy*; however, they emphasised the relational and values-based elements of their roles in those professional performances. In practice, they harmonised the language of investment with their relational performances. This often came at a personal cost, as demonstrated in the examples of Joan, Yasi and Toni who respectively allocated additional time, selectively raised concerns, or applied additional effort to enact and progress their values.
Participants engaged in critique of policy via intricately-woven *policy-affirming* and *policy-resisting* performances in ways that both reinforced a particular policy direction while also resisting the scripts of policy through complex counter-performances. Throughout the interviews and focus group activities, participants strategically switched their language between different, and at times competing, discourses, enabling them to navigate and participate in the complex ECEC policy terrain. The combination of interview and dialogic workshop data collection methods enabled participants from a range of roles to identify and articulate their place in relation to policy and practice. This approach is in contrast to traditional forms of policy consultation and evaluation that seek to reconcile diverse experiences within policy, often with limiting consequences.

My research has revealed powerful counter-performances of ECEC ‘professionalism’ that contrast with images of ‘professionalism’ as performed by accountable neoliberal subjects. It has provided examples of *policy-affirming* and *policy-resisting* performances in relation to dominant policy scripts. The process through which I identified these performances offers a meaningful mechanism for canvassing participants’ existing engagement in policy for policy development and review.

**LIMITATIONS**

My research has involved both the analysis of policy texts and detailed work with a small group of professionals working in one integrated setting. Given the small sample, I have not sought to draw generalisable conclusions or comparisons from my research; rather, I have sought to explore in detail the ways policy texts function and the ways that professionals respond and identify in their profession. Because of this, I do not make judgments about what it means to be a ‘good’ professional in integrated settings; nor have I focussed on the skills or training required to work in integrated settings. I also do not seek to compare integrated settings with stand-alone settings. I have considered the work that a small sample of ECEC professionals have done to define and describe their professional identities and practices within the complex context of integrated service delivery and policy reform.

I have focused on a single integrated site, and was therefore able to explore the lived experience of what integration meant to a particular work team. This has enabled a deep
exploration of a small group’s experience of their context and setting. There is potential to build on this approach, applying it more broadly to investigating experiences within other integrated settings, stand-alone ECEC settings, or to regionally or demographically specific sites to seek deeper understandings of the implications of policy and practice in different contexts.

CONCLUSION

My research provides an in-depth exploration of performances of ECEC professional identities in one integrated setting in the context of policy and reform processes that are driving the shift to an integrated service delivery model. It addresses an under-explored area: how professionals identify in their profession and how they respond to policy reform.

This has provided significant insight into the tensions that exist between what is considered to be high quality professional practice by practitioners themselves and what is held to be of importance in policy documents. Key tensions emerge between the accountability practices associated with a neoliberal framing of professionalism and consequent low visibility and value placed on relational efforts within policy texts. These tensions were made evident by reading the participants’ rich accounts of their relational performances in juxtaposition with the policy descriptions that contained limited accounts of the utility of this relational effort.

The research methods provided opportunities to describe the values and priorities that participants took into their work, opening up new ways of describing their work both within and outside the language of policy. This resulted in richer accounts of professional practices that spanned cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions of the sector. The emergent data indicates that more specific mechanisms are required to recognise this additional effort and to make visible the deep care and commitment that participants brought to making change in their community, efforts that are obscured by ambiguous or misaligned descriptions of relational and integrated practices.

There is also a need to explore different ways of engaging with ECEC professionals directly in relation to policy, as well as developing and framing policy to take account of their broader effort. Participants described in detail the values that drove their
professional performances, some consistent with policy intentions and some that contrasted or extended beyond these intentions. I have proposed a model of professional inclusion as a useful analytical tool to reframe perspectives that are dominant in defining practices and which make visible alternative conceptualisations. I used this model to examine the shifting and competing tensions between economic and affective policy goals to reveal highly relational practices that participants strategically progressed. These care-rich interactions are fundamental to the effort of ECEC professionalism, yet are often erased within prevailing neoliberal conceptions of quality and typical forms of measurement. I am advocating for greater balance between the cultural, economic, political and affective dimensions of the professional inclusion model that better account for the relational effort involved in performing ECEC professionalism. Particularly in integrated settings where sophisticated relational competence could make a substantive difference to the lives of children, families and communities. My aspiration is for ECEC policy and practice to be performed with strong [and unapologetically] affective professional accents.
References


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APPENDIX 6.1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview one – 45-60 mins

Opening

Formal introductions and explanation of the research, consent and withdrawing consent.

Select a pseudonym:

What is your role?

