Towards inclusive workforce development

Socio-economic diversity in the Australian early childhood workforce and its implications for practice

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Abstract

This study describes various aspects of socio-economic diversity in the Australian early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce, and considers their implications for educators' practice. Its main hypothesis is that educators' qualifications are likely to be associated with other aspects of social advantage, and that this association may contribute to the relationship between educators' qualifications and quality of practice that underpins ECEC workforce development policy in Australia. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, the study conceptualises social advantage as comprising different levels of cultural, economic and social capital, which influence practice through the mechanism of *habitus*. The study uses existing data from three large-scale surveys to identify indicators that relate to capital and its effects for the Australian ECEC workforce, and describe their relationship with educators' qualifications. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing is used to describe educators' position in Australian society; the National ECEC Workforce Census to describe educators' subjective experience of their work; and the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth to describe educators' school and family backgrounds, and transitions. The results indicate that the effects of cultural capital (especially achievement at school) are associated with educators' qualifications as Bourdieu's theory predicts, as is educators' access to economic capital. The study also identifies various strengths and challenges associated with social advantage for educators with different gualifications, which may have bearing on the quality of their practice. The study concludes with discussion of how these findings might inform support for educators' professional growth, including by informing educators' own collaborative professional reflection. The study aims to guide more inclusive approaches to ECEC workforce development, by looking beyond qualifications to the dynamics of social advantage that complicate ECEC workforce reform.

To my niece, with brightest hopes.

Declaration of authenticity

I, Jennifer Louise Jackson, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Towards inclusive workforce development: Socio-economic diversity in the Australian early childhood workforce and its implications for practice* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signed:

Date: 8 June 2018

Acknowledgement

This study is part of an Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded project, *Early childhood educators as agents of intergenerational educational change*. Two Chief Investigators from this project, Professor Stephen Lamb and Professor Andrea Nolan, were principal and associate supervisors (respectively) for this research.

The aims of the ARC-funded research project, as stated in the funding application, are:

- To illuminate how low-qualified early childhood educators might best navigate the tension between the aspirational vision of educational success for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector set out by the National Quality Framework, and their own experiences of low educational attainment; and
- 2. To widen the lens of policy analysis, from systemic factors (such as qualifications), to more detailed information about educators' backgrounds, identities and contexts.

This study primarily supports the second aim, in relation to socio-economic diversity in the Australian early childhood workforce. It aims to investigate the following questions:

- How can existing large-scale survey data be used to identify indicators of social advantage and its effects for the Australian ECEC workforce?
- How do these indicators vary between groups of educators with different qualifications? Which indicators increase most with higher-level qualifications?
- How can the relationship between practice and social advantage be theorised? What are the potential implications for the quality of educators' practice?

The first aim of the ARC-funded study is being investigated through qualitative case study research, which is occurring concurrently with this doctoral study. The research presented here will add to the quantitative component of the study, and help inform the analysis of the qualitative case study data, through a mixed-methods approach.

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Chapter 1 — Introduction

This study concerns the over 100,000 educators who work in Australia's early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. It uses large-scale survey data to map the characteristics of this large, diverse occupational group, and draws on relevant theory to consider the implications of these characteristics for educators' practice. The study is a new contribution to research in the ECEC field, in that studies that examine the entire Australian ECEC workforce are currently rare. It provides a valuable complement to the many other studies of the Australian ECEC workforce that have focused on particular groups or samples of educators, by enabling the insights from these studies to be situated within a broader picture of the workforce as a whole.

The focus of this study is socio-economic diversity, or different levels of social advantage, within the Australian ECEC workforce. The notion of studying socio-economic diversity within an occupational group may initially appear counter-intuitive. Occupational groups are generally understood as categories from which measures of social advantage (such as socio-economic status) may be constructed, whether from the social status of the occupation, the income it attracts, or the knowledge and skills required to perform it (see Ganzeboom, De Graaf, Treiman, & De Leeuw, 1992). Examining socio-economic diversity *within* an occupation may therefore be expected to reveal little variation.

The Australian ECEC workforce confounds this expectation, because of the relative newness of its identity as a single occupational group. The unitary concept of an "early childhood educator" is a construct of relatively recent policy discourse (Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009, p. 5), and brings together a group of workers with diverse educational, economic and social characteristics. Examining these workers as an occupational group therefore provides rich grounds for discovering a wide spectrum of socio-economic diversity.

The current policy reform agenda for ECEC in Australia has charged all educators with an ambitious task: to improve quality and consistency of ECEC service provision across the sector, and to lift outcomes for all children and families (Council of Australian Governments, 2009). The ECEC workforce is arguably the most critical lever by which this policy goal can be achieved. A key assumption of the policy agenda is that practice can be improved by raising the level of educators' knowledge and skill, especially through the pursuit of higher ECEC qualifications. To this end, the national policy agenda for ECEC has included higher standards for the qualifications required for ECEC work. Further details of these new requirements are provided in Chapter 1 of this study. This aspect of the ECEC reform agenda has strong echoes of past efforts to improve the quality of school education, by raising qualifications for the school teaching workforce (see Hoyle, 2008). Indeed, the reform agenda has involved the ECEC sector positioning itself closer to schools in its mission and purpose, as an important part of the system of lifelong learning. At the same time, the ECEC sector in Australia has a very different history and structure from that of school education, and includes a diverse array of services and programs (Elliott, 2006). This diversity is reflected in the current diversity of the ECEC workforce.

The diversity of the ECEC workforce may be regarded as a potential risk to the goal of consistent quality service provision to which the ECEC reform agenda aspires. There are many dimensions along which this diversity may be framed, but one is of particular interest to this study: the fact that the ECEC workforce (unlike the contemporary school education workforce in Australia) contains educators with vastly different levels of formal education. If formal education—as marked by qualifications—is a predictor of ability to deliver quality ECEC practice, then this aspect of workforce diversity may have profound implications for the likelihood of the reform agenda achieving its aims.

This study, however, does not frame educators' educational and socio-economic diversity as an impediment to the success of the ECEC reforms. Rather, it approaches this diversity as both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge—addressed by the data analysis in this study—is to uncover the deeper layers of diversity that lie behind the qualifications that educators hold, to better understand the personal and historical factors that may influence the relationship between qualifications and quality of practice. This analysis recognises that qualifications are not simply measures of capability, but represent educators' educational, social and economic chances across the life course.

The opportunity is then to use this information to reconsider what it will take to achieve the improvements to practice quality to which the ECEC reform agenda aspires. Describing the diversity within the ECEC workforce in socio-economic terms highlights the need for workforce development strategies to respond to educators' broader position in Australian society, not only the qualifications that they might hold. This reconsideration generates new questions that may be critical to the reform agenda's success—not least the question of how a workforce comprising many educators from backgrounds of relative social disadvantage can best be supported to develop the kinds of practices that will equip the children with whom they work with strong foundations for lifelong learning. It calls for close attention to the relationship between social advantage and practice, as well as constructive, evidence-driven engagement with the class-based discourses that have hitherto been sidelined in the ECEC policy agenda in Australia.

This thesis begins by introducing the elements of the ECEC context in Australia that are most relevant to this study, including the landscape of ECEC service provision, and recent policy reforms that directly address the ECEC workforce and its development. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework for the study, which is linked back to the empirical field in Chapter 3, to create a conceptual model for understanding the relationship between social advantage and ECEC practice. Chapter 4 sets out the methodological framework for the study, describing the process and through which social advantage in the Australian ECEC workforce will be examined.

Chapters 4 to 6 use data from three large-scale surveys to explore various aspects of social advantage in the Australian ECEC workforce. The data analysis is organised according to the three pillars of Australia's national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF): *Belonging, Being and Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009), which are as relevant to the learning and development of educators as they are to the development of children. Understanding who educators are (being), their subjective experience (belonging), and their own professional journeys (becoming) is essential for creating learning and development opportunities that will help all educators to achieve the highest possible levels of professionalism and practice.

Following the data analysis, Chapter 7 discusses implications of the findings for educators' practice and professional growth, drawing on the theoretical framework established in Chapter 3. The goal of this discussion is to guide the design of differentiated approaches to workforce development, which respond to different levels of social advantage among educators in inclusive, strengths-based ways. Chapter 8 turns to what educators themselves might gain from this study, in generating new perspectives to inform their collaborative critical reflection. The concluding chapter summarises how recognition of socio-economic diversity within the ECEC workforce might guide future research and policy directions for ECEC workforce development, to make the most of what every educator has to offer.

Definitions

Research in the ECEC sector frequently encounters definitional challenges. The types of ECEC services encompassed within the sector vary widely across countries, and sometimes even within them—as is the case in the ECEC sector in Australia. With a wide array of services, funding models, staff, industrial arrangements, governance structures and objectives, the Australian ECEC sector has been variously described as "a ragged

armada" (Finn, 2009, p. 6), a "maze" (Elliott, 2004, p. 3), "a complex and unfocused system" (Press, 2007, p. 186), or a "shambles" (see Meagher, 2007, p. 137). It is therefore important to commence by providing some broad definitions for navigating this "maze", and the kinds of services that operate within it.

The term "early childhood education and care" (ECEC) has been adopted for the sector in this study, to reflect the inseparability of fostering young children's learning, and providing physical and emotional care. This term is widely used in international research, sometimes inverted to ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) to give greater emphasis to care. It responds to a growing recognition that "children's social, emotional and cognitive growth go hand-in-hand" (Cahir, 2011, p. 12), and that support for children's learning and development are of equal importance in all ECEC settings (Tayler, Ishimine, Cloney, Cleveland, & Thorpe, 2013). All workers in ECEC services are therefore understood to be providing both care and education simultaneously.

In Australia, as elsewhere, ECEC provision may occur in a wide range of settings. This study concerns workers in services listed on the Australian National Register of ECEC services, which are required to comply with government regulations. At 13 August 2017, the National Register listed 15,563 ECEC services within the scope of this research (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2017a). These services may be divided into four main types, depending on the nature of service they provide, and their funding arrangements:

- 1. Preschool services, also known as kindergarten services in some Australian states, are funded by Australian governments (under a national agreement) to deliver 15 hours of preschool education to children in the year before school (four- to five-year-olds). Many also offer shorter-length programs to three-year-old children. The 15 hours are typically offered in three- to five-hour sessions of play-based learning programs, with the configuration of sessions across the week varying depending on community needs. While preschools often operate as a stand-alone program, they are increasingly offered within long day care services, leading to blurring of definitions between these service types. Preschools are the only ECEC services to receive direct funding, from state governments, although this only covers the hours of operation funded under the national agreement. Parent contributions fund the costs associated with additional hours (for example, if the program is embedded in long day care), or the costs involved in providing programs for younger children.
- 2. Long day care services offer full-day programs, to children from birth up to and including preschool age. They are typically larger than preschools, with multiple

rooms offering programs for children of different age groups (multi-age grouping also occurs in some services). Long day care services do not receive direct government funding, but families may access government subsidies for their child to attend. As noted above, many long day care services offer an integrated preschool program, which occurs in the four-year-old room and receives direct government funding.

- 3. Family day care services are delivered in educators' homes, usually with a single educator and a group of up to seven children up to age twelve (including the educator's own children). Operating hours vary widely depending on families' needs, with some services offering weekend or overnight care. Services typically have a coordinating office which manages administration and enrolments for all affiliated educators. Like long day care, family day care services receive government funding via subsidies to families. Some educators may take children to sessional preschool programs during the day, but this is not integrated into the family day care service.
- 4. School age care services are also known as outside school hours care (OSHC), before- and after-school care, or vacation care. Their hours are typically short and variable, with some services offering an afternoon program only, which begins after the end of the school day, and others offering both morning (before school) and afternoon care, as well as longer days during school holidays. School age care services typically offer multi-age programs in a single facility, often using school-based facilities such as gymnasiums or general purpose rooms. Although programs are usually offered on school grounds, school age care is often contracted by schools to an external provider, with little involvement from the school in their operation.¹

Quantifying the number of each of these services that currently operate across Australia is complicated by the fact that many ECEC services may be classified as more than one type—especially when preschool programs are located in long day care. The National Register distinguishes only between "centre-based" services (preschool, long day care and school age care) and "family day care". At 13 August 2017, there were 14,693 centre-based ECEC services, and 870 family day care services (ACECQA, 2017a).

Other types of ECEC services exist in Australia, including nannying, short-term occasional care, and multi-functional Aboriginal children's services (MACS). These services are not currently required to comply with the same government regulatory framework as the four types listed above, and are therefore not currently listed on the National Register. For this reason, they are out-of-scope for this study, and the term

¹ These definitions are based on knowledge acquired during the author's experience as a Lead Assessor of ECEC services in the state of Victoria (2012–2013).

"ECEC services" hereafter is used to refer only to the four types of services listed above. It is nevertheless recognised that many of the issues examined in the study for the Australian ECEC workforce are also applicable in other, non-regulated ECEC contexts.

Definitional issues also exist in naming the workers who staff ECEC services. Royer and Moreau (2016, p. 136) list just a few of the many possibilities used in international research literature, "educators, caregivers, interveners, preschool teachers, early childhood teachers, family child care providers, and day care teachers", noting that this allows for "much ambiguity" in ECEC workforce research. For this study, a single term is adopted, "educators", which is defined in Australia's national Early Years Learning Framework as "early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). This includes all paid contact staff in all of the service types listed above, irrespective of their role, qualifications or employment arrangements. The adoption of a single inclusive term is deliberate, as will be elaborated later in the study, to enable examination of the diversity that it contains.

The ECEC sector in Australia

The socio-economic diversity within the Australian ECEC workforce that is the subject of this study is the product of the diverse history of services within the Australian ECEC sector. Detailed accounts of this history are provided by other authors, notably Brennan (1994), and more recently Hunkin (2016a). Drawing on these accounts, as well as other related literature, this section summarises aspects of the sector's history that have had particular influence on the kinds of people who work in Australian ECEC services.

Philanthropic origins

The ECEC sector in Australia primarily originated from philanthropic concerns. Hunkin (2016a) describes how "mother-care" has dominated Australian social discourse as the preferred model of educating and caring for young children since the early days of colonisation, with "other-care" positioned as an undesirable alternative to be pursued only when mothering was inadequate or unavailable (p. 89). Brennan (1994) explains that the first preschool services in Australia therefore had a "child-saving" mission, based on a "belief that the conditions of working class family life could be improved through voluntary, philanthropic activity" (p. 7). Only in recent decades has ECEC been re-cast as a desirable alternative to caring for young children in the home for all families. This is based on research about the potential benefits of ECEC participation, as well as the increasingly dominant discourse about the economic and social benefits of female labour force participation, including the mothers of young children (Hunkin, 2016a).

This shifting dynamic has had consequences for who uses ECEC services in Australia, who provides them, and the relationship between the two. In the early days of ECEC provision, the remedial purpose of ECEC services necessitated provision by educators whose skills in educating and caring for young children were considered superior to the disadvantaged families whom their philanthropic efforts were intended to support. While the purpose of early preschools varied across Australian states, in differing emphasis on education and health, there was a shared intent that ECEC services primarily existed as a form of welfare to the economically disadvantaged (Hunkin, 2016a).

Those providing these early preschool services were predominantly women drawn from Australia's middle class (Brennan, 1994). In pragmatic terms, they were best able to afford the fees associated with private training in ECEC practice, and to afford a lifestyle in which philanthropic activity for little or no financial reward could be accommodated (Hunkin, 2016a). They also best conformed to the ideal of the well-bred, self-sacrificing, motherly woman upheld internationally at the time as the epitome of the preschool teacher (Dombkowski, 2002). This arguably placed them in a position of both moral and social superiority over the disadvantaged families at whom their services were aimed.

In the early philanthropic days of ECEC provision, concerns about quality of provision, or competence of these educators, were mainly the domain of the volunteer organisations that coordinated provision in the sector. These organisations served as champions of ECEC pedagogy, and established private training colleges to ensure that the educators in charge of preschool programs were skilled in their implementation (Whitehead, 2008). This aligned with the focus on improved outcomes for disadvantaged children as the dominant goal of the preschool movement.

By the 1940s, middle-class Australian families had begun to recognise the benefits of preschool for their own children (Hunkin, 2016a). Fee-paying preschools began to appear in middle-class communities, and by the 1950s, most children attending preschools were middle-class (Brennan, 1994). The relationship between educators and families therefore shifted, to one of social equivalence or even inferiority on the part of the educator; and from a charitable endeavour for those in need, to a middle-class strategy for the consolidation and increase of social and educational advantage.

Economistic growth

Meanwhile, increasing female labour force participation was giving rise to a different imperative for the provision of ECEC services. Day nurseries were established in the late 19th century to care for the children of mothers in the workforce. Like preschools, day

nurseries were charitable undertakings, targeted at mothers who were "obliged" to work by their economic circumstances (Brennan, 1994, p. 7). A crucial point of difference was that day nurseries understood their mission as the provision of care rather than education; a difference that the preschool movement accentuated more prominently over time, in a bid to preserve the unique kindergarten identity (Hunkin, 2016a).

As female labour force participation increased further, more day care options became necessary to meet growing demand. The first family day care services were established by philanthropic interests in the early 1970s, to "link up those women who wanted to go out to work and who needed child care with those who wanted to stay at home and who needed extra income" (Brennan, 1994, p. 132). This reflected a new conceptualisation of the role of an ECEC service; from an *augmentation* of what could be provided by the mother in the home, to a more-or-less direct *substitution*.

This new conceptualisation posed difficulties in defining how the role of the family day carers themselves should be understood. A 1974 report on a pilot family day care scheme by the national Social Welfare Commission (SWC) grappled with the issue of whether the woman taking in the child should be considered a worker, concluding that "it would be more in keeping with the spirit of family day care for the caregivers to be regarded as housewives carrying out additional duties, rather than as workers" (SWC 1974, p. 43, as cited in Brennan, 1994, p. 134). Brennan (1994) adds that the views of many carers endorsed this conclusion, often reflecting a level of disdain for women who chose work over full-time motherhood. Although family day carers may not have had the same social advantages as the early preschool and day nursery proponents, they retained a kind of moral superiority by embodying maternal femininity—an ideal that has dominated Australian social discourse for much of the 20th century (Hunkin, 2016a).