Tell me about yourself

Questions about the participant and their role

How long have you worked in Early Childhood?

How long have you done this job?

How did your career in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) start?

What types of roles and types of settings have you worked in?

Describe your role as an ECEC professional in an integrated service setting?

Have you always worked in ECEC/Where did you first start your career?

Questions about skills and knowledge

What type of knowledge, skills and qualities are important in doing your work?

What specific knowledge, skills and qualities are important in integrated settings?

What are the core skills and knowledge for working in ECEC settings and what are the additional skills and knowledge related to working in integrated settings?

How available are the opportunities to develop the specific type of knowledge, skill, or qualities that you see as important?

Are you able to access this?

Do you access any type of professional learning and development?

Questions about perceptions of the work and its value

Why did you originally choose to work in ECEC settings?
Why do you continue to work in ECEC settings?

What contribution does your work make?

What are some of the perceived contributions of your work?

What is most important for you?

How much of your role is focused on this?

What are the other things that you are expected to be?

Who or where do these expectations come from?

**Questions about working with other professionals**

What are the other roles and professions who are important or who you interact with in your work?

How do you interact with professionals in these roles?

How is your role different and how is it the same to the other professionals in your setting?

How important are these professionals to the job you do?

What is the impact of other professionals on your work and practice?

**Questions about fitting in**

Thinking about ECEC, where do you fit or belong?

Where do you fit the most and the least?

How do you fit within integrated settings and the broader environment (intentionally non-descript)?

Which other roles fit in this space?

Which roles don’t fit in this space?

What types of roles are able to attend or be involved in your work or space?

Any that you wouldn’t work with?

**Questions about influence and autonomy**

How much of your work is directed by you?
How represented do you feel by the direction of the field?

Have you or could you have an impact on the field?

Where do you have the most influence—where do you have the least?

**Questions about changes in the ECEC sector**

What do you think has had the biggest impact on your role with recent changes in the ECEC sector?

Can you identify some of the most important policy documents in your field at the moment? (Provide visual examples if required)

How has your own practice changed, if at all, in response to these?

How much do you see yourself in these descriptions of the work?

**Interview two – 45 mins**

**Opening**

Formal introductions and explanation of the research, consent and withdrawing consent.

Select a pseudonym:

**Talk generally about the experience.**

*(provide open space for participant to lead discussion)*

**Questions about participation and views expressed:**

Are there things that you would have liked to have said, but didn’t throughout the focus groups?

- Explore the content and the reasons that they were not said in the group (if appropriate).

Were your views represented in the discussions?

*When were they most represented?*

*When were they least represented?*

Did you agree with what was said?
Questions about insights/reflections

What was most significant either in the discussions or from participating in the focus groups (if anything)?

Are there any reflections or insights that you would like to share in relation to the discussions?

- Discuss any positive or negative impacts of participating; and
- Explore any negative experience as a result of the research.

Questions about observations or statements

Present data from interview one compare with data from focus groups

Did you feel heard in the group?

Explore and plan any follow up action (referral or support).
APPENDIX 8.1: USE OF TERMS ACROSS ALL TEXTS

I summarise the number of references to the four key research terms across each of the policy texts visually below. I have colour coded each of the policy texts and have marked emphasis visually by making the circles associated with the uses of the terms larger for more-frequent uses of term and smaller respectively for less-frequent uses of terms.

Appendix Figure 1: Total references to each term across texts

Appendix Figure 2: Total references to children across texts
Appendix Figure 3: Total references to care across texts

Appendix Figure 4: Total references to education across texts

Appendix Figure 5: Total references to education and care across texts
Appendix Figure 6: Total references to integration across texts
APPENDIX 8.2: MOST FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

I have colour coded each of the policy texts to show the different ways the terms are used and the emphasis that is placed on them within and across the documents. I have marked emphasis visually by making the circles associated with the uses of the terms larger for more-frequent uses of term and smaller respectively for less-frequent uses of terms. I have also shown where there have been fewer than five ways that the term has been used in some documents.