In the latter part of the 20th century, maternal labour force participation became more common and less stigmatised, as a matter of choice rather than necessity (Manne, 2005). The surge in demand for child care services led the market to extend beyond what philanthropy could provide, and the repositioning of child care use as a personal choice also created a new "user-pays" argument for fee-based care. Commercial² providers were quick to take advantage of the opportunities to profit from a rapidly-expanding market, either to meet demand for access that the not-for-profit sector could not address (Elliott, 2004), or to offer higher-quality services for those with the ability to pay for them.

² Like Brennan (1994), this study will adopt the term "commercial" (p. 11) rather than "private" for profit-making ECEC providers, to distinguish them from private ECEC providers that operate services on a cost-recovery basis; for example, private employers who deliver ECEC services to support workforce participation for their employees (Seefeldt, 1990; Kilderry, 2006).

Commercial ECEC provision in Australia has experienced ebbs and flows over time. It peaked through the mid-2000s, notably through the rapid expansion of a single provider, ABC Learning, which operated over 1,000 services at its peak (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 16). When over-expansion led to the company's collapse in 2008, the purchase of many ABC services by not-for-profit consortium Goodstart saw a substantial rebalancing of provision towards the not-for-profit sector (DEEWR, 2010a). Almost a decade later, however, commercial provision is again on the rise. By 2014, approximately half of all ECEC services were delivered by for-profit services, including around two-thirds in long day care (Productivity Commission, 2014, p. 81).

The commercialisation of the ECEC market changed the position of ECEC workers once again. As economistic discourse came to dominate Australian public policy (see Pusey, 1991), the use of ECEC services also came to be viewed in economic terms: including by providers, who came to include an increasing proportion of economic profiteers; and by parents, for whom the choice whether to use ECEC often pivots on a trade-off between the wage a mother can earn in the workforce, and the cost of providing reliable care for the child. The Productivity Commission's (2011) "Is it worth working?" calculator is an exemplar of this economic factors that also affect families' decisions to access ECEC services, such as happiness for both the mother and the child (see Manne, 2005).

In an economistic approach, the educator is positioned as a human resource whose labour costs must be factored into the economic equation. For providers, the profit motive dictates that the labour of educators must be purchased at the lowest possible cost to deliver a service attractive to potential clients (families). Families also have an interest in lowest-possible labour costs, to maximise the financial advantage gained from parental labour force participation, relative to the costs of care. Educators themselves can also be understood as rational economic actors, who may be expected to maximise the financial return they can gain for their skills (which may be best achieved by working for families and providers most able to pay). For all the actors in this economistic scenario, decision-making is driven by individual advantage—a stark inversion of the philanthropic values on which ECEC provision was initially built.

As the imperative for ECEC provision shifted from remediating child outcomes to enabling parental workforce participation, concerns about the quality of ECEC provision began to increase. In particular, the growth of commercial ECEC services has generated widespread concern about services prioritising profit margins ahead of program quality (for example: Goodfellow, 2005; Kilderry, 2006; Meagher & Cortis, 2009; Pocock & Hill,

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2007; Woodrow, 2008). Some commentators recognise that commercial ECEC services cannot be characterised homogeneously (Duhn, 2010; Kilderry, 2006); and as the most rapidly-growing market segment, commercial ECEC provision perhaps spans the widest quality range. While the profit motive provides an obvious conflict-of-interest, the rapid expansion of ECEC services—irrespective of provider—might itself be seen as sufficient grounds for concern that quality would become more variable.

A renewed focus on outcomes for children

Economistic considerations have also been applied to the role of ECEC services in achieving beneficial outcomes for children, especially in equipping them for future productivity in the workforce. This type of economistic discourse is associated with the human capital policy agenda (Hunkin, 2016a), fuelled by the research of economist James Heckman that showed strong economic returns on investment in the provision of quality early learning (Heckman, 2000). The return-on-investment argument has been effective in attracting greater government investment in ECEC (Access Economics, 2009), reinforced by influential publications from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)³. The intense policy focus on ECEC across Australia mirrors similar reforms in other developed countries around the world (OECD, 2006).

The surge in government interest in ECEC as a worthwhile sphere of investment resulted in the first of two major National Partnership Agreements between Australia's federal and state and territory governments. This involved a commitment to providing 15 hours of state-funded preschool education for all children in the year before school (COAG, 2008), which has since been extended repeatedly beyond its anticipated four-year term (COAG, 2012, 2014, 2015; Australian Government, 2017a). The policy logic behind this agreement echoes the well-established logic behind universal government-funded access to primary and secondary school—that universal provision of educational services is a worthwhile public good—thereby strengthening the conceptual link between ECEC services and schools. It has resulted in the expansion of government-funded preschool service provision; often within long day care services, as noted above.

Provision of ECEC services is only beneficial if quality can be assured. For the last two decades, the notion of quality has therefore been dominant in Australian ECEC policy discourse (Hunkin, 2016b). While acknowledging that quality is a contested construct (Moss & Pence, 1994; Fenech, 2011; Hunkin, 2016b), "quality" is understood in this study as the kind of ECEC practice that supports improved outcomes for children and families.

³ Notably *Starting Strong II* (OECD, 2006), which emerged as Australian governments' interest in ECEC was approaching peak levels in the mid-to-late 2000s.

The concept of quality in ECEC first arose in the 1960s, when increasing female labour force participation generated the need to distinguish beneficial ECEC practice from ECEC that might be harmful to children, relative to mother-care (Hunkin, 2016a). Since then, the diversification of ECEC provision—along with a growing evidence base about the kinds of ECEC provision that best supports child outcomes—has placed quality front-and-centre as a central concern for the Australian ECEC sector (Hunkin, 2016b).

As with any form of education or care, the quality of ECEC provision depends heavily upon the skill and effort of those at the front line of service delivery. While past ECEC reforms in Australia have focused on structural elements of quality (such as physical infrastructure or routines), the National Quality Agenda has shifted the focus to "process quality", or "the practice of early childhood educators and the everyday experience of children in early education settings" (Torii, Fox, & Cloney, 2017, p. 1). Educators are therefore positioned as pivotal actors in determining the level of quality that Australian ECEC services can provide. If policy efforts are to improve the quality of ECEC services, it follows that the ECEC workforce must also be "improved" (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [VDEECD], 2009a, p. 1).

International ECEC research, notably the influential Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study from the UK, provided policy-makers with an answer to the thorny question of how such improvement might be achieved. The EPPE study found that the presence of educators with higher-level qualifications, especially "trained teachers", is associated with the delivery of higher-quality ECEC programs (Sylva et al., 2004, p. 56, as cited in Owen & Haynes, 2008, p. 15). Although the direction of causality in this relationship was not clearly established by the research, the finding that higher-level qualifications are associated with higher levels of skill suggests an appealing interpretation that qualifications are an effective mechanism for workforce improvement. Workforce reform through qualifications is therefore a central pillar of the National Quality Agenda, which aims "for workers to become more skilled practitioners, and to demonstrate this skill through acquiring specific credentials" (Andrew, 2015a, p. 306).

The second National Partnership Agreement, signed in 2009, introduced a new National Quality Agenda for ECEC services, which aimed to support "nationally consistent and high quality experiences, programs and care across Australia" (COAG, 2009, p. 4). The National Quality Agenda comprises a suite of new policy and regulatory tools, replacing the former state-based policy and regulatory framework for preschool programs, and the nationally-administered accreditation and monitoring system for child care. These tools are described below, focusing on their consequences for the ECEC workforce.

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Belonging, Being and Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009)

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is Australia's first-ever national curriculum framework for ECEC services (DEEWR, 2009). It sets out five outcomes that all ECEC services must strive to achieve for all children:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators (DEEWR, 2009, p. 8).

A separate national framework for school age care (FSAC), *My Time, Our Place*, was introduced in 2011, which sets out the same five outcomes for children, with modified content appropriate to older age groups (DEEWR, 2011a). Some state governments have also introduced complementary frameworks aligned with these outcomes (for example, VDEECD, 2009b and South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, 2008). All ECEC services are now required to deliver a learning and development program for children based on the EYLF, FSAC or complementary state/territory curriculum framework.

The EYLF is important for this study firstly in its coining of the term "educators", to encompass the entire ECEC workforce (see DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). As has occurred elsewhere in the OECD (for example, Rockel, 2009), this term has been used extensively throughout the subsequent policy discourse, and has significant ramifications for how the diverse ECEC workforce is being constituted through policy as a unified sector or profession. The EYLF is also important to this study in setting out a common set of principles and practices to guide all early childhood educators in their work. Figure 1.1 reproduces the key diagram from the EYLF, which shows how the five outcomes for children are supported by practices and principles for educators, to form a new conceptual framework for contemporary ECEC practice.



Figure 1.1 – Elements of the Early Years Learning Framework (reproduced)

Source: DEEWR, 2009, p. 10.

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)

The Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations) are a common set of regulations for ECEC services, adopted in 2011 by all state and territory governments across Australia (National Regulations 2011). The regulations require government-approved ECEC services to deliver a program based on an approved learning framework such as the EYLF, as described above. They also set out more specific requirements regarding both the structural and procedural elements of ECEC practice, which have been phased into ECEC services over the 2012–2015 period.

For this study, the most relevant of the new regulations are those relating to the ECEC workforce. The National Regulations set out a new minimum qualification for working directly with children, the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (previously

known as Certificate III in Children's Services). The Certificate III in ECEC is a low-level⁴ credential delivered by the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, which typically takes around six months to complete (Centre for Research on Education Systems [CRES], 2011). All educators in ECEC services must hold, or be "actively working towards" (National Regulations 2011, §1) this qualification by January 2014. The National Regulations also set out designated quotas for the proportion of educators holding a 1.5-year VET Diploma in ECEC (previously known as Diploma in Children's Services), which vary depending on the service type and age of children attending.

For preschool and long day care services, the regulations additionally require that at least one degree-qualified staff member is employed. ECEC teaching degrees typically take three years of full-time study, although some may take longer if integrated with primary teaching courses, or less time if credit is given for a previous diploma-level qualification (CRES, 2011). Prior to the new regulations, degree-level qualifications were only required for the delivery of preschool programs, according to local regulations in some Australian states and territories.

A further new regulation in relation to the ECEC workforce is the requirement that all approved ECEC services designate an "educational leader" to guide the learning and development program of the service. This regulation is noteworthy for this study, as another signal of changing policy expectations for the ECEC workforce. The National Regulations do not specify criteria for the appointment of the educational leader, except that they are "suitably qualified and experienced" (National Regulations 2011, §118); and neither do they set out the way in which this leadership is to be enacted.

Although many educators are still working towards their qualification, the new requirements for staff qualifications have now largely been implemented in preschool and long day care services (O'Connell, Fox, Hinz, & Cole, 2016)—which constitute the largest segment of the ECEC workforce. In other parts of the workforce, progress towards implementation is occurring more slowly. In school age care, for example, states and territories have implemented different interim qualification requirements, from upholding the Certificate III requirements for all educators (VDET, 2017a), through to adjusting the requirements to apply to at least 50 per cent of educators in a service (Northern Territory Government, 2016). As implementation of the regulations proceeds,

⁴ Qualification levels are described in this study based on their position in the AQF, which sets out a hierarchy of qualifications based on "relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement" (AQF n.d., n.p.). As noted elsewhere, the implication that qualifications positioned higher on the AQF are of higher value is contested.

it is timely to consider what else may be necessary for the workforce development reforms to achieve their aims.

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care (2011)

The National Quality Standard (NQS) is a new standard for all ECEC services, embedded within the National Regulations (see above). It set out 18 standards for ECEC practice, comprising 58 elements and organised into seven quality areas, which are seen as constituting quality in contemporary Australian ECEC settings (see DEEWR, 2010)⁵. All ECEC services listed on the National Register must undergo an assessment and rating process, in which their practice is assessed by an authorised officer against the 18 standards, and a quality rating is awarded to the service: Working Towards NQS, Meeting NQS, or Exceeding NQS. Two other possible ratings—Excellent, or Significant Improvement Required—may be applied under special conditions (ACECQA, 2014).

The National Quality Standard is the first quality standard to apply to all Australian long day care, preschool, family day care and school age care services, which had previously been regulated under separate national or state-level systems. As well as providing consistent minimum standards for all ECEC services (Boyd, 2012), the National Quality Standard is also seen as "raising the bar" compared to the previous regulatory regime (ACECQA, 2013, n.p.). A notable feature of the National Quality Standard compared to previous standards is its emphasis on pedagogical practice and relationships with children, over structural elements such as staff:child ratios and health and safety regimes, which have been emphasised in the past (see Tayler et al., 2013). This means the assessment of services against the standard has shifted from a relatively simple, check-box approach, to complex observation of educators' practice (see Jackson, 2015).

Related ECEC workforce strategies

The National Quality Agenda has been supported by various policy artefacts targeted directly at the ECEC workforce. Significant among these for this study are the national *Early Years Workforce Strategy* (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood [SCSEEC], 2012), and the Victorian Government's *Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce: Working to give Victoria's children the best start in life* (VDEECD, 2009a), which was the first state-level ECEC workforce strategy of its kind. These documents are referenced where appropriate throughout this study, as they have been

⁵ From February 2018, the number of standards was reduced from 18 to 15, and the number of elements from 58 to 40. Text was also clarified throughout the standard (ACECQA, 2017b).

instrumental in shaping and extending the policy discourse of ECEC workforce development.

Policy initiatives within these strategies include various scholarship schemes to assist educators to pursue higher qualifications (for example, Victorian Department of Education and Training [VDET], 2016a). Some jurisdictions have also offered "grandfathering" (for example, VDET, 2013, p. 1) or recognition schemes (for example, ACECQA, n.d.) which recognise experienced educators' skill as sufficient to meet regulatory requirements, without the need for them to gain a full qualification. In addition to qualifications, various Australian jurisdictions have invested heavily in professional learning for educators that does not necessarily lead to a qualification, but advances the National Quality Agenda's goal of improvements to quality of practice. A major example is the Long Day Care Professional Development Programme (LDCPDP), a \$200 million government investment in "upskilling educators" in long day care services (Australian Department of Education and Training [DET], 2017, n.p.).

The impact of this increase in government intervention on the ECEC workforce has been immense. Even educators not directly affected by new qualifications requirements have still been confronted by new ways of thinking, talking about, and documenting their practice, and new expectations for the "professionalism" with which they approach their work (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 5). Despite the enormity of this impact, major ECEC practitioner advocacy groups have welcomed the reforms, with their promise of improved recognition for the ECEC sector and those who work within it (Australian Childcare Alliance, 2017; Cahir, 2010; Early Learning Association Australia, 2014; United Voice, 2014).

Improving quality through workforce development

This brief historical account of the Australian ECEC sector shows how recent reforms have placed educators in the spotlight, and positioned qualifications as a central mechanism for achieving desired improvements in the quality of their practice. This study recognises that higher-level qualifications and higher-quality practice have a strong conceptual link that has been empirically reinforced by several large-scale studies—see Whitebook (2003) and Warren and Haisken-DeNew (2013) for summaries of this research—including the recent Effective Early Educational Experiences for Kids (E4 Kids) study in Australia (Tayler et al., 2013). It also recognises that a clear majority of educators themselves report improvements in their practice as a result of undertaking higher qualifications, according to a major survey by one ECEC union (United Voice, 2014). Further, it recognises that the pursuit of higher qualifications as a workforce development strategy has potential flow-on benefits in raising the status of the ECEC

profession, and garnering greater public recognition for the importance and complexity of ECEC work.

Educators' qualifications are also an attractive focus for policy due to their measurability. At the time the National Quality Agenda came into force, information about quality in the Australian ECEC sector was extremely limited. The national system for ECEC quality assessments did not differentiate effectively between services, beyond compliance with minimum standards (VDEECD, personal communication, 2012), and data on children's learning and development outcomes is not collected at the service level. The new assessment and rating process under the National Quality Agenda has provided an improved measure of quality, although this is not reliably correlated with more stringent measures of service quality used in academic research (CRES, 2013). In the absence of other quality measures, educators' qualifications provide a plausible proxy, which can be used to provide baseline and progress indicators for ECEC quality reforms.

At the same time, this study is motivated by a desire to look more deeply at the factors that influence educators' practice, beyond qualifications alone. There are several reasons to suspect that qualifications themselves will not be sufficient to achieve the increase in practice quality to which the ECEC workforce reforms aspire. These reasons also suggest that the benefits of the current emphasis on qualifications—both in terms of increases in practice quality, and in professional status—may accrue unevenly to different educators in the ECEC workforce, depending on their ability to access them.

Further research is therefore warranted, both in considering limitations in the policy logic that associates higher-level qualifications with higher quality; and in considering the vulnerability of different segments of the ECEC workforce, who may be disadvantaged as a result of the current ECEC workforce reforms. Without this research, a dual risk arises: that the policy agenda will founder due to unforeseen obstacles to its implementation; or that policy will result in unintended adverse consequences for some educators, which could have been mitigated with greater critical insight into its effects.

Three key limitations in the qualifications-to-quality policy logic are set out below:

1. Uncertainty in the relationship between qualifications and quality

The first reason to question the efficacy of qualifications in developing the ECEC workforce is that the link between qualifications and quality of practice has not held constant in all empirical research. In contrast to the EPPE and E4 Kids studies noted above, Early and colleagues' (2007) meta-analysis of numerous studies on the effects of qualifications found "largely null or contradictory associations" between teaching

qualifications and quality of ECEC practice (p. 558). The authors emphasise that this does not mean that the importance of qualifications for quality practice should be discounted, but that further research is needed to better understand complexities in the relationship. Examples of such complexities identified by Early and her co-authors (2007) include the changing content of ECEC preparation courses; a lack of attention to educators' capacity to build effective relationships with children; and variations in educators' ability to apply what they learn in their studies in day-to-day practice.