Appendix Figure 7: Most frequent uses of the term children

The Standards

The Framework

Early Years Strategy

Children’s Centres Evaluation

Workforce Strategy

Acronyms

Programs

Outcomes

Age

Needs

Learning

Experience

Relationships

Support

Development

Outcomes

Relationships

Support

Needs

Acronyms

Programs

Needs

Outcomes

Vulnerable

Acronyms

Programs

Needs

Outcomes

Vulnerable

Acronyms

Programs
Appendix Figure 8: Most frequent uses of the term care

Early Years Strategy
- 98

The Framework
- 25

Children's Centres Evaluation
- 3

The Standards
- 322

Workforce Strategy
- 31

- Careful
- For environment
- Experience of
- Children's Practice
- Long Day Care
- Practice of Care
- Within ECEC
- Childcare
- School Age
- Within ECEC
- ECEC Service Type
- Continuity
- For Environment

Appendix Figure 9: Most frequent uses of the term education

Early Years Strategy
- 59

The Framework
- 144

Children's Centres Evaluation
- 4

The Standards
- 552

Workforce Strategy
- 96

- Carer/Caregiver
- ECE
- Law/Framework
- Level of
- Opportunity
- Within ECEC
- Department
- Educator
- Success
- ECE
- Within ECEC
- Department of
- Educators
- Within ECEC
- Concepts
- Leader
- Ratio
Appendix Figure 10: Most frequent uses of the term education and care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Years Strategy</th>
<th>The Framework</th>
<th>Children’s Centres Evaluation</th>
<th>The Standards</th>
<th>Workforce Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Programs</td>
<td>C1 Programs</td>
<td>C1 Quality</td>
<td>34 Quality</td>
<td>18 Workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Workforce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17 Provision of</td>
<td>18 Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Reform/Agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 Participation in</td>
<td>15 Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Law/Framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 Programs</td>
<td>14 Educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 Law/Framework</td>
<td>5 Quality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Figure 11: Most frequent uses of the term Integration (direct and in-direct)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Years Strategy</th>
<th>The Framework</th>
<th>Children’s Centres Evaluation</th>
<th>The Standards</th>
<th>Workforce Strategy</th>
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<td><strong>29</strong></td>
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<td>7 Collaborative</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>5 Model</td>
<td>3 Joint approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Collaborative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 Practice</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Qualifications</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3 Joint approach</td>
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<td>4 Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 System</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3 Qualifications</td>
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<td>3 Joint approach</td>
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XIX
## APPENDIX 8.3: 'POLICY-ENDORSED PRACTICES'

Appendix Table 1: 'Policy-endorsed practices' and associated skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Policy-endorsed practices'</th>
<th>Associated skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing relationships</td>
<td>communication, interpersonal, teamwork, listening, rapport building, giving feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on outcomes</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing diversity</td>
<td>communication, interpersonal, cultural competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation, monitoring and assessment</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing routines</td>
<td>Organisational, content knowledge, communication, documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning through play</td>
<td>facilitation, observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Communication, interpersonal, curriculum knowledge, assessment, observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive to children</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging families</td>
<td>communication, interpersonal, teamwork, listening, rapport building, giving feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>communication, interpersonal, teamwork, listening, rapport building, giving feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning, documenting and evaluating</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity and transitions</td>
<td>organisation, communication, teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing frameworks</td>
<td>Implementation, documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational concepts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and skill development</td>
<td>content knowledge, implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and management</td>
<td>communication, interpersonal, teamwork, listening, rapport building, giving feedback, organisation, documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic ECEC practices</td>
<td>program implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reflection</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
<td>content knowledge, observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Management</td>
<td>observation, documenting, hazard identification, communication, assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelling</td>
<td>content knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental practices</td>
<td>content knowledge, implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating quality</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and accountability</td>
<td>recording, reporting, monitoring, planning, documenting</td>
</tr>
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<td>Aspect</td>
<td>Tasks</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection of Children</td>
<td>observation, monitoring, assessment, documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene practices</td>
<td>content knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional teaching</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
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<td>Best Practice</td>
<td>content knowledge</td>
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<td>Ethical Practices</td>
<td>content, knowledge, reflective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>content knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing curriculum</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Agency</td>
<td>observation, assessment, monitoring, planning, documenting, evaluating</td>
</tr>
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APPENDIX 8.4: REFERENCES TO PRACTICES ACROSS TEXTS

Appendix Figure 12: References to Practices across texts
Appendix Figure 13: Proportion of top three references to practice - per text
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix Table 2: References to ‘policy-endorsed practices’ across the texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing relationships</td>
</tr>
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<td>Focus on outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation, monitoring and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing routines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning through play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning, documenting and evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity and transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing frameworks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational concepts</td>
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<td>Learning and skill development</td>
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<td>Leadership and management</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Management</td>
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<td>Modelling</td>
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<td>Continuous improvement</td>
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<td>Environmental practices</td>
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<td>Evaluating quality</td>
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<td>Management and accountability</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Protection of Children</td>
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<td>Hygiene practices</td>
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<td>Intentional teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing curriculum</td>
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<td>Promoting Agency</td>
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APPENDIX 9.1: OTHER PROFESSIONAL ROLES

Participants brainstormed the specific roles of ‘other’ professionals in integrated services.