Kelley and Camilli's (2007) meta-analysis of relevant United States research in the same year drew similarly ambiguous conclusions. They found that the effects on quality outcomes from teachers having a bachelor's degree were statistically significant, but relatively small (p. 1). They add that the research supporting this effect is "correlational in nature", meaning that "it is possible that any number of factors, aside from having a bachelor's degree, cause this effect" (p. 2). As "studies of teacher qualifications inherently involve comparisons of non-equivalent groups", they argue that controlled trials are necessary before the effect of teaching qualifications can be clearly established (p. 33). In other words, it is possible that the effectiveness of qualifications in improving practice may depend upon other characteristics of those who attain them.

Neither was it clear to Kelley and Camilli (2007) which specific skills were gained in the qualification that caused the effect on outcomes; and if these skills were to be identified, it was not clear "whether they can be transmitted to teachers with or without a bachelor's degree" (p. 32). The empirical evidence for a relationship between qualifications and practice quality is strongest for educators with "at least three years' tertiary study in specialist early childhood studies" (Tayler, 2016, p. 29). However, it remains unclear whether shorter periods of study might achieve a similar result (Kelley & Camilli, 2007).

A recent Australian-led systematic review of international research on the relationship between qualifications and ECEC practice quality agreed that current literature does not provide sufficient information to determine the "marginal change of ECEC quality based on a unit change in [educator] qualification" (Manning, Garvis, Fleming, Wong, & Campbell, 2017, p. 59.) While strongly supporting the association between higher qualifications and quality of practice, it cautioned that such a relationship is correlational rather than causal, and "a myriad of factors outside of the collected data may affect the direction and magnitude of the observed results" (p. 60). "Potential moderators" such as socio-economic status are also seldom specified in such studies, despite their possible confounding effect on the results (p. 45). Despite constituting a large proportion of the ECEC workforce in Australia and internationally, little research has directly addressed the capability of educators with qualifications below degree level (Van Laere, Peeters & Vandenbroeck, 2012; Curby, Boyer, Edwards & Chavez, 2012). Warren and Haisken-Denew's (2013) Australian study is a rare exception, in examining literacy and numeracy outcomes for children in programs led by educators at all possible qualification levels (degree, diploma and certificate). The researchers found that, after controlling for children's backgrounds, Australian children attending preschool programs led by degree-qualified teachers achieved significantly better outcomes in reading, spelling and numeracy than those in programs led by educators with certificates; but the differences in children's outcomes (Warren & Haisken-Denew, 2013). This suggests some uncertainty about the level of qualification necessary for improvements to practice quality to be achieved.

A further gap in the research concerns the effects of educators' qualifications in practice with children in younger age groups. Most ECEC services employ their degree-qualified educator in the "preschool room" (O'Connell et al., 2016, p. 17), typically with four- and five-year-old children. As calls have emerged for more highly-qualified educators to be engaged in work with younger children (for example, Stonehouse & Phillips, 2016; Cheeseman, Sumsion & Press, 2015), questions have arisen about the effects of higher qualifications in infant and toddler rooms. The evidence base regarding educator qualifications with younger age groups is especially limited and inconsistent, making it difficult to determine exactly what kind of qualification Educators working with infant and toddler age groups should hold (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2014).

If differences in the quality of educators' practice may result from other characteristics besides their qualifications, then the investment in raising qualifications is unlikely to improve quality unless these other characteristics are understood and explicitly addressed as well. There is therefore a clear need to explore other characteristics of the workforce that lie behind the differences in their qualifications. There is also a need to problematise the assumption that a higher-level qualification is a marker of higher-quality practice, at least in comparisons between diploma- and degree-qualified educators in Australia. Considering the characteristics of educators at each qualification level, and their implications for practice, can assist with both of these research imperatives.

2. Limitations in the capacity of the higher education and training sector

The second reason to question the efficacy of qualifications is the variability in the quality of courses leading to ECEC qualifications in Australia. The international enthusiasm for

policies to increase educators' qualifications typically assumes equal effectiveness, regardless of the quality of the course (Early et al., 2008). As noted above, most educators (74 per cent) reported that their qualification had benefited their practice in a major recent union survey (United Voice, 2014, p. 7); but this still left a sizeable minority who did not. The task with which the Australian higher education and training sector has been charged—to lift the quality of practice for the ECEC workforce at all levels—is extremely challenging, and vulnerable to several weaknesses within this sector.

The general quality of courses leading to an ECEC qualification continues to be a source of concern (Irvine, Thorpe, McDonald, Lunn, & Sumsion, 2016; Andrew, 2015a). Concerns about course quality are most prevalent in Australia's VET sector, which is a mixed market of government-funded and private training providers responsible for delivery of ECEC certificates and diplomas. A major 2011 study in the state of Victoria found that ECEC educator satisfaction with their courses—while high overall—declined from degree, to diploma, to certificate level (CRES, 2011, p. 112). The rapid recent growth in ECEC courses has compounded doubts about the ability of VET providers to maintain appropriate standards of delivery, especially for certificate-level courses (Bretherton, 2011; Andrew, 2015a). When the National Quality Agenda commenced, the Productivity Commission (2011) commented that Australia's substantial investment in ECEC VET courses could be "wasted" if concerns about their quality are not addressed (p. xxii).

CRES's (2011) report identified the aspects of ECEC courses that contribute most to quality outcomes—including quality teaching, depth and breadth of content, and rigorous assessment. The study confirmed that there are high levels of variability in educator perceptions of these characteristics across VET providers (CRES, 2011). This variability is also reflected in employers' views of graduates from ECEC courses, in that "dodgy operators" (Irvine et al., 2016, p. 12) in the VET sector are impacting on the quality of workforce preparation, especially at certificate level.

Alongside general concerns about quality, the growing recognition that all educators are engaged in complex practice has lifted expectations for what ECEC professional preparation should entail. Contemporary understandings of ECEC practice call for an educator who is "a critical thinker and researcher, who works as a co-constructor of meaning, identity and values, and who values participation, diversity and dialogue: in short, a democratic and reflective professional" (Moss, 2008, p. 124–125). In contrast, VET's role as "an industrial trainer" in the Australian labour market (Keating, 2006, p. 70), and consequent focus on competency-based training (Wheelahan, 2007), has arguably led to lower-value, technically-oriented curriculum in many VET courses.

If all education and care work requires reflective capacity to connect skills, experience and theory (Cameron & Boddy, 2006), then access to such skills cannot be restricted to students in university-based courses alone (see Wheelahan, 2007). Other researchers have argued against the "de-professionalising constraints" of a rigid focus on technical skills in ECEC preparation courses (Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd, 2010, p. 89). Moss (2008) vividly contrasts the reflective ECEC practitioner described above with the "army of childcare technicians" that may be produced by shallow adherence to technical competencies in pre-service and in-service training (p. 122).

The challenges of quality ECEC course provision are further compounded by the diversity of students, especially in VET. Meeting individual learning needs is another feature of ECEC courses identified by CRES (2011) as supporting quality outcomes, but even a high-quality VET program may struggle to meet the needs of the diverse student population that VET courses attract. ECEC VET courses have less formal entry requirements than university-based courses (CRES, 2011), which means that they accommodate students with varying levels of proficiency in formal study.

A final challenge for the quality of ECEC courses is the funding environment. Funding arrangements for higher education and training in Australia are highly complex and will not be described in detail here; except to note a general trend in recent decades towards decreased public funding, and cost-shifting from government to students and institutions (Noonan, 2016; Universities Australia, 2017). The consequences of decreased funding for ECEC courses have been somewhat mitigated for educators by targeted scholarship programs (for example, VDET, 2016a). However, the overall funding environment raises doubts about the sustainability of positioning the higher education and training sector as a provider of professional development for the predominantly low-paid ECEC workforce.

3. Potential adverse effects of ECEC qualifications reforms

A further reason to question the current emphasis on formal qualifications in ECEC reform is the potential for such an emphasis to have adverse effects. The widespread support for increased qualifications as a means of improving ECEC quality means that potential adverse effects of this aspect of the reform agenda have been given little attention in policy and research. When concerns with ECEC workforce reform have been raised, it is usually from the point-of-view that "this process has not yet succeeded, rather than it being flawed conceptually" (Andrew, 2015a, p. 307).

Andrew (2015a) goes on to caution that "questioning a well-established truth claim within the field raises issues about the trustworthiness of the research" (p. 309a). It is not the intention of this study to question the worthiness of efforts to increase qualifications for the Australian ECEC workforce, or to downplay the considerable benefits of doing so. Rather, this study recognises that all policy is an experiment (Banks, 2009), and that "policies are always incomplete in so far as they relate to or map onto the 'wild profusion' of local practice" (Ball, 1994, p. 10). Examining potential adverse effects is part of the evolution of policy that inevitably occurs in its implementation, with the second phase of a reform agenda typically involving correction of problems arising in its initial phase (see Odden, 1991). It is therefore timely to consider which effects of the ECEC workforce reforms that may benefit from correction, as implementation progresses.

An obvious adverse effect of qualifications-focused reforms is the massive investment of time and resources by government, ECEC providers and educators themselves. The new qualification requirements mean that many educators have added further study to the already challenging demands of their work and personal lives. These effects are not always visible in policy terms, but may be seen in qualitative research about the impost that further study places on educators' family lives and personal wellbeing (Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008; Osgood, 2012). Strong arguments may be made on both moral and efficiency grounds to minimise this burden wherever possible.

Another potential adverse effect is the barrier that qualifications requirements place on entry into the ECEC workforce. On one hand, this barrier may be seen as a positive outcome of the reforms, as it limits entry into the sector to those who have acquired at least basic skills (through a Certificate course), and have sufficient commitment to ECEC work to engage in formal study. On the other hand, it also precludes entry for those with qualifications in other fields, reducing the attractiveness of temporary or career-change entry into ECEC work. It also risks closing off an important pathway into employment for a vulnerable cohort of unqualified educators with limited other career options—an idea that will be examined in greater detail throughout this study.

A final point may be made in relation to the broader consequences of qualificationsfocused reforms for the ECEC sector's institutional identity. Many commentators have examined ways in which international ECEC policy reforms have placed the sector's institutional identity under threat, in terms of greater government scrutiny (Osgood, 2006a; Kilderry, 2015; Nolan & Molla, 2017a), "datafication" of outcomes for children (Roberts-Holmes, 2015, p. 302), "brainification" resulting from over-emphasis on neuroscience over the social nature of ECEC (Vandenbroeck, 2014, p. 1); or "schoolification" arising from the greater emphasis on learning and readiness for school (Press, 2007, p. 193). Although they are seldom criticised among these debates (Andrew, 2015a is a notable exception), educators' qualifications may also be seen as formal mechanisms of government scrutiny, quantification of learning, and the human capital development agenda.

Some researchers regard professionalisation through "credentialism" as a means of garnering power, rather than directly improving practice (see Collins 1979; Ehrenreich, 1989; Kivinen & Rinne, 1994). Related to this is the "academicisation" of practice, which is being used in ECEC reforms as a strategy for gaining power and recognition relative to other professions (see Wingrave & McMahon, 2016, p. 710). While ECEC reform advocates focus on the benefits of this power for the ECEC sector, any shift in a power dynamic inevitably also results in exclusion. As Andrew (2015a) notes:

The risk is that such a credentialisation process, which is fundamental to professionalisation, will operate to exclude the women who have long formed the backbone of the [ECEC] field – a point that is not often acknowledged within this discussion (Andrew, 2015a, p. 315).

Sims (2014) and Woodrow (2008) have also raised questions about whose professional identifies are privileged in the current ECEC reforms, with Sims (2014) calling for the new ECEC profession to "truly create a space where we can all grow and develop", rather than "a space that privileges some but excludes others" (p. 10). Considering who may be excluded through credentialism—including among educators, children and families— is arguably as important as critical examination of any other aspect of ECEC reform.

Where to next?

There is a long distance to travel yet, before the goals of Australia's National Quality Agenda for ECEC services are achieved. Government data on the quality of ECEC services continues to show high variability across services, with over one-quarter (26.3 per cent) of the 14,269 services that have been assessed still below the National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2017a). This is despite the substantial increase in educators' qualifications that has occurred since the National Quality Agenda reforms commenced.

The discussion above has shown some reasons why qualifications may not be sufficient to achieve the desired increase in quality in their own right. It points to the need to continually re-examine the fitness-for-purpose of ECEC credentials as instruments for achieving quality improvement. It also suggests a need for other opportunities for educators to develop their practice through ongoing professional learning, to fill the gaps left by limitations in what the higher education and training sector can provide (see Australian Childcare Alliance, 2017; Early Learning Association Australia, 2014).

The next steps in ECEC workforce development must be informed by a strong evidence base about the challenges and opportunities that may exist in the next phase of National Quality Agenda implementation. This is not to imply that a new suite of evidence is called for, to usher in a new suite of policy reform; as "change-fatigue" is already evident throughout the Australian ECEC sector after almost a decade of intensive reform (Tayler, 2016, p. 27). Rather, it is time to deepen the existing evidence base, to probe gaps and shore up weak points, in the hope that this will point to ways in which the existing suite of ECEC reforms in Australia may be strengthened rather than created anew.

This study aims to address one weak point in the evidence base for Australian ECEC workforce reforms: detailed understanding of who the ECEC workforce comprises, and how this relates to their qualifications. In the National Quality Agenda reforms, the issue of *how* ECEC practice is performed has all but eclipsed consideration of *who* might be performing it. The research presented here is premised on a view that the *who* and the *how* of ECEC practice are more closely connected than the policy agenda might suppose, and that disentangling this relationship—and its association with educators' qualifications—might lead to valuable insights into how future efforts to improve the quality of practice might best be directed. In particular, this study identifies differences in social advantage among educators as a critical factor in developing quality of practice; drawing on theories that view the relationship between person and practice through the lens of social advantage. These theories are introduced in the next chapter.
Chapter 2 — Theoretical framework

As set out in Chapter 1, this study is concerned with probing the messiness in the relationship between educators' qualifications and the quality of their practice. It therefore requires a theoretical framework that can problematise conventional understandings of both these constructs, to open up spaces in which new insights into the relationship may be formed. The theory of Pierre Bourdieu is recognised as being "enormously good to think with" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 11), in problematising the taken-for-granted in social research, especially in the field of education. For the purposes of this study, Bourdieu's theory is most useful in offering nuanced ways of thinking about the relationship between the aspects of social advantage—including qualifications—and the nature of practice. Bourdieu's view of this relationship is elaborated in this chapter, and connected to elements of the study's empirical field.

Selection of a theoretical framework for the study also serves to situate it within the discipline of educational research (Dowling & Brown, 2010). Bourdieu's "thinking tools" have been widely used across many areas of educational research (Rawolle & Lingard, 2013), including some recent examples in ECEC research, which are referred to where relevant throughout this chapter. While the theoretical framework set out in this chapter may appear well-worn in some areas of educational research, especially in studies relating to social advantage in school education, its application here to workforce development in the ECEC sector constitutes a new approach. The theoretical framework for this study therefore offers a valuable new perspective on the relationship between educators' qualifications and the quality of their practice, and makes an innovative contribution to extending the theoretical base for future ECEC research.

Practice theory: Linking who and how

Practice theory is a broad term that encompasses a range of social theorists active in the last third of last century, who place practices (as opposed to structures, agents, discourse or other alternatives) at the heart of social analysis (Reckwitz, 2002). Practice theory is typified by simultaneous consideration of the influence of social structures and individual agency on human action (Nicolini, 2012). That is, practice theory recognises that "a given action is *at once* a component of some [objectively or structurally-defined] practice and a part of some [subjectively or individually-lived] life" (Schatzki, 2017, p. 28, original emphasis).

The idea that people's practice is guided by *both* their individual subjectivities and the social structures in which they live and work is useful to this study. It invites consideration

of how educators' individual characteristics might have bearing on the way in which they work with children—both in terms of their own individual choices, and in the way that they are influenced by wider social forces. Most importantly, it guards against the "what not to do" of practice theory: divorcing the practice from the practitioner, and considering practice as "something to be represented, not lived" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 62). While the National Quality Agenda for ECEC in Australia sets out many abstract representations of quality practice, it is how these practices are *lived* that will determine their effects.

Pierre Bourdieu is counted among the most prominent of practice theorists. Bourdieu's theory is especially valuable for this study because it describes the mechanism by which structure and agency are manifest in practice—the notion of *habitus*. *Habitus* has been variously defined as "socialised subjectivity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126), or the "unthinking disposition to act in a certain way" (O'Connor, 2011, p. 117). It is cultivated consciously and unconsciously, both by the subjective, agentic individual, and the structural and historical forces under which they act. Using Bourdieu's own metaphor of a sports field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), *habitus* may be understood as a sense of the game, shaped by each player's skills and attributes, as well as the explicit and implicit rules, norms and precedents that govern their behaviour on the field. *Field* itself is a specific term in Bourdieu's theoretical lexicon, defined as "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (p. 97). When *habitus* and *field* are in alignment, practice becomes effortless; just as the fish "does not feel the weight of the water" and "takes the world about itself for granted" (p. 127).

The nature of an individual's *habitus* is determined by the amount and value of *capital* that they possess, and their ability to draw on this capital to gain social advantage. The notion of capital permeates Bourdieu's work, and has three main forms: *cultural capital* (knowledge), *social capital* (relationships), and *economic capital* (wealth) (Bourdieu, 1986). *Symbolic capital* is an aggregate form of capital, which is accrued by converting the first three types of capital into higher social standing (Bourdieu, 1986). The value of the various forms of capital is not assigned in the abstract, but through the concrete interactions that constitute everyday practice on a given *field*. These interactions, and the value they afford to different types of capital, depends on the structural forces at work within the *field*, or the "rules of the game" (*doxa*).

Bourdieu's sports field metaphor again serves to clarify the relationship between these concepts (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Players on the *field* act according to *doxa* (rules of the game) and their own *habitus* (sense of how to play). In doing so, they both activate and accumulate various forms of *capital* (such as *cultural capital* gained from their

training, or *symbolic capital* gained from their status). For example, the act of kicking a ball into a goal is attributed an arbitrary value by the rules of the game, which is reinforced by the interactions between its players; and players may execute this act with more or less success depending upon the levels of requisite capital they command. The success of any given player in the game is therefore determined by the capital that they possess, its value on the field, and their advantages in relation to other players.

Bourdieu's ideas of *habitus* and capital are not only useful for understanding individual and structural influences on practice. They are also essential to Bourdieu's theory of the central role of practice in social stratification. Bourdieu's notion of practice is "always a group or class phenomenon" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 60); while individuals perform the actions that constitute practice, *habitus* itself "both expresses the common condition of existence [of a group or class], and harmonizes the practices of the members" (p. 60). Those with the most capital (economic, social and cultural) are most likely to demonstrate the *habitus* and practices associated with the dominant class (O'Connor, 2011)—or, to continue the sporting metaphor, to be on the winning team. While Bourdieu at times turned his attention to gender groups, he most often discussed group-level differences in *habitus* and practice in terms of social class—to the point where he is "routinely included in lists of leading contemporary class theorists" (Weininger, 2005, p. 119).

As practices and people are shaped by one another (Schatzki, 2017), this relationship becomes mutually reinforcing: that is, not only are those with the most capital most likely to enact desirable practices, but the practices enacted by those with the most capital are the most likely to be considered desirable. Examples of this can be found throughout Bourdieu's thinking. In *Distinction*, he describes how the practices and preferences of the dominant class come to be considered desirable, because those who practice them are in a position that enables them to dictate desirability (Bourdieu, 1984). Similarly, Bourdieu suggests that the practices of the dominant masculine gender are more highly valued because it is males that perform them (Bourdieu, 2001).

Another significant assumption in Bourdieu's theory is the invisibility of the social processes through which practices and people are attributed value. For Bourdieu, the group nature of *habitus* "generates local common-sense worlds rendered objective by the consensus on the meaning of practices", in which practices and their value are "taken for granted" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 58). Bourdieu refers to this tendency towards "taking the world for granted" as *misrecognition* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 168). Misrecognition occurs when practices are believed to be *intrinsically* valuable, rather than recognised as having arbitrary value due to their association with the dominant class.

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The internalisation of these values by those outside the dominant class is referred to as *symbolic violence*; or "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). Symbolic violence not only affects an individual's immediate perceptions of people, practices and their value, but also their estimation of what practices might be possible for them, relative to their social position. That is, symbolic violence causes aspirations to be adjusted to a "sense of one's place", just as individuals adjust their practices to be those that "befit the occupants of that [social] position" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 466). As objective limits become internalised through misrecognition, this "leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, person, places and so forth from which one is excluded" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471).

The remainder of this chapter applies Bourdieu's concepts to the current Australian ECEC context. It begins by re-framing educators' qualifications in terms of Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, and using his theorisation of the relationship between qualifications and capital to broaden understanding of the differences that might exist between differently-qualified educator groups. It then uses Bourdieu's ideas to show how the practices that constitute quality in the ECEC sector may be regarded as those that are valued by the dominant class, including both the educative and caring dimensions of educators' roles. It concludes by connecting Bourdieu's theory of practice to the foundational concepts of learning and development in the EYLF, extending Bourdieu's ideas into a conceptual framework for the study that is oriented to supporting educators' professional growth.

Problematising educators' qualifications

For Bourdieu, education is situated within the broader process of socialisation through which the *habitus* is formed, and through which intergenerational social advantage is reproduced. *Cultural capital*—perhaps the most widely-recognised term in Bourdieu's theoretical lexicon—refers to knowledge and skills acquired through this acculturation. The forms of cultural capital—and associated *habitus*—most valued in educational institutions tend to be those "traditionally associated with the middle classes" (O'Connor, 2011, p.117), leading Bourdieu to regard such institutions as key instruments for the intergenerational reproduction of class advantage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Bourdieu's theory thereby explains the persistent relationship between social advantage and educational achievement by re-casting educational success as the effect of *capital* acquired through socialisation into the dominant class, exercised in practice via *habitus*; rather than the result of intrinsic merit. The education system does not only work to transmit and reward the cultural capital valued by the dominant class, but also the "docile dispositions" that lead to acquiescence and complicity in the system through which such capital is attributed its value (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 166). Cultural capital is therefore the "best hidden" form of capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246), as it is concealed within a meritocratic discourse that frames the acquisition of such capital as the result of ability, not social advantage.

While the social dynamics that give cultural capital its value may be hidden from view, the mechanisms by which cultural capital is codified and exchanged are more visible. Bourdieu distinguishes between cultural capital that is *institutionalised* (such as through academic qualifications), and cultural capital that is *embodied*. Academic qualifications represent an objectified, institutionalised mechanism through which the education system imbues the cultural capital of the dominant class with a durable value. Through mechanisms such as qualifications, the "relations of domination" around which the education system is structured acquire "the opacity and permanence of things", and thereby "escape the grasp of individual consciousness and power" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 184). Qualifications become taken-for-granted as meritorious, removing the need for the dominant class to continually re-assert the value of the cultural capital that they objectify—and protecting such assertions from any possible disputation.

As institutionalised cultural capital, qualifications are also attributed a value "independent of the person of their bearer" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Bourdieu explains this by drawing a parallel with the objectification of capital in the economic sphere:

Academic qualifications are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital. By giving the same value to all holders of the same certificate, so that any one of them can take the place of any other, the educational system minimizes the obstacles to the free circulation of cultural capital which result from its being incorporated in individual persons...it makes it possible to relate all qualificationholders (and also, negatively, all unqualified individuals) to a single standard, thereby setting up a single market for all cultural capacities and guaranteeing the convertibility of cultural capital into money, at a determinate cost in labour and time (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 187).

An additional benefit of this objectification is that it makes the relative value of different qualifications reasonably straightforward to quantify, by measuring the length of time the qualification takes to obtain, or the status of its content. In contrast, embodied cultural capital has a fluid value, which is dependent upon relatively arbitrary valuations that "may be called into question at any time" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247).

While qualifications may therefore serve as indicators of cultural capital to the extent that it is institutionalised, they are a "very imperfect proxy" for the full spectrum of socially advantageous knowledge that Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital encompasses (DiMaggio, 1982, p. 199). DiMaggio (1982) argues that complete measures of cultural capital would take into account a breadth of attributes, including "status culture participation" (that is, participation in high-status cultural activities), and observational data on day-to-day manifestations of cultural capital in both linguistic and nonverbal interactions (p. 199). To continue Bourdieu's economic parallel, this may be likened to the difference between quantifying money, and measuring wealth; in that the latter may demand a broader set of indicators reflecting how an individual acquires and deploys their money, as well as evidence of their socialisation into the "wealthy" class.

This imperfection generates the primary research question guiding this study: to what extent are educators' qualifications markers of deeper differences in social advantage? If educators' qualifications are reconceptualised as proxy indicators of broader social advantage, then it follows that educators with different qualifications will also exhibit other differences, besides their credentials. At the same time, the imperfect nature of the proxy means that there may be some aspects of social advantage in which this theory is not borne out, where other factors disrupt the expected relationship between educators' qualifications and their cultural, economic or social capital. The next section briefly reviews what is already evident in the relationship between educators' qualifications and other forms of social advantage, based on existing literature from the ECEC field, before turning to possible implications for the quality of educators' practice.

Qualifications and cultural capital

As noted above, qualifications themselves represent one objectified manifestation of cultural capital, in its institutionalised form. Differentials in the amount of cultural capital assumed to be objectified by different qualifications are institutionalised in Australia by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which sets out a hierarchy of qualifications based on their duration and complexity (AQF, n.d.). The content of university qualifications is more likely to reflect the higher-status academic material valued by the dominant class, whereas VET qualifications use a competency-based training oriented towards transmission of technical skills (Wheelahan, 2007).

Bourdieu (1986) nevertheless cautions against assuming that equivalent qualifications are synonymous with equivalence in cultural capital, observing that educational qualifications "are never entirely separable from their holders: their value rises in proportion to the value of their bearer" (p. 258). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) found

that students from outside the dominant classes who pursue higher qualifications may still find themselves disadvantaged compared to their dominant-class peers, who have more of the social and cultural capital required to turn qualifications into social advantage. A more recent relevant example can be seen in Skeggs' (2002) research, which found that young working-class women undertaking ECEC qualifications often remain at a disadvantage within the workforce, as they do not possess the other forms of capital that determine the way the dominant classes dress, talk and act.

While Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) empirical work focused on university qualifications, this argument can be readily extended to other forms of institutionalised learning available to the Australian ECEC workforce. Diploma and (especially) certificate courses have far shorter durations than degrees, allowing even less time for the course to overcome differences in social advantage that may affect educators' chances of benefitting from the qualification. Following this logic, it becomes clear that educators' educational practice is not only influenced by what they know (as signified by the institutionalised cultural capital of a qualification), but by who they are (in terms of the embodied cultural capital that they acquire through their broader socialisation).

Class-based analyses of the ECEC workforce offer insight into the embodied cultural capital that educators may exhibit. Osgood (2012) observes that educators in child care are often viewed as "working class", especially by middle class families (p. 104); and provides a stinging example of classed pejoratives being applied to the ECEC workforce in the UK media, caricaturing educators' dress and speech (p. 13). Colley (2006) reports that educators can be acutely conscious of this social distinction, and have a strong desire to be seen as "respectable" or "nice girls" by middle-class families (p. 18). While neither author directly addresses the association between educators' qualifications and embodiment of middle-class cultural capital, Osgood (2012) suggests that service leaders and other educators may differ in their level of middle-class appeal. She describes how ECEC managers may deliberately exclude certain educators from parent interactions in middle-class communities, lest they tarnish the service's marketability.

In the Australian context, studies of educators' cultural capital have focused on the knowledge acquired through training and professional learning rather than the broader forms of capital arising from educators' social advantage. Macfarlane and Lewis (2012) recognise that educators' *habitus* may differ as a result of different kinds of pre-service training, but apply this to the integration of different types of ECEC services rather than educators' practice. Nolan and Molla (2017a) use Bourdieu's theories to recognise the relationship between structural factors and educators' dispositions in shaping their

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practice. They recognise professional learning as the accumulation of capital (2017a), but focus their studies on "professional capital" (p. 11) specific to the workplace, rather than socialisation in a broader sense.

Also in Australia, Andrew (2015b) focuses on educators' emotional capital, which is a specific form of cultural capital (Cottingham, 2016), first identified by Nowotny (1981, as cited in Reay, 2000, p. 572). Andrew (2015b) defines emotional capital as manifesting in a range of observable skills, including "resilience, insight into their own and other's emotions, empathy, the ability to assess emotional situations quickly, and the skill of finding satisfaction in the job" (p. 12). For Andrew, emotional capital is a crucial resource for effective ECEC practice, as work with young children and their families can often be intensely emotionally demanding. Andrew (2015c) observes that emotional capital may be possessed in equal measure by educators across the qualifications spectrum, suggesting that it is a form of cultural capital that transcends class-based socialisation. This idea will be examined further later in this chapter, in considering the role of emotional capital in influencing educators' practice with children.

A notable feature of emotional capital is its strong association with gender, and centrality to feminist extensions of Bourdieu's work (Reay, 2004a). DiMaggio (2004) acknowledges that "the relative neglect of gender has been something of an embarrassment to research on cultural capital, which has dwelt intently on the impact of socioeconomic status on cultural capital without systematically noting or theorizing the sometimes larger impact of gender" (p. 99). The highly feminised nature of the ECEC workforce reinforces that emotional capital may be a form of capital of particular relevance to educators' work.

Qualifications and economic capital

Economic capital is perhaps the most readily recognisable form of capital, as the "economic metaphor" that Bourdieu uses to understand all forms of capital (Jenkins, 2002, p. 86) has its origins in conventional understandings of economic wealth. For Bourdieu (1986), economic capital constitutes anything "immediately and directly convertible into money" (p. 243). While Bourdieu's primary interest is in cultural capital, he is acutely aware of the importance of economic capital in shaping social advantage (Nash, 1990; Fowler, 2001). In *The Weight of the World*, Bourdieu (1999) vividly illustrates the effects of economic disadvantage in shaping the experience of powerlessness among the socially disadvantaged. The distinctive element of Bourdieu's approach is that the importance of economic capital arises not only from its direct effects on social advantage, but its influence on other forms of capital, which also exert additional effects of their own (Allan, 2011).

In Australia, the ECEC field institutionalises the relationship between the objectified cultural capital of educators' qualifications, and the objectified economic capital of their income, through the industrial agreements that govern educators' pay and conditions. For educators in long day care, family day care and school age care, the consolidated Children's Services Award 2010 sets out minimum wages at each level of employment, and the qualification required at each level. Educators in preschool services are covered by the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2010. It is difficult to quantify the relationship precisely, as each qualification group spans several wage levels, and may be associated with differently-remunerated roles.⁶ Estimates of the average hourly wage for educators in each qualification group supplied by a major not-for-profit long day care provider in 2014 are provided in Table 2.1⁷.

Certificate III	\$23.31
Diploma	\$26.88
Advanced Diploma	\$29.59
Degree	\$31.43

Source: Productivity Commission, 2014, p. 318 (from Goodstart Early Learning submission)

More recent estimates for educators' annual incomes are \$40,000 for a certificatequalified educator, and \$46,000 for a diploma-qualified educator working full-time (Bita, 2016, n.p.), and \$58,000 for the highest-paid educators in the sector, who will typically hold a university degree (Toscano, 2016, n.p.).

These differences in part reflect the different levels of success experienced by educators with different qualifications, in advocating for higher remuneration. Degree-qualified educators in preschools have successfully argued to achieve pay parity with their primary school counterparts—first achieved in the state of Victoria in 1971 (Brennan, 1994, p. 123), preschool and primary teachers now have similar wages and conditions in most Australian states (Productivity Commission, 2014). These gains were based upon a hard-won argument that preschool and primary teachers perform similarly complex work; and therefore should be remunerated similarly.

⁶ For example, the Children's Services Award 2010 associates an ECEC degree with a director's role, whereas the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2010 associates it with "teaching". Educators can also progress through multiple pay grades within their qualification level, depending on their demonstrated ability and experience (Fair Work Ombudsman 2016), or may gain additional income through overtime, higher duties and allowances (Aussie Childcare Network, 2015). Few ECEC employers pay above award rates (Productivity Commission, 2014). ⁷ Goodstart Early Learning pays above Award rates, so sector-wide averages may be lower.

However, these gains have not resulted in improved conditions for other educators, including educators with lower-status qualifications in preschool services (Brennan, 1994); and educators at all qualification levels in services known as childcare. It is only in relatively recent pay negotiations for Australian preschools that "co-educators" have been "better recognised for their important contribution" (Australian Education Union, 2015, n.p.). Even this acknowledgement fails to recognise that the relationship between a degree-qualified "teacher" and lower-qualified "co-educator" (which parallels the relationship between teachers and lower-paid teacher aides in primary schools) does not characterise the work of lower-qualified educators in all parts of the ECEC sector. Outside of preschools, educators with diplomas, certificates or even no ECEC qualification may also be responsible for leading and delivering "individualised, developmentally-appropriate, play-based learning programs" (United Voice, n.d., p. 1).

A sustained national campaign, commenced in 2013, has attempted to improve access to economic capital for other educators across the ECEC sector. In 2016, the campaign brought a case before Australia's Fair Work Commission, arguing for educators to receive pay rises of 39 per cent to 72 per cent (Toscano, 2016). On International Women's Day, 2017, over 1,000 Australian educators walked off the job at 3.20pm (Hunt 2017). This "biggest educator walk-off in history" (United Voice,⁸ 2017, n.p.) aimed to convey a simple message: that all educators should be paid more for their work.

As well as institutionalising the relationship between qualifications and income, Table 2.1 also signals that access to economic capital is limited for many Australian educators, relative to the Australian workforce as whole. The typical remuneration for educators at certificate level is approximately half the Australian average wage (Toscano, 2016, n.p.)—well within the OECD's definition of low-wage work (see Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008). The upper estimate of \$58,000 is approximately equivalent to the median wage (Cowgill, 2013), despite educators in this bracket holding qualifications that are close to the top of the AQF hierarchy. This suggests that other factors contribute to educators' levels of economic capital, beyond their qualifications alone.

The high proportion of women in the ECEC workforce also exerts an effect on educators' ability to access economic capital. Bourdieu's (2001) theories recognise gender as one determinant of economic advantage, observing the domination of men in the public

⁸ There are three major trade unions representing the Australian ECEC workforce: United Voice, which represents a rage of primarily low-wage industries; the Australian Education Union (AEU), which is primarily active representing teachers in school education, but claims over 2,700 members in ECEC services (AEU Victoria, n.d.); and the Independent Education Union, which especially represents educators working in ECEC services based in independent schools.

space and the "field of power" (especially economic power) (p. 94). For Bourdieu, gendered roles in the home carry across into the value of paid work: he sees women's paid participation in fields like welfare or education as "quasi-extensions of the domestic space" (p. 94). Educators' work, especially in services historically known as child care, perhaps continues to resemble too strongly the work that women have previously done in the home for no direct economic return at all (Waring, 1990). Higher qualifications are no protection against the effects of gender, as higher levels of education are generally less likely to result in higher earnings for women than for men (DiMaggio, 2004).

An argument used prominently in the Fair Work campaign for educators' pay is framed around gender equality, and the assumption that men would be paid more for similarly-skilled work (United Voice, 2017). The 3.20pm timing of the International Women's Day walk-off marked the time of day at which Australian women "effectively start working for free", based on wage comparisons with their male counterparts (Hunt, 2017, n.p.). The Fair Work Commission ruled in 2015 that the wage case for educators rests on the unions' ability to prove that women working in childcare are disadvantaged, compared to men in similarly-skilled work (Colman, 2015). This argument appears to have since become mired in the difficulty of identifying male-dominated industries that might be seen as performing similarly-skilled work. As at early 2017, metalworking had emerged as the most likely comparator (Workplace Express, 2016).

Overall, then, ECEC in Australia continues to hold the status of a "low-paid *profession*" (Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008, p. 105, original emphasis); contrasting starkly with the conventional understanding of professionalism as involving financial independence and security (see Lortie, 1975). Low wages, poor work conditions and heavy workloads are consistently cited as sources of burnout, staff turnover and job dissatisfaction for educators (Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson & Goodfellow, 2008). Financial insecurity has been found to be a major source of stress for some in the sector (Corr, Cook, LaMontagne, Waters & Davis, 2015), and Osgood (2005) describes ECEC careers as "only a marginally viable economic alternative to unemployment and a life on welfare benefits" (p. 295). Masterman-Smith and Pocock (2008) describe many adverse effects of low incomes on low-paid educators' quality of life, including poor health, housing difficulties, long commutes, and compromises to the quality of care that they can provide to their own families. Reay (2004a) notes the impact of low incomes on emotional capital, as "poverty is not an environment in which emotional capital can normally thrive" (p. 69).

Although the Productivity Commission (2014) recognises the widely-held view in the ECEC sector that the ECEC workforce is "underpaid and undervalued" (p. 316), the

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economic situation of the ECEC workforce has yet to be substantially addressed in Australian policy. The national 2012 Early Years Workforce Strategy acknowledges that "matters such as lower pay and conditions compared to other sectors are recognised as affecting professional status", but declares these to be "outside the scope of the strategy, as they are for employers and employees to negotiate" (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 3). The union campaign initially succeeded in obtaining (centre-left) government support for a short-term wage subsidy for educators, but the funding was subsequently repurposed by the incoming (centre-right) government to fund a sector-wide professional development scheme (Karvelas, 2014; Productivity Commission, 2014). Current ECEC workforce reforms instead rely on labour market dynamics to increase economic capital for the ECEC workforce, assuming that "higher standards and better training will result in higher wages" through the workings of market forces (Andrew, 2015a, p. 312). The ongoing Fair Work wage campaign suggests that this promise is yet to be fulfilled.

The intractability of the wage issue for Australian educators—especially those with lowerlevel qualifications—invites consideration of broader factors that may influence educators' access to economic capital. As for cultural capital, Bourdieu sees economic capital as being affected by the socialisation process through which social advantage is reproduced, so the current economic position of educators may be connected to their own socio-economic origins, and the expectations and opportunities that these may have produced. Bourdieu's theory also demands the consideration of economic capital in context, taking into account its relationship to other forms of capital, and the position of individuals within social structures and institutions. These considerations guide the analysis of educators' economic capital and its effects that is undertaken in this study.

Qualifications and social capital

Social capital is a form of capital derived from a social agent's connections to others. Like Bourdieu's other forms of capital, social capital is an asset that may be deployed by an individual to gain advantage within a given *field*. For Bourdieu (1986), the advantage conveyed by individuals' social capital is determined by the size of their social networks, and the value of the capital that each other individual within these networks holds (cultural, economic, social and symbolic). Families, schools or professional groups are all examples of institutionalised networks through which social capital may be acquired.

Like economic capital, the concept of social capital pre-dates Bourdieu's work. It was originally coined by Hanifan (1916), as a measure of the "good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit" (p. 130, as cited in Putnam, 2002, p. 4). Since then, the term has been widely used in social

research, to the point where its exact meaning has become "somewhat intangible" (Howson 2015, n.p.). This study therefore turns to the empirical field for guidance as to which dimensions of social capital may be most relevant to the ECEC workforce.

Contemporary literature on the Australian ECEC workforce suggests that social capital is most relevant in its affinity with symbolic capital, or social status and recognition. Of all Bourdieu's forms of capital, social capital is the most directly convertible to symbolic capital (or status), as it depends entirely on social recognition: "It goes without saying that social capital is so totally governed by the logic of knowledge and acknowledgment that it always functions as symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 257). Social capital is converted to symbolic capital as a group defines its own identity, and as others recognise this identity as conveying social status. Definition of a group does not occur haphazardly, but requires "an endless effort at institution", in order to "produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material and symbolic profits" (p. 249).

Efforts in policy discourse to improve the status of the ECEC sector can be readily framed in these terms. The simple act of definition through which "educators" have been constituted as a group may be seen as an "effort at institution" designed to gain recognition for the sector, and build the cohesiveness required to improve its status. This aligns with one of the goals of the ECEC policy agenda, to raise the professional status of educators and build recognition of their specialist skills (Molla & Nolan, 2018).

Recent Australian studies of the ECEC workforce suggest that policy efforts to raise the status of the ECEC workforce have so far had little effect. Irvine and colleagues (2016) found that most educators "perceived that the professional nature of their work was not seen nor valued by the broader community" (p. 15); while educators in Andrew's (2015a) study believed that "the public mindset" about the value of ECEC work has not changed, despite the "discursive shift" in policy (p. 313). In Molla and Nolan's (2018) recent research, all participating educators believed that they were seen as no more than "glorified babysitters" by parents and the community (p. 7).

The rise of commercial ECEC services has also affected educators' symbolic capital, by positioning them as low-cost commodities to serve commercial ends (Osgood, 2012). In Australia, instances of market failure—such as the overexpansion and collapse of the ABC Learning franchise, which risked leaving a gaping hole in ECEC service provision (DEEWR, 2010a), or the recent exposure of fraudulent practices in commercial family day care (Gatrell, 2017)—have further undermined public trust in for-profit ECEC services, which had already been found to be the least-preferred form of ECEC delivery

(Meagher, 2007). Educators in commercial services may therefore be most vulnerable to low status and recognition, compounded by the quality issues noted in Chapter 1.

Variations in social capital might also be expected to exist between educators with different qualifications. Like others in positions of social disadvantage, educators with limited access to economic and cultural capital may also have limited opportunities to accumulate the kind of social capital that will support an increase in status (see Allard, 2005). Social capital may accrue to more highly-qualified educators through their roles in ECEC leadership at room or service level—which are also institutionalised through role descriptions in ECEC industrial awards—and through the recent formal recognition of degree-qualified educators in ECEC as members of the teaching profession (O'Connell et al., 2016). Bretherton (2011) adds that the low status of VET in Australia may further undermine the ability of certificate- and diploma-qualified educators to improve their professional status, rather than raising it as the National Quality Agenda intends. This demonstrates again how the forms of capital are interrelated, and work together to determine educators' level of social advantage.

Problematising quality ECEC practice

The connections between educators' qualifications and other forms of capital weave a vast web of complexity about exactly what educators' qualifications might signify, beyond the institutionalised cultural capital that they objectify. To understand why this might matter for the quality of ECEC services in Australia, the strands of this web must somehow be connected to educators' practice. Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* provides this connection, by recognising that an individual's practice is not only the product of *what they know*—as might be acquired through obtaining a qualification—but of *who they are*, as determined by the complex socialisation process through which *habitus* and capital are acquired.

Just as forms of capital are attributed value, Bourdieu's theory asserts that practices are attributed value, through the same arbitrary-but-invisible mechanisms by which the values of the dominant class come to be (mis)recognised as meritorious norms. In essence, then, it is necessary to possess the capital valued by the dominant class, in order to produce the practices to which the dominant class attributes value. This calls for consideration of how practices that are valued as "quality" in the ECEC sector might reflect the values of the dominant class; and how educators' levels of capital and *habitus* might therefore influence their ability to acquire and embody these practices in their work.

Embarking on this discussion requires a clear point of reference regarding what quality practice in ECEC involves; or, in Bourdieu's terms, the *doxa* of the field. A large body of

research exists on quality in ECEC practice (see Hunkin 2016a, 2016b), which is beyond the scope of this study to distil. Instead, this study will draw on one of the foundation documents of the National Quality Agenda—the EYLF—as indicative of the *doxa* as reflected in policy. While policy documents are not necessarily indicative of *doxa* supported by practitioners, the consensus between policy-makers, academics and practitioner organisations that underpins the National Quality Agenda (Cahir, 2010) suggests that the EYLF's view of practice also reflects a widely-held view in the sector.

The EYLF sets out five principles and eight practices to guide quality ECEC practice. These appeared in Figure 1.1, embedded in the elements of being, belonging and becoming that constitute the EYLF's vision, and are listed again in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 – Principles and practices in the EYLF

Principles	Practices
 Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships Partnerships High expectations and equity Respect for diversity Ongoing learning and reflective practice 	 Holistic approaches Responsiveness to children Learning through play Intentional teaching Learning environments Cultural competence Continuity of learning and transitions Assessment for learning

Source: DEEWR, 2009, pp. 12–17

The five principles "reflect contemporary theories and research evidence concerning children's learning and early childhood pedagogy", and "underpin" the seven practices (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12). A full description of each principle is provided at Appendix 1, and they are referred to where relevant throughout the following discussion.

The EYLF principles and practices are well-aligned conceptually with the theoretical framework for this study. To begin with, like Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, they recognise the importance of dispositions to practice, as well as actions. This dual focus is well-established in theories of educational practice, as summarised by Spodek (1988):

In order to understand the nature of teaching, one must not only understand the behavior of the teachers observed, but also the teacher's thought processes regarding teaching and the implicit theoretical systems that drive these processes (Spodek, 1988, p. 14).

Consistent with Bourdieu's notion of *habitus,* the dispositions that guide educators' practice may not be consciously held (McClintic & Petty, 2015); and arise from educators'

"personal stock of information, skills, experiences" (Wood & Bennett, 2000, p. 637), affirming the importance of educators' backgrounds in shaping both thought and action.

A second point of alignment may be found in the EYLF's recognition that children's learning and development is supported through both education and care. Bourdieu's (1977) theory recognises that the "pedagogic action" through which socialisation occurs is not only effected through directly educative actions, but also through the role-modelling behaviours that occur in day-to-day interactions with children. Embodied attributes of the adult (such as their way of speaking or moving) are influential components of this action, even if they are never "raised to the level of discourse" (p. 87). Bourdieu's theory therefore prefigures the EYLF's recognition that young children learn continuously, and that all adults who provide care for children are thereby educating them at the same time.

What Bourdieu's work did not anticipate is the extent to which the early socialisation of young children has subsequently been reallocated from the family to a new institution the ECEC sector. Especially in long day care or family day care services, it is not unusual for educators to be present for a greater proportion of a child's waking hours than their parents. For many Australian children, the early socialisation process that is so central to Bourdieu's theory is therefore now substantially located outside of the family.

In problematising quality ECEC practice from a Bourdieuian perspective, it is therefore instructive to consider the role that ECEC services are now expected to play in the socialisation process, and how these expectations inform which practices are valued. As Bourdieu recognises, the attribution of value to practice does not occur in a vacuum, but in the context of particular institutions or *fields*, in which *doxa* gives authority to the aggregate values of their members. For this reason, the discussion of quality ECEC practice presented here will be framed in terms of the two key institutions through which socialisation occurs, which practice in the ECEC sector is now expected to supplement: the institution of school education, and the institution of the family.

Supplementing socialisation through the school

The policy discourse that surrounds the National Quality Agenda firmly establishes the ECEC sector as supplemental to school education in the process of socialisation. A substantial body of research supports the value of quality ECEC services in enhancing later educational outcomes, thereby augmenting what the school system can offer (see Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2018 for a recent summary). Contemporary policy understandings of ECEC practice position infants as "learners from birth", in contrast to past views of young children as "waiting to learn" in the years before

formal schooling (Cheeseman, Sumsion & Press, 2015, p. 38), supported by an "explosion of research on early brain development and early learning" that has established the early years of a child's life as a critical time for learning (O'Connell et al., 2016, p. 1). In this sense, the institutional purpose of the ECEC sector has come to resemble the purpose that Bourdieu attributes to schools: to transmit the cultural capital valued by the dominant class, to maximise success in later life and learning.

The concept of "school readiness" is a clear example of how the cultural capital valued in the school system is increasingly influential in the early years—most apparent in the preschool sector, which is chronologically closest to the time when children enter school:

At the core of a good preschool learning program is building thinking and problem-solving skills, imagination and creativity and ensuring that every child has the social, cognitive and emotional capacity to optimise learning in the school years (Elliott, 2006, p. 50).

The emphasis on "educational" content in the National Quality Standard extends this focus on learning into programs for younger children, which have historically been regarded as educationally inferior (Macfarlane & Lewis, 2012). In all types of ECEC services, the transmission of cultural capital that is valued in schooling (including its precursor skills, for younger age groups), has come to be seen as the desirable norm.

As for schooling, ECEC participation has therefore joined the suite of mechanisms that may be used to reproduce social advantage. Smyth (2017) draws on Bourdieu's ideas to consider how Australian families with different levels of social advantage use a variety of strategies, including participation in ECEC, to gain advantage for their children. O'Connor (2011) adds that Bourdieu's theories have now been used to recognise the link between social advantage in the home, and children's success in early learning. Gregory, Williams, Baker, and Street (2004) also recognise the relationship between the cultural capital that children bring into ECEC services, and their achievement of learning and development outcomes, including those associated with social advantage.

This emphasis can also be seen in expectations for educators' practice. As children's play and care routines are increasingly recognised as a process of continuous learning (see DEEWR, 2009), all educators are required to continuously exercise pedagogical judgement, choosing the right moments to guide, extend or intervene, or to recognise learning that is occurring independently. Elliott (2007) summarises the knowledge and practice that educators require, to have greatest impact on children's learning:

- talking with children (questioning, explaining, discussion, responding, plus modelling, demonstrating and guiding)
- a knowledge of child development, cognition and learning processes
- a knowledge of content areas (language, early literacy, early numeracy, and society and environment)
- a knowledge of pedagogy (Elliott, 2007, p. 202).

These educative themes are evident throughout the principles and practices of the EYLF. The EYLF practice of "intentional teaching", or the purposeful use of planned and spontaneous experiences as opportunities to foster children's learning, underpins the practice of "learning through play" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 15). The EYLF principle of "high expectations" focuses on "educational success" and "achievement in learning" (pp. 12– 13), rather than the other holistic outcomes for children that the EYLF also aims to support, such as child wellbeing and sense of identity.

The EYLF also promotes a model of professionalism for educators which resembles the model for school education. The EYLF asks educators to "continually seek ways to build their professional knowledge and develop learning communities" (p. 13), echoing expectations for ongoing collaborative learning in practice standards for the school teaching profession (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011), as well as for other professions. While the EYLF does not set out any particular expectations for content knowledge (as occurs for the school teaching profession), its renewed emphasis on documented "assessment for learning" (p. 17) implies the need for educators to have strong skills in written communication—the example "*par excellence*" of objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). Just as school teachers are expected to embody the *habitus* valued by the education system, educators in ECEC services are increasingly subject to the same professional ideals.

There are nevertheless some important differences between the principles and practices of the EYLF, and models of educative practice that are dominant in schools. The most prominent is the centrality of relationships in the EYLF, especially the quality of educators' relationships with children. The principle of "secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships" requires that educators are "attuned to children's thoughts and feelings", and "give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12). This principle also underpins various EYLF practices, including the requirement in "learning through play" that educators "interact with babies and children to build attachment" (p. 15); and *holistic approaches,* which

requires educators to give "attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing", as well as their cognitive development (p. 14). This emphasis on emotionality in relationship contrasts markedly with non-emotional models that have dominated discourses of professionalism in school education (see Zembylas, 2005).

The EYLF also places a strong emphasis on the principal of "partnerships", and recognises that "families are children's first and most influential teachers" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12). Partnerships with families are conceived in the EYLF as a two-way relationship, based on "understanding each other's expectations and attitudes", and "build[ing] on the strength of each other's knowledge" to support children's learning and development. The principle of "respect for diversity" builds upon this idea, requiring educators to make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's "cultures, identities, abilities and strengths", and "respond to the complexity of children's and families' lives" (p. 13). While school teachers deliver a set curriculum informed by the values of the dominant class, the EYLF implies that educators and families must work together to create an emergent curriculum that incorporates the values of each child and family.

The previous section points to several ways in which educators' qualifications may be related to their ability to meet these expectations, beyond the knowledge and skills conveyed in the qualification itself. To give a simple example, the expectation that extensive documentation will be part of educators' professional repertoire will be more easily met by educators with higher levels of scholastic cultural capital—which Bourdieu's theory suggests will most likely be found among educators with degrees. In general, expectations for ECEC practice to support academic learning are likely to speak to the strengths of the degree-qualified group; not only because of the degree itself, but because of the socialisation into dominant-class cultural capital that it is likely to signify. These expectations inevitably advantage educators whose stores of cultural capital most closely match what is valued in schools—as may be signified in part, but not wholly, by the possession of a higher qualification.

On the other hand, the points of divergence between the EYLF and expectations for professionals in school education appear to provide spaces in which other educators may also have opportunities to exercise their strengths. The possession of emotional capital by educators at all qualification levels, noted above, suggests that all educators may have strengths in meeting the EYLF's requirements for warm relationships; although Reay's (2004a) research, described in the next section, suggests that building relationships in a way that fosters children's learning may prove challenging for some. Similarly, educators from across the spectrum of social advantage may have strengths

in understanding the needs and perspectives of similarly diverse children and families, equipping them well to meet EYLF expectations for respect for diversity and partnerships. In particular, past research (with highly-qualified educators) suggests that educators' understanding of the educational needs of children experiencing social disadvantage may be especially limited (Lobman & Ryan, 2007; Simpson et al., 2017). Educators from similar backgrounds may possess valuable knowledge to inform the adjustment of pedagogical practices, to take children's levels of cultural capital into account (see Gregory et al., 2004).

Some literature extends on Bourdieu's theory to propose a broad understanding of the value of capital, to include what is valued by those outside the dominant class (see Dixon-Román, 2014). Prior research has described the "subcultural capital" (Bullen & Kenway, 2005, p. 47), or "alternative versions of cultural capital" (Simpson et al., 2017, pp. 7–8) that are created and exchanged outside the main currencies of social advantage.⁹ Others have described how the failure of educational institutions to embody such capital can intensify feelings of exclusion for children and families (Lareau, 1987; Sullivan, 2002; Byrne, 1985); a matter of particular concern in Australia, as participation in ECEC remains skewed towards more socially-advantaged groups (Cass, 2007; Gilley, Niklas, Tayler, & Cloney, 2015). The presence of educators from outside the dominant class may be an invaluable resource in building respect for, and understanding of, children and families from similar social groups.

In sum, then, the dominant educative discourse of the EYLF positions the ECEC sector as a mechanism for transmitting the cultural capital of the dominant class. It therefore demands that educators acquire and embody the *habitus* necessary for this purpose, which may be some distance from the *habitus* of educators whose stores of such capital are limited. At the same time, the expectations of the EYLF also appear to create some openings for knowledge from outside the dominant class to be recognised and valued. Both these conclusions point to the need to understand educators' capability not only in terms of the qualification they possess, but the broader stores of cultural and other forms of capital that might inform their *habitus* and ECEC practice.

⁹ Cultural capital from outside the dominant classes may not only be valuable in engaging families from similar backgrounds. Skeggs (2004b) observes that the "creative hedonism; the anti-pretentious humour, the dignity, the high ethical standards of honour, loyalty and caring" of the working class are highly valued across the entire class spectrum (p. 88).

Supplementing socialisation through the family

The ECEC sector has also assumed a supplementary role in relation to the family, supporting children's socialisation. The exact nature of this relationship is less clearly defined than the relationship with the school sector, and may be characterised as augmentative (building on what the family can offer), substitutive (direct replacement), or compensatory (especially in relation to disadvantaged families). For Bourdieu, the family is an even more important institution than the school, in the intergenerational reproduction of social advantage (see Bourdieu, 1986). In addition to the expectations placed on them to supplement the socially reproductive functions of the school, ECEC services therefore also face pressure to supplement the socially reproductive functions of the family.

A large body of research exists regarding parenting practices, and the strategies used within families to maximise social advantage. Due to the close association between ECEC practice and the practice of "mothering" (Dalli, 2008, p. 174), these understandings of quality parenting practices are relevant to understandings of quality in educators' work. This section considers the classed dimensions of parenting practices, and how they relate to the practices that are valued in ECEC services.

A prominent feature of classed approaches to parenting is the deliberate effort to support children's learning prevalent among the middle class. Lareau's (2011) influential study contrasted the "concerted cultivation" approach of middle-class parents—characterised by careful management of children's time, to maximise developmental opportunities— with the reliance on "natural growth" in working-class families (p. 1); noting that the former is far more effective in increasing or sustaining social advantage. In their speech to children, middle-class parents have been found to more often use "elaborated codes", in which they explain their reasoning (Bernstein, 1975, as cited in O'Connor, 2011, p. 116). Similarly, Smyth's (2017) recent small-scale Australian study found that degree-qualified parents (one marker of middle-class cultural capital) were more likely to demonstrate "parenting for cognitive development"—which includes reading to children, explicit teaching of basic literacy and numeracy concepts, or engaging in learning-oriented play and activities (Schaub, 2010, p. 47, as cited in Smyth, 2017, p. 67).

While the language used in interactions with children may reflect the cultural capital of the middle class, other class-based parenting practices are more directly attributable to economic capital. These include "outsourcing" cognitive development, or engaging in paid structured leisure activities (Smyth, 2017, p. 69). Even parenting practices that do not directly incur costs may be influenced by economic factors; Vassallo's (2012) intimate

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case study of one working-class family shows how demanding economic circumstances may constrain the time and energy available for quality parent-child interactions. Social capital also exerts an effect—for example, Brooker (2002, as cited in O'Connor, 2011, p. 120) found that families from low-income migrant communities may have high levels of social capital, but not the kind that is valued in education. As with education, then, Bourdieu's concepts of capital and *habitus* are valuable for understanding how differences in parenting practices do not arise from differences in merit between social groups, but from differences in the resources they have at their disposal (Vincent, 2017).

As educational achievement has come to be regarded as a desirable goal for all (Cole, 1990), the parenting practices that support it have also come to be positioned as desirable for everyone (Vincent, 2017). This expectation imposes "particular forms of behaviour [practices] on parents, especially mothers, requiring them to develop self-sufficient, self-regulating children who achieve in a range of academic and non-academic areas" (Vincent, 2017, p. 544). Effects of this trend may be seen in Pusey's (2003) observation that middle-class Australian women "experience *parenting itself* as a performance" and feel "enslaved by performance criteria that they can never satisfy" (pp. 99–100, original emphasis); as well as Vincent's (2017) discussion of the struggles that working-class women experience in seeking to meet the same ideals. In both studies, maternal guilt at potentially failing to meet such standards is a prominent theme.

Smyth (2017) finds that use of ECEC services helps reduce the pressure felt by parents to actively support children's learning through their parenting. The role of the middleclass mother has notionally become outsource-able; exemplified in the observation that "two years of high-quality ECEC for 15 hours per week gives the same protective effect as having a tertiary-educated mother" in supporting subsequent outcomes at school (Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2010, as cited in O'Connell et al., 2016, p. 7). This is an attractive proposition for parents caught in the squeeze between paid work and parenting, whatever their social class.

The truth of this proposition depends upon ECEC services pursuing the same practices that middle-class mothers would use with their children. This may be relatively easy to establish in the case of Australia's preschools, with their middle-class history (see Chapter 1)—but more difficult in the case of services historically known as child care. Ehrenreich (1989) reports that fears that working-class child carers may "contaminate [children] with an easygoing outlook fatal to middle-class achievement" have a long history in middle-class Western culture (p. 87). Given the persistent social differences

between educators and families, it seems highly probable that such class-based concerns about educators' capability may persist to the present day.

The National Quality Agenda may be seen as an attempt to reassure parents against these concerns, in its ambitions for improving quality in ECEC practice. A clear resemblance can be seen between middle-class "parenting for cognitive development" (Schaub, 2010, p. 47, as cited in Smyth, 2017, p. 67) and the EYLF's emphasis on maximising opportunities for children's learning in everyday interactions; or between the "intentional parenting" strategies of the middle-class (Arendell, 2001, p. 169, in Vincent, 2017, p. 543) and the "intentional teaching" practice of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009, p. 10). Similarly, the "sustained shared conversations with children" required by the EYLF practice of "learning through play" (p. 15) resemble the complex, two-way exchanges between adults and children most common in middle-class homes (Hart & Risley, 2003). Additionally, the EYLF principle of "secure, responsive and respectful relationships" requires educators to "share decisions" with children (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12); suggesting the "reasoning and negotiation" typical of middle-class parenting, rather than the more directive parenting styles associated with the working class (Lareau, 2011, p. 238).

The EYLF's exhortation to hold "high expectations" for children also resonates with research on middle-class parenting. Mayo and Siraj (2015) describe the explicit communication of expectations and aspirations particular to middle-class parenting, while Vincent (2017) reports that parents who have been more successful in their own schooling may have higher expectations in relation to their own ability to support learning for the next generation. This is not to say that high aspirations are the sole preserve of the middle classes, and Mayo and Siraj (2015) also found parents from less advantaged backgrounds who were highly motivated to achieve better outcomes for their children—just as educators from disadvantaged backgrounds may be strongly motivated to pursue better futures for the children with whom they work (Osgood, 2012). Still, the practices through which such aspirations are expressed and supported appear to be among those most prevalent among parents in the dominant class.

As with education practices, the association of these practices with a particular social class suggests that they are likely to come more readily to some educators than to others. While mothering practice "requires no legitimising in terms of 'official' qualifications" (Jones & Osgood, 2007, p. 294), the differences between parenting practices across social classes suggests that there are forms of mothering that require a specific *habitus*—and implicitly, specific capital—to enact. Unlike school education, which is universal in Australia, there is no guarantee that educators themselves will have had

exposure to such parenting practices, either in their own experience as parents, or their early experiences as a child. The web of differences in social, cultural, and economic capital that can be spun around differences in educators' qualifications may therefore have profound implications for the ease with which educators can fulfil the socialisation role vacated by middle-class parents who place their children in care, or aspired to by socially disadvantaged parents who hope for better outcomes for their children.

The emphasis on relationships and diversity in the EYLF again provides pause for considering any points of divergence between contemporary understandings of ECEC practice, and the practices valued by the dominant class. Reay's (2000) work on emotional capital is helpful in illuminating class differences in the emotional dimensions of parenting. Examining mothers' emotional involvement in their children's education, Reay (2000) found that working-class mothers exhibited similar levels of emotional involvement (heartfelt interest) in their children's learning as middle-class mothers; but had greater difficulty translating this interest into emotional capital (which Reay presents as protective strategies or encouragement), due to the pressures arising from their socioeconomic circumstances. Working-class mothers also struggled to provide the kinds of emotional capital that would support success at school, often due to their own negative experiences of formal learning. This suggests that, while the emotional investment of mothers in their children may be similar across the spectrum of social advantage, children's experience of emotional support may differ across more or less advantaged homes. Middle-class homes may be more likely to demonstrate the "responsiveness to children" required by the EYLF in the relationship, which involves "open ended questioning, providing feedback, challenging their thinking and guiding their learning" (DEEWR, 2009, pp. 14–15).

While this finding suggests that emotional capital in parenting practice also has a classed distribution, Reay (2000) introduces ambivalence into this proposition by observing that the value of emotional capital can be perceived in different ways:

If emotional capital is to be viewed as inextricably linked to educational success then it sometimes appears to be at the cost of both mothers' and children's wellbeing. On the other hand if the most important link is with emotional wellbeing then the acquisition of emotional capital does not necessarily lead to academic success (Reay, 2000, p. 580).

In Reay's study, class-based differences emerged in the priority given to academic achievement (as the basis for future happiness, or delayed gratification), relative to the

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happiness of the child in the here-and-now. While some middle-class mothers prioritised children's emotional wellbeing, this view was more prevalent in the working-class group.

This ambivalence suggests a tension in how educators might balance the EYLF practices and principles in their work. While the EYLF places a high value on support for learning, the quality of relationships with children is also prominent throughout. Negotiation of this tension may involve negotiation of tensions in educators' own *habitus*, informed by their socialisation in childhood and adulthood. It may also involve negotiation of relationships with families—for example, Lobman and Ryan's (2007) study found educators pushing back against middle-class parents' preferences for structured academic learning. Swimming against the tide of middle-class parenting is a striking inversion of Bourdieu's expectations for social reproduction, and suggests that an ECEC workforce with diverse experiences of parenting and childhood may be a valuable resource. In some respects, it also places even greater demands on educators to embody authoritative professionalism, so that their knowledge and views on what is best for children's development may be respected by parents from across the social spectrum.

Being, belonging and becoming

If quality ECEC practice reflects the values of the dominant class, then educators must have the opportunity to acquire the capital of the dominant class in order to develop the *habitus* to enact it. As higher-level qualifications may be seen as markers of such capital, the relationship between higher-level qualifications and quality practice may be readily understood in these terms. However, *habitus*—and therefore practice—is not only shaped by the cultural capital gained through formal qualifications, but also by other forms of capital, including those that exert their influence on practice in less conspicuous ways. It is therefore worth considering all the forms of capital that are currently available to the Australian ECEC workforce, as well as the ways in which the *doxa* of the National Quality Agenda and EYLF is changing the value of such capital in their practice.

While Bourdieu's theory of socialisation and practice provides a valuable model for explaining social processes, it still leaves many questions unanswered (Nash, 2003). A notable omission is that it "allows no recognition of self, or choice or action", recognising "the strategic behaviour of groups but not individuals" (p. 434). This subjective element may be exactly where possibility arises for the relatively deterministic relationship that Bourdieu envisages between social advantage and practice to be disrupted. This idea will be revisited later in this study, as a window into possibilities for the relationship between capital and *habitus* to change; but is raised here simply to highlight a limitation in the usefulness of Bourdieu's theory in setting up a premise for the study.

This study is not only concerned with educators' levels of capital, as a foundation for their practice, but the *experiences and actions* by which the capital-to-*habitus* relationship is enacted. Further, it is concerned not only with understanding the relationship between educators' qualifications and other forms of capital, but with deriving meaning from this relationship to guide educators' future professional growth. These two interests require a move beyond Bourdieu's theory, to establish a conceptual framework through which educators' experiences and actions may be better examined, as well as the conditions under which their professional growth is most likely to be achieved.

The task of supporting educators' professional growth bears many similarities to educators' own task of supporting children's learning and development. ECEC programs strive to achieve positive outcomes for children and families from a diverse range of backgrounds, and to recognise their individuality while equipping them with the skills, knowledge and dispositions that are most highly-valued by the society in which they live. In the same way, effective development of the ECEC workforce involves supporting all educators to acquire the skills, knowledge and dispositions that respect and respond to their individual needs.

The Australian EYLF conceptualises the dimensions that matter to children's learning and development in terms of three broad concepts: *being, belonging* and *becoming* (DEEWR, 2009 – see Figure 1.1). *Being* involves recognising the importance of children's lives "in the here and now" (p. 7), and supporting them to know themselves and thrive in the present. *Belonging* involves the centrality of relationships to "who children are and who they can become", and the importance of "knowing where and with whom you belong" (p. 7). *Becoming* relates to the "process of rapid and significant change" that children undergo as they learn to participate "fully and actively in society" (p. 7). Together, these concepts recognise that identity, connectedness and growth are all essential components of children's learning and development.

Parallels may be drawn to elements of practice theory, and its implications for educators' learning and the development of their practice. The discussion in this chapter has argued for the need to understand educators' *being* (who they are), and the influence of their background on their learning and practice. The EYLF extends this to the broader concept of identity, including both structural and subjective dimensions. The centrality of relationships in shaping *habitus*, and Bourdieu's metaphor of the "fish in water", points to practice being most successful when a feeling of *belonging* is in place—that is, when the individual and community are well-aligned. Again, the EYLF emphasises the importance of the subjective dimension of this feeling. Lastly, the notion of *becoming* is

visible in the historical nature of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1979), and the way that educators' past experiences connect through *habitus* to their current practice, which in turn shapes their future aspirations and expectations. To this, the EYLF adds greater recognition of "agency" or subjective choice in choosing and pursuing developmental pathways (DEEWR, 2009, p. 21). While Bourdieu's practice theory provides a valuable theoretical foundation for this study, this extension through the EYLF opens up a wider spectrum of possibilities for analysis, which may help illuminate the mechanisms through which capital informs *habitus* in the ECEC empirical field.

Implications for this study

In this chapter, elements of Bourdieu's theory have been used to generate a new and challenging view of efforts to improve the quality of ECEC practice. Firstly, educators' qualifications have been reframed not only as markers of their skills and knowledge, but as the product of their *habitus*, which in turn is the product of the cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital that they possess. Secondly, the *doxa* of "quality" practice has been reframed as practice that reflects what is valued by the dominant class—even if this arbitrary attribution of value is invisible or *misrecognised*.

This theoretical reconceptualisation of ECEC practice is not intended to undermine current policy directions for ECEC workforce development. If current understandings of quality ECEC practice reflect the values of the dominant class, it remains true that these practices are the most likely to support children to develop the skills and dispositions that they need to succeed in a society in which dominant-class values hold sway. This may be particularly important for children from outside of the dominant class themselves, who may not be exposed to such practices in the home environment. The imperative to increase the incidence of such practices in Australian ECEC services therefore remains; but this theoretical framework provides greater acknowledgement of the differential challenges it may pose, for educators whose own *habitus* is furthest from dominant-class ideals. This acknowledgement of differential challenge helps to open up some of the jagged edges that may be concealed by a smooth policy narrative that supposes a relatively seamless relationship between educators' qualifications and practice quality.

The relationship between educators' qualifications and the quality of their practice therefore moves beyond a technical association between acquiring skills and performing them, to a more complex social process situated within relations of privilege and power. The ECEC *field* is reframed as a site of struggle, in which *symbolic violence* works to augment the advantages and aspirations of some groups, while also working to disadvantage others; potentially with their complicity. The valorisation of qualifications in

ECEC discourse may be seen as an act of *symbolic violence*, as it works to "transmute a social inequality into a specifically educational inequality" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 158); that is, by associating higher qualifications with greater merit, without acknowledging the other differences between educators that they may signify. While educators with higher-level qualifications may be most successful at embodying quality practice (that is, practices most highly-valued by the dominant class), Bourdieu's theory suggests that this may result from other elements of social advantage and socialisation, as much as from the knowledge gained through acquiring their qualification.

The examination of educators' forms of capital in this chapter has highlighted another site of social inequality affecting the ECEC workforce—the gap in social advantage between educators and the Australian workforce as a whole. This is most evident in the literature in terms of economic capital, as dynamics of both gender and class have positioned educators at an economic disadvantage. Nevertheless, Bourdieu's recognition of the inter-relatedness of all forms of capital suggests that this economic inequality may result from, and contribute to, inequality in other aspects of social advantage, between educators in ECEC and their peers in other parts of the workforce.

Importantly, the theoretical framework for the study assists in theorising how educators' levels of social advantage might relate to their practice. According to Bourdieu's theory, social, economic and cultural capital have an integral role in shaping practice, through the mechanism of *habitus*, as situated in a given *field*. The capital that educators accrue can therefore be assumed to have bearing on the nature of their ECEC practice.

This theoretical reframing of the ECEC workforce establishes a powerful framework for empirical research. As Reay attests (2004b), the notion of *habitus* is most useful as "a way of looking at data which renders the 'taken-for-granted' problematic" (p. 437):

[Habitus] suggests a whole range of questions not necessarily addressed in empirical research; How well adapted is the individual to the context they find themselves in? How does personal history shape their responses to the contemporary setting? What subjective vocations do they bring to the present and how are they manifested? Are structural effects visible within small scale interactions? What is the meaning of non-verbal behaviour as well as individuals' use of language? (Reay, 1995a, p. 369, as cited in Reay, 2004b, p. 437).

This is in keeping with Bourdieu's own view of the purpose of social research, as challenging the misrecognition that occurs in "taking the world for granted" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 168). While policy-makers prefer to "simplify, smooth over, mend what is broken", the task of academic research is to "complicate, make messy, and to

shatter what is taken for granted" (Heydon & Iannacci, 2009, p. 161). By applying the concept of *habitus* to the relationship between educators' qualifications and quality of practice, new questions are generated for investigation, and jagged edges appear in the smooth lines of the policy narrative that may indicates fissures for productive reform.

As the Australian ECEC sector continues with the ongoing implementation of the National Quality Agenda reforms, new theoretical perspectives can help researchers, policy-makers and practitioners engage with some of the more difficult challenges of workforce development. The theoretical framework set out in this chapter is valuable for clarifying how social class dynamics within the ECEC workforce might affect educators' ability to capitalise on opportunities for professional growth presented by the reforms, and complicate the achievement of policy goals for improving ECEC practice. By understanding these dynamics, it becomes possible to engage with them more constructively, and recognise the effort that is needed to address them.

The desirability of research in this area is supported by prior studies that have identified social class as a blind spot in current research on ECEC workforce development. Noting a lack of data on social class for the ECEC workforce in the United Kingdom, Osgood (2005) argues that a class-based analysis of the ECEC workforce would make a valuable contribution to the evidence base for developing the ECEC profession. For Osgood, class has important consequences for educators' experiences of an international ECEC policy agenda that she argues is largely driven by middle-class interests and norms. Drawing on Osgood's (2009) work, Andrew (2015a) contends that the Australian policy agenda for developing the ECEC workforce is being implemented "without understanding of the classed and gendered factors that may complicate this process" (p. 306), and that "unresolved classing processes" may compromise its integrity (p. 307).

Through its history (see Chapter 1), the Australian ECEC sector has continued to employ educators from across the class spectrum (Andrew, 2015a)—as do other ECEC systems internationally (Osgood, 2012; Steinnes, 2014; Simpson, 2010). This study aims to help address the "unresolved" issues generated by this social diversity, by bringing Bourdieu's theories to bear on an empirical analysis of social advantage within the Australian ECEC workforce. The goal of the study is to demonstrate how educators come from different social origins, and may therefore require different levels of support to benefit from the opportunities that the National Quality Agenda provides. By framing the analysis in terms of educators' being, belonging, and becoming, the study extends the theoretical framework to consider how educators' professional growth can best be supported.

This approach is vulnerable to several of the same limitations as Bourdieu's own work. Its focus on social advantage pays scant attention to the role of race and ethnicity in shaping *habitus* and practice—a point which has been raised in other recent research (see Vincent, 2017, p. 550). Although Bourdieu (1986) claims that gender is "as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon from its acidity" (p. 106), analysis focused on social advantage also risks overlooking instances where gender dynamics may in fact exert stronger effects than social class—a point that may be especially relevant to the highly-feminised ECEC workforce. These limitations point to opportunities for the theoretical framework established for this study to inform the development of future research. Studies that consider how educators' gender, race or ethnicity influence their practice may be equally valuable, in examining the relationship between *person* and *practice* from different perspectives. This heightened awareness of self-in-practice is a key contribution that this study seeks to make, to provoke critical reflection among researchers, policy-makers and practitioners alike, about the social composition of the ECEC workforce and what this may mean for quality practice.

Chapter 3 — Method

Chapter 2 used Bourdieu's theory of practice to posit that educators' practice is determined not only by what they know, but who they are—especially their levels of social advantage. This offers a new way of thinking about the relationship between educators' qualifications and the quality of their practice. Qualifications may be seen as both signifiers of the knowledge that educators have gained through their study (in Bourdieu's terms, *institutionalised cultural capital*), and markers of a deeper accumulation of social, cultural and economic capital. This study postulates that *both* elements of what a qualification represents may have a bearing on educators' practice.

Disentangling these two influences on practice would require rigorous re-testing of the proposition that higher-level qualifications result in higher-quality practice, controlling for various aspects of educators' backgrounds that may also have an effect. This would serve to isolate the effects of the qualification itself, independent of educator-level effects—assuming that qualifications at a particular level themselves have a uniform influence (another complex proposition beyond the consideration of this study). Such an investigation would be a valuable addition to research on ECEC workforce development.

But for which characteristics of educators would the research need to control? Bourdieu's theory deliberately avoids demarcating the exact observable characteristics that constitute social class, preferring to keep social class as a fluid assemblage of various forms of capital that may be redefined according to the empirical field in which it is applied. Andrew (2015a) suggests that qualifications themselves may serve as the best available for proxy for educators' social class (while recognising that considerable "intragroup differences" exist within qualification groups) (p. 310)—but this is clearly an unhelpful variable for examining differences in social advantage that lie behind educators' qualifications. Occupation is also often used as a proxy for class (Marks, 1999); but is equally unhelpful in examining social class within an occupational group.

The specific research task undertaken by this study is therefore to empirically test the hypothesis that there are other aspects of social advantage associated with educators' level of qualification, which may influence their *habitus* and practice. To do this, it examines the relationship between educators' qualifications and a wide range of indicators, each of which signify a different dimension of social advantage, or the effects of social advantage on educators' attitudes and experience. In Bourdieu's terms, this may be defined as different kinds of economic, social and cultural capital, as well as measures that are not themselves definable as forms of capital, but which help to

understand capital and its effects. By analysing these indicators by educators' level of qualification (as defined by the AQF), it becomes possible to understand the differences in capital that increase with higher-level qualifications, as Bourdieu's theory suggests. It is also possible to identify differences between educators that may disrupt the relationship, which may help to explain why the relationship between qualifications and quality of practice does not always behave according to expectations (see Chapter 1).

This study does not go so far as to attempt empirical analysis of the relationship between these underlying variables and practice, to meet the research need identified above. Instead, it responds to the imperative that any attempt to establish causality in the complex sphere of human behaviour and social institutions first requires a sound descriptive understanding of the social phenomena involved (Borgman, 2015). Smith (2008) notes a tendency in quantitative social research "to rush to explain phenomena before determining whether or not they actually exist", resulting in under-description and poor measurement (p. 42). There is therefore value in providing a descriptive account of the diversity of social advantage in the Australian ECEC workforce and its relationship to qualifications, as a foundation on which more inferential studies may be grounded. Bourdieu's own use of statistics was "basically descriptive, [and] simply the starting point, the sociological constitution of the thing to be explained" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 60).

The research task taken up by this study involves four key steps:

- 1. Identifying measurable dimensions of social advantage (economic, social and cultural capital), and experiences and attitudes that may signify their effects
- 2. Gathering data on these indicators for the Australian early childhood workforce
- 3. Analysing these data, to examine the relationship between these indicators and early childhood educators' qualifications (to test the main hypothesis above)
- 4. Considering the possible implications of these relationships for educators' practice.

The last step in this process recognises that the value of social research lies not only in the application of existing theories, but building of new ones. By blending the theoretical framework, the empirical analysis, and contemporary understandings of ECEC practice, this study aims to generate new theories about how the relationship between person and practice might play out in the Australian ECEC sector as a *field*. These theories can then help point to new directions in future research, as well as in policy and practice.

Each of the steps listed above is detailed below, concluding with a discussion of how the methodology for the study responds to ethical imperatives of human subject research, and acknowledgement of its major limitations and their implications for further research.

1. Operationalising measures of social advantage

One of the most valuable contributions of Bourdieu's work to this study is the way in which the concept of capital dismantles social advantage into constituent constructs, which may then be measured empirically. As Bourdieu's own empirical research was concerned with differences in capital at the group or class level, he typically examined social advantage using aggregate statistical data (Jenkins, 2002, p. 88). This study follows Bourdieu, in using statistical data to examine the characteristics of groups of educators at aggregate level.

Bourdieu's methods have been applied to good effect in recent major empirical studies of social class. The Great British Class Survey (Savage et al., 2013) used a battery of indicators of social, cultural and economic capital to analyse class groupings in contemporary Britain. Sheppard and Biddle (2017) built on Savage and his co-authors' method to develop six indicators for Australia, two of each form of capital: economic (gross annual household income, and assets); cultural (measures of "highbrow cultural capital" and "emerging tastes", derived from items about participants' leisure activities); and social (the number and range of occupations among participants' social networks) (pp. 5–6). Based on this, they identified six broad class groups in contemporary Australian society.

A similar approach, surveying educators using these proven indicators, might have had value if the social class of educators was the sole concern of this study. However, this study is less concerned with the categorisation of educators into a particular social class, and more with specific aspects of social advantage that may have bearing on their practice. As such, this study relegates the construct of social class to the background— a move that may increase its relevance in Australia's purportedly "classless" society (Greig, Lewins & White, p. 169)—and focuses instead on the specific components of class that may make a difference to educators' practice¹⁰. As no attempt is made to aggregate these variables into a composite measure of social class, the term "social advantage" is preferred throughout this study, as it implies a scale of advantage that may

¹⁰ There are risks associated with relegating social class to the background, including implicitly normalising middle-class identities (Lawler, 2000), or endorsing individual advancement over systemic change (Reay, 2013). These are acknowledged limitations of this study.

vary with the individual, rather than a group-level classed identity. This approach requires three points of departure from Sheppard and Biddle's class-oriented method.

The first is the need to cast the net wider and deeper, in the search for indicators of cultural, social and economic capital that may influence educators' practice. A wider search for indicators of social advantage simply means that a greater number of indicators are considered. Bourdieu (1977) describes capital as anything "rare and worthy of being sought after in particular social formations" (p. 178), and his own research operationalises the concept of capital in many different ways, according to the empirical field of each study (Weininger, 2005). A deeper search requires that those indicators are less generic than those applied in class-based studies at population level, and more specifically relatable to ECEC practice. This means identifying variables based on factors that past research suggests may be most important to ECEC practice.

In addition, this study is concerned with the mediating factors through which the influence of capital on *habitus* and practice might be effected. To take the simple example of economic capital, low incomes may be associated with limited choices in housing, resulting in longer commutes to work, and higher levels of exhaustion which ultimately impact on practice. As well as indicators of capital itself, the study therefore also considers indicators of educators' attitudes and experiences in which such mediating factors might be seen. As discussed in Chapter 2, the extension of the theoretical framework to encompass aspects of educators' being, belonging and becoming provides scope for a broad range of attitudinal and experiential indicators to be considered.

The second point of departure arises from the attention given to *habitus* in this study. This presents a challenge for operationalisation, given that the concept of *habitus* is "nebulous" and characterised by "vagueness" (Sullivan, 2002, p. 150). This study takes Reay's (2004b) view, that the "conceptual looseness" of *habitus* is part of its strength, as it can be readily adapted to the questions generated by whatever empirical context it encounters (p. 441). In this study, the concepts of being, belonging and becoming from the EYLF are used as tools to identify various mediating factors that may impact on *habitus*, among indicators that are observable in empirical research.

This includes attention to the historical nature of *habitus* (see Chapter 2)—in that it reflects not only who a person is at a given point of time, but their journey to becoming that person, and the cultural, social and economic capital they have accumulated along the way; as well as their future aspirations (which *habitus*, by way of *symbolic violence*, may also affect). This calls for data that is not confined to the here-and-now, but also

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explores educators' social trajectories over the life course. The concept of becoming from the EYLF provides a lens through which this historical dimension may be explored.

The third significant point of departure is a shift towards subjective, as well as objective, indicators of social advantage. Class differences are not always observable (Sennett & Cobb, 1973), but may be deeply encoded in "people's sense of self-worth and in their attitudes to and awareness of others – on how they carry themselves as individuals" (Savage, 2000, p. 107, as cited in Bottero, 2010, p. 6). Osborn and Morris' (1979) diagrammatic representation of the variables that make up social class is reproduced in Figure 3.1, as an example of a model of social class that places subjectivity at the centre.

Figure 3.1 – Example of a model of factors determining social class (reproduced)



Source: Osborn and Morris, 1979, p. 45.

For this reason, this study also considers indicators that reflect educators' subjective perceptions of their social position, alongside objective, observable characteristics.

These features of this study's approach thereby bring together elements of established methods for the measurement of social advantage, and the three key concepts underpinning learning and development according to the *doxa* of the ECEC *field*: being, belonging and becoming (see Chapter 2). In terms of how data are used in this study, *being* reflects objective, observable characteristics of who educators are, including point-in-time descriptors of their social, economic and cultural capital. *Belonging* is something experienced subjectively, and involves data on how educators feel about their levels of capital and their resultant social position. *Becoming* is addressed through longitudinal data that charts educators' social position over time. These three concepts guide the collection, analysis and presentation of empirical data throughout this study.

2. Collecting data on the Australian ECEC workforce

This study's approach to the operationalisation of measures of social advantage informed the approach to data collection. It called for data that would be broad enough to encompass the desired breadth of indicators, and of sufficient scale to enable meaningful analysis of educators as a social group. Collection of primary data against these indicators was rendered unnecessary—and inefficient—by the existence of high-quality data sets, available for analysis, that addressed the desired constructs in statistically valid ways, without placing further burden on research participants. Australia has been described as a world leader in making large-scale data available for research use (Borgman, 2015), and Australian researchers are fortunate to be able to access a wide range of public data, through government agencies and research institutions.

The selection of data sets and indicators occurred through a two-way, iterative interaction between the intended research task, and the contents of the data sets themselves. This two-way movement between induction and deduction is typical in the use of existing data in educational research (Smith, 2008), which is often guided by interplay between researchers' general substantive interests and their growing familiarity with the data files (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). It is not claimed here that the data sets selected in this way encompass all possible measures of educators' capital and its effects that could have been considered—for example, they fail to cover some indicators used in Sheppard and Biddle's (2017) research. At the same time, their limitations provided a valuable discipline to the study, in necessitating some pragmatic "stopping rules" to keep the indicators of capital within manageable bounds.

The study uses data from three major Australian data sets, described below, which align well with the three dimensions of learning and development set out by the EYLF—being, belonging and becoming (see Chapter 2). Several other data sets were also considered during the data collection phase, but rejected after initial exploratory analysis revealed major limitations in their usefulness. These additional data sets are described at Appendix 2, along with the reasons for their exclusion.

ABS Census of Population and Housing

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing (ABS Census) is used to examine educators' *being*, or who they are in the context of Australian society. The ABS Census is an extensive cross-sectional survey of the entire Australian population, completed every five years, covering topics related to occupation, education, family relationships and other demographic characteristics. The Census has been described as "the envy of other developed countries" (Hutchens & Marten, 2015, n.p.),
and is a valuable data source for researchers from many disciplines and fields. At the time of data analysis for this study, 2011 was the most recent Census data available.

ABS Census data may be readily accessed through a range of user interfaces, or customised fee-for-service requests. The free-to-access TableBuilder interface was selected for this research, which enables the construction of basic customised aggregate tables using a range of variables. While TableBuilder does not allow the same fine-grained analysis that would be possible with unit record files, its cross-tabulation functions provided sufficient granularity for the descriptive purposes of this study.

The ABS Census data offer many advantages for understanding the entirety of a social group, without the need to take into account limitations arising from sampling¹¹. It also enables comparison between particular social groups and the general Australian population; a feature that has been used in this study. The limitations of the ABS Census mainly relate to a lack of depth in the scope of survey items, which primarily relate to general demographic and economic characteristics. Even so, the ABS Census remains an excellent resource for examining indicators of capital for the Australian ECEC workforce, and understanding their social advantage relative to other Australians.

ECEC National Workforce Census (NWC)

The Australian Government ECEC National Workforce Census (NWC) is used primarily to examine educators' sense of *belonging* in the ECEC sector. The NWC is a national census of all Australian ECEC services approved for Child Care Benefit (CCB), which is a subsidy to families paid by the Australian Government. It has been conducted three times by the Social Research Centre (SRC) on behalf of the Australian Government, in 2010, 2013 and 2016¹², with the same survey items repeated each time. Data from both the 2010 and 2013 surveys were provided for analysis in this study.

The NWC includes two components: a compulsory service-level questionnaire, and an optional staff questionnaire. The Service Survey requires ECEC service leaders to provide details of each of the educators employed at their service, making it a powerful source of information about the ECEC workforce. The Staff Survey also attracts a strong response rate, with at least one staff member from 75 per cent of Australian ECEC services responding in 2010, and 70.9 per cent in 2013 (SRC, 2011, 2014).¹³

¹¹ TableBuilder data are not weighted, so accuracy is affected by undercount (see ABS, 2012).

¹² Data from the 2016 NWC was not available in time to be included in the study. A time lag of at least two years is common before government data is available for analysis (Smith, 2008)

¹³ A Staff Survey response rate, defined as a per cent of total staff, is not provided, given that no definitive estimate of the total number of staff can be established (SRC, 2014, p. 6).

The NWC has significant advantages as a source of information about Australia's ECEC workforce. The Service Survey comes as close as may be possible to a comprehensive census of all workers in government-approved ECEC services (notwithstanding that it carries the risk of double-counting for educators employed in multiple services simultaneously). As a sector-specific survey instrument designed by policy-makers, its constituent items are highly relevant to contemporary issues affecting policy and practice in the ECEC sector. A further advantage is that the NWC targets ECEC services affected by new regulations for workforce qualifications (as being subject to these regulations is a condition of eligibility for CCB approval), making it especially pertinent to this study.

The chief disadvantage of the NWC is that it is not collected with research purposes in mind. Access to the data is limited by stringent legal instruments, specifically *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*, which places strict limitations on data release. Although a Data Protocol was created to support the release of NWC data (DEEWR, 2011b), contact with DEEWR (now DET) staff indicated that there were neither processes nor resources in place to facilitate transfer of data for research purposes. As a result, it took over 14 months to obtain the data, which could then only be provided as aggregate tables rather than unit record files, precluding deeper analysis. As with the ABS Census, however, the aggregate tables are still sufficient to yield rich empirical data to explore the research questions in this study.

Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY)

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) data set is used in this study to examine educators' process of *becoming* over time. LSAY is a major longitudinal survey that tracks young people as they move from school to post-school destinations. LSAY is funded primarily by the Australian Government, and currently administered by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), after being administered by the Australian Council for Educational Research from 1995 to 2007 (LSAY, 2016). A 2014 review recognised LSAY as the "pre-eminent source of information" on transition and pathways for young people in Australia (Australian Department of Education [DoE] 2014, p. 4). LSAY is included in the ABS listing of Essential Statistical Assets for Australia (DoE, 2014).

LSAY has so far collected data from six cohorts, with the first two cohorts based on commencing samples of Year 9 students, and the remaining cohorts based on age samples commencing at age 15 (modally Year 10). This reflects the fact that from 2003 onwards, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Australian sample was used as the LSAY commencing sample. PISA selects participants based on

their age rather than their modal grade. Each cohort is surveyed annually until cohort members turn 25—comprising a total of 11 waves for most cohorts, or 12 for the first two cohorts, to ensure that all participants had reached age 25 in the final survey year (LSAY, 2016). The LSAY surveys cover a wide range of topics, including achievement, aspirations, post-school transition pathways to work or study, and satisfaction with school and life in general.

At the time of data analysis for this study, data for the first five cohorts were available for use, with the first three cohorts having completed all waves of data collection. The total sample for each cohort in the first wave is shown in Table 3.1, including the number of schools (to reflect LSAY's cluster-based sample design), and the proportion of students in each year level. The last column shows the number of waves for each cohort that were available for use in this study, at the commencement of data analysis in January 2016.

Cohort	Studente	Schools		Year level		Waves available
Conon	Students	3010015	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	(Jan 2016)
1995	13,613	301	100%			10
1998	14,117	296	100%			10
2003	12,551	321	8%	72%	20%	10
2006	14,170	357	9%	72%	19%	8
2009	14,251	354	11%	71%	18%	5
2015	14,530	758	11%	75%	14%	0

Table 3.1 – LSAY sample by cohort, showing waves available for this study

Source: Derived from supplied LSAY data files.

The main intended purpose of LSAY is analysis of general patterns in young people's post-school pathways and transitions. The LSAY data therefore include weightings for each wave, to correct for attrition over time, and enable results to be reported as representative of the entire Australian population. However, LSAY data has also been used for narrower studies that examine specific groups, especially groups of interest to particular policy concerns (DoE, 2014). Following this idea, this study uses LSAY data to examine a particular group of Australian young people: those bound for ECEC study and careers. LSAY provides a unique resource to track young early childhood educators back into secondary school, and find out how their early accumulation of social and cultural capital translated to later involvement in ECEC-related study or employment.

Working with LSAY data involves two major limitations. The first is the relatively small number of young people who went on to become early childhood educators during their period of involvement in LSAY, and the impossibility of knowing whether they constitute a representative sample of young people who do so. This is partly due to attrition from the survey, which has been highest among students with lower levels of school achievement—a group from which many young early childhood educators are likely to be drawn, as will be shown later in this study—as well as other characteristics associated with social disadvantage (see Rothman, 2009). For this reason, the educators located in the LSAY data are best treated as case studies, rather than a generalisable sample.

The second limitation arises from the unwieldy nature of the LSAY files. The 2014 review found that even advanced users of LSAY data "generally considered that the LSAY dataset is difficult to work with and...the investment of time needed to become proficient is much greater than in some other longitudinal surveys" (DoE, 2014, p. 4). The time invested in this work for this study arguably makes the LSAY findings all the more valuable, and they showcase some of the unique insights that LSAY can provide. At the same time, limitations on what could be produced for this study within available time suggest that further work with LSAY data on this topic remains a worthwhile area for further research.

Locating educators within the data

Quality of sampling is a significant factor in the reliability and rigour of quantitative research (Harrison, 2010). By drawing on high-quality, large-scale data sets in which statistically rigorous sampling procedures have already been applied, this study avoided many of the challenges of obtaining a sufficient sample that may arise in quantitative doctoral research (see Smith, 2008). However, while use of existing data may be a cost-effective means of achieving a quality sample (Goodwin, 2012), its "ease of acquisition" should not be mistaken for "ease of analysis" (Borgman, 2015, p. 128). Researchers must invest considerable time to "know the data intimately" before commencing analysis, especially for complex data sets (Harrison, 2010, p. 140). As those who collected the data may not have shared the research interests of the analyst (Blaikie, 2003), translation work may also be required to prepare data for a specific analytical purpose.

A key translation issue for this study lay in identifying early childhood educators within each data file. Occupational groups are seldom easy to define, and have "longstanding issues of classification" (Smith, 2008, p. 74), which are compounded for occupations with lower-status or emerging identities (Seddon & Bohren, 2012). Early childhood educators fall into this group—due to the emerging nature of ECEC as a coherent profession, a wide range of terms is still used to describe early childhood educators in international research; in contrast, for example, to the well-defined construct of "teacher" in school education (Royer & Moreau, 2016, p. 136).

For quantitative researchers, occupational coding frameworks can go some way towards mitigating the difficulties of occupational classification (Smith, 2008). These frameworks are typically applied to surveys in which respondents provide open-ended descriptions of their occupation and role, which are then coded into designated categories. The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), First Edition, Revision 1 (ABS, 2009) is widely used in Australian surveys, including both the ABS Census and LSAY data sets used in this study.

Even so, "early childhood educator" does not appear on the ANZSCO occupational list as a recognised occupation. It was therefore necessary to create a classification of "early childhood educator" appropriate to each data set, using its underlying constructs—that is, the three components of the definition of an "educator" as defined in the EYLF:

- 1. Early childhood practitioners who
- 2. work directly with children in
- 3. early childhood settings (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5, emphasis added).

These components were used to select survey items in each of the data sets that would enable a group of "educators" to be identified. The use of multiple data sets also enabled some triangulation, to test the plausibility of results. This method is admittedly imperfect, and may have excluded educators (or included non-educators) in some data sets—but all systems of classification inevitably contain "gaps or slippages" of some kind (Bowker & Star, 1999, p. 11). The remainder of this section describes the method used for classifying "early childhood educators" in each of the data sets listed above.

ABS Census of Population and Housing

Three variables within the ABS Census data were used to identify early childhood educators, associated with the three underlying constructs in the EYLF:

Early childhood practitioners

Early childhood practitioners may be found in two main Unit Groups in the ANZSCO coding structure: *2411: Early Childhood (Pre-Primary) Teachers* and *4211: Child Carers* (ABS, 2006). The former group is described as workers who "teach the basics of numeracy, literacy, music, art and literature to early childhood (pre-primary) students and promote students' social, emotional, intellectual and physical development", and who typically have "a level of skill commensurate with a bachelor degree or higher qualification" (p. 247). The latter group is described as providing "care and supervision

for children", requiring skills "commensurate with AQF Certificate II or III", or at least one year of experience (p. 287). Full descriptions for each group are provided at Appendix 3.

The ANZSCO descriptions therefore still reflect the historical divide between education and care (Elliott, 2007), rather than contemporary recognition that all educators simultaneously support children's learning and build caring relationships. A striking example can be seen in how ANZSCO describes the act of telling a story to a child: as "language development" for an *Early Childhood (Pre-Primary) Teacher* (p. 247), but "entertaining children" for a *Child Carer* (p. 287). A similar issue is reported in recent US research, which found occupational codes to be "inadequate, primarily because they maintain the artificial dichotomy of education and child care, which does not reflect the reality of the work or the overlap in roles" (Rhodes & Huston, 2012, p. 14).

It appears that this misalignment has resulted in ABS Census respondents (or coders) having had some difficulty fitting actual ECEC occupations to the ANZSCO codes. Despite ANZSCO's expectations for "commensurate skills", many *Child Carers* in the ABS Census data in fact held early childhood teaching degrees; and others coded as *Early Childhood (Pre-Primary) Teachers* did not have a qualification above certificate level (ABS, 2017). While raw free-text responses were unavailable for the ABS Census, examples from the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA—see Appendix 2) (for which free-text answers used for ANZSCO coding are included in the public data) show how this confusion may have arisen. Of the 41 respondents coded as *Child Carers* or *Pre-primary teachers* in AuSSA (2003–2014), most identified both care and education in describing their role, at all qualification levels, as illustrated in the examples below:

Certificate-qualified: "Educate and care for children aged under 5 years" Diploma-qualified: "Supervision, caring, helping, teaching" Degree-qualified: "Ensure safety and mental, physical emotional wellbeing"

Only a few displayed an enduring view of the education/care divide, for example:

Unqualified: "Care for young children"

Degree-qualified: "Design, plan and teach children how to read and write".

This mix of roles suggests that a review of ANZSCO to reflect current understandings of educators' work would be timely and worthwhile—an idea that is revisited in the policy recommendations provided at the conclusion of this study.

Work directly with children

Whatever their other limitations, the ANZSCO role descriptions for *Early Childhood (Pre-Primary) Teachers* and *Child Carers* clearly fit the construct of *work directly with children*. This construct is more problematic for a third ANZSCO Unit Group in which early childhood educators might also be found: *1341: Child Care Centre Managers*. According to ANZSCO, the role of an ECEC manager may vary, from "implementing programs" and "providing care" for children, through to more administrative duties which imply little direct engagement in the ECEC program (ABS, 2006, p. 107—see Appendix 3).

In the absence of other information, it appears reasonable to assume that *Child Care Centre Managers* with an ECEC qualification would be most likely to engage directly with children, as opposed to managers with qualifications in another field (such as management or business administration). Respondents in this category are therefore included in the "sample" of educators if their *field of highest qualification* is among those considered relevant to ECEC practice (see below). This constitutes a plausible proxy to enable educators working in management roles to be included in the analysis.

Early childhood settings

The *industry of employment* variable in the ABS Census provided a way of ensuring that all educators selected met the criterion of working in *early childhood settings*. The ABS Census uses the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006 (ABS, 2006) to code workplaces in a similar way as occupations, to facilitate analysis. Again, the historic divide between education and care was apparent. The relevant industries in the ANZSIC framework were *Preschool and School Education*, classified under "Education and Training"; or *Child Care Services*, which is classified under "Health Care and Social Assistance" (ABS, 2006, p. 42). Due to the increasing integration between preschool and child care services in Australia, the distinction between these two categories was deemed irrelevant for the purposes of the study.

The diversity of provision arrangements in the ECEC sector meant that several further industries were also deemed to be plausible categories into which ECEC services may have been coded. *Labour supply services* may include the many educators employed through recruitment agencies, while *local* or *state government administration* are plausible codes for educators who may have described their employer as a government agency. All types of school were also deemed within-scope, reflecting that many educators work within schools, including some that mainly provide secondary education. As the ANZSCO codes had been used to select Pre-Primary Teachers or Child Carers

only, there was little risk that teachers of school-age children in these settings would inadvertently be included. Table 3.2 shows all codes deemed within-scope for the study.

Employment Placement and Recruitment	Primary Education					
Services	Secondary Education					
Labour Supply Services	Combined Primary and Secondary Education					
State Government Administration	Special School Education					
Local Government Administration	Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd					
Education and Training, nfd	Social Assistance Services, nfd					
Preschool and School Education, nfd	Inadequately described					
Preschool Education	Child Care Services					
School Education, nfd	Not stated					

Table 3.2 – ANZSIC codes used for identifying ECEC settings

Note: "nfd" means "not further defined".

Selecting these industry codes enabled *Child Carers* employed by *Private Households* (such as nannies) to be excluded, as well as many other *Child Carers* employed outside the ECEC sector (for example, in the *Sports and Recreation* industry). Employment outside ECEC services was less common for those identified as *Early Childhood (Pre-Primary) Teachers*, although some respondents were also excluded using this method. A limitation of this method is that the ANZSCO codes do not provide sufficient detail to limit the definition of *early childhood* settings to those set out in Chapter 1 (preschool, long day care, family day care and school age care), and educators in other settings not affected by workforce reforms (such as occasional care) are therefore included. However, these settings constitute a small proportion of ECEC services overall (SRC, 2011), so this limitation is unlikely to have a large impact on the validity of the findings.

Using these methods, a total of 117,010 educators were identified in the ABS Census.

ECEC National Workforce Census

Locating educators was simplest in the NWC, as it was designed specifically for the Australian ECEC workforce. All staff identified in the Service Survey, and respondents to the Staff Survey, may therefore be defined as *early childhood practitioners*. On some indicators, the NWC also enabled the condition *work directly with children* to be satisfied, as data were provided only for "contact" staff (that is, staff who work with children in ECEC services, as opposed to "non-contact staff" who primarily perform other duties

such as food preparation or administration). This distinction was only made in selected tables provided for the study, so the condition could not be satisfied for all NWC data.¹⁴

Defining *early childhood settings* involved more judgement. The NWC includes all CCBapproved services (see above), including some that have been defined as out-of-scope for this study, such as occasional care and vacation care. However, as all the NWC data tables provided for this study were disaggregated by service type, it was possible to restrict analysis to only those educators in the four service types within scope: preschool, long day care, family day care and school age care.

NWC workforce data are weighted at two levels: service and individual. A weighting is applied at the service level in the Service Survey, which corrects for differences between the number of ECEC services of each type responding, and the estimated in-scope population of services operating in the reference week (SRC, 2011, 2014). A modified version of the service-level weighting is then applied to each staff member reported for the service. Responses to the NWC Staff Survey (completed by educators themselves) are weighted against the estimate of total educators using rim (Random Iterative Method) weighting, which adjusts for multiple variables at the same time with minimal distortion to the data (SRC, 2011, 2014). These weightings were applied to all NWC data by the data custodians, before suppling the aggregate tables for use in this study.

A total of 113,591 educators were identified in the weighted 2010 NWC data, and a total of 124,127 in NWC data for 2013. This figure provides some validation of the method for identifying educators used in the ABS Census. The total number of educators identified in the ABS Census (117,010) represents a plausible total for 2011, given the likelihood of a year-to-year increase in the overall size of the ECEC sector, and the inclusion in the ABS Census sample of a broader range of ECEC settings.

Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

Like the ABS Census, the LSAY data uses ANZSCO and ANZSIC (or a prior equivalent) to code occupations and workplaces, enabling a similar approach to identifying educators to be applied as was used in the ABS Census. The same categories were selected, with adaptations made as appropriate to fit the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Second Edition (ABS, 1997) used instead of ANZSCO in the early waves of the survey. This enabled young people working as *early childhood practitioners* in *early childhood settings* to be identified in each wave.

¹⁴ Presentation of NWC data throughout this study identifies whether data were provided for "contact" staff / "educators" only, or for "all staff".

The unique qualities of LSAY required two variations to this method. The first recognises that LSAY includes many young people who have not yet commenced their working lives, and who might enter the ECEC workforce after their participation in the survey has concluded (either due to attrition, or reaching the age of 25). To capture these young people, the sampling method extended to young people studying in an ECEC field (using *field of study* variables in each wave). Study in an ECEC field was considered to be a reasonable indication of intent to work in ECEC at some point beyond the survey; noting that this excluded young people studying dual primary/ECEC degrees, in which intention to work in ECEC may be possible but could not be assumed.

The second variation arises from the longitudinal nature of the survey. A common strategy in longitudinal survey research is to increase sample size by pooling surveys collected over time (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). This method was applied to LSAY, combining "educators" over multiple intakes to gain the largest possible sample. That is, LSAY participants were included in the sample of educators if they had *ever* either worked or studied in ECEC during their participation in the survey. This method requires the construct of interest to remain reasonably stable over time, so that cohorts at different points of time may be treated as equals (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). To address this, each LSAY item selected for analysis was first disaggregated by year, to check for variation across cohorts or waves. Notwithstanding minor variations that may be due to cohort differences¹⁵, the items explored in this research remained stable over time.

This method resulted in 1,534 respondents being identified as educators in at least one LSAY wave. As noted above, this sample is treated in this study as a cluster of case studies, rather than a representative sample. Weightings have not been applied, as it is not possible to determine whether the population-level weightings developed for LSAY adequately capture the adjustment that would be required for the sample of educators to accurately represent all young people involved in ECEC study and work in Australia.

3. Analysing the relationship between capital and qualifications

For each of the data sets, the analysis consisted of examining the relationship between educators' level of qualification, and indicators of the effects and possible mediating factors of economic, social and cultural capital that were present in each survey. The analysis involved two goals:

¹⁵ An exception was the 2003 cohort, in which higher results appeared in attitudinal measures. This may be attributable to a change in sampling method for this wave. This may have slightly inflated attitudinal measures for the composite LSAY sample overall, but does not affect comparison between qualification groups, which is the main focus of analysis for this study.

a) To test the hypothesis that higher-level qualifications represent the effects of capital

As set out in Chapter 2, Bourdieu's theory of capital