Appendix Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children and families</th>
<th>Psych</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECEC professional</td>
<td>Health professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play group facilitator</td>
<td>Occupational Therapists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy Library</td>
<td>Speech Pathologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leaders</td>
<td>Paediatric fellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen staff</td>
<td>Cleaners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCH</td>
<td>Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>Community leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 9.2: USING SPACE

A component of the focus group discussion explored the different roles within an integrated setting (previously outlined in Appendix Table 3). In the first activity, I used a circle to represent the service and asked participants to plot the roles towards the inside or outside of the circle to represent where the participants positioned them in relation to the setting.

Participants placed ‘children and families’ at the centre of the circle surrounding them with a range of professional roles: ECEC Professionals; Playgroup Facilitators; Maternal and Child Health Nurses; Management; Kitchen Staff; Team Leaders; Toy Library Coordinator; and Administration. Participants described these roles as closest and most familiar to children and families. These roles also operated in the setting on a day-to-day basis.

Appendix Figure 14
On the border of the circle, participants included the board; community leasers; occupational therapists and speech pathologists; psychologists; students; health professionals; and external support services.

For the participants, these represented external services that other professionals deliver at the setting on an intermittent or appointment basis. Participants excluded the paediatric fellow from the circle because the relationship was developing and not fully formed. Participants commented that they would like the other professionals on the border of the circle to be closer to the centre and to their work with children and families however, their involvement is often limited and based on being able to demonstrate the need for these services. They also noted that services do not need to be on-site to be a part of integration.
APPENDIX 9.3: HIERARCHY

An element of the focus groups was to explore participant’s perceptions and experiences of status in integrated settings. To do this I facilitated three ranking activities asking participants to plot the roles identified in the integrated setting onto a hierarchical structure. First, participants undertook this activity from their own perspective, then from their perception of a Maternal and Child Health Nurse’s perspective and finally from their perception of a family’s perspective.

I have included a representation of each of the rankings from these activities below in Appendix Figure 15, Appendix Figure 16, and Appendix Figure 17.
Appendix Figure 17: From Family Perspective

- Play group facilitator
- Toy Library
- Team leaders
- Kitchen staff
- MCH
- Admin
- ECEC professional
- Psych
- Health professional
- OT
- Speech
- Paed fellow
- Community leaders
- Student
- Board
- Cleaners
- Children and families
APPENDIX 10.1: 'POLICY-ENDORSED PRACTICES' RANKING AND FREQUENCY

Appendix Figure 18 show the 'policy-endorsed practices' listed in order of frequency compared to the order that participants ranked them (the order number is included in brackets). A blue bar extending to the right means that the participants ranked the 'policy-endorsed practices' higher than its order drawn from policy analysis. A pink bar extending to the left of the page means that the participants ranked the 'policy-endorsed practices' lower than the policy analysis order. A green mark means that the policy order of frequency and the participant ranking were in the same position in both lists.
### Appendix Figure 18: ‘Policy-endorsed practices’ and participant rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy-endorsed Practice (Participant ranking)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Developing relationships (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. A focus on outcomes for children (12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Valuing diversity and inclusive practices (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Observation, monitoring and assessment (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Managing and implementing routines (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Facilitating learning through play and experiences (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. (Collaborative) Decision-making and ownership (in curriculum) (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Being responsive to children’s interest, needs and learning (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Engaging families (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Community engagement (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Planning, documenting and evaluating (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Supporting continuity and transitions between services (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Implementing frameworks for practice (21)</td>
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<td>14. Embedding educational concepts and practices (16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Facilitating learning and skill development (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Leadership and management (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Generic Education and Care practices (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Supervision (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Critical Reflection (26)</td>
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<td>20. Behaviour management (30)</td>
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<td>21. Risk Management (15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Modelling - approaches or skill development (9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Continuous Improvement and professional development (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Environmentally sustainable practices (34)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Evaluating quality ECCE (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Management and accountability (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Scaffolding (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Protection of Children (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Hygiene practices (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Intentional teaching (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Implementing Best Practice (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Ethical Practices (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Developing or reflecting Philosophy (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Developing Curriculum (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Promoting Agency (28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Ranked higher by participants
- Ranked lower by participants
- Ranked the same by participants
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Author/s:  
Leach-McGill, Daniel

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2018

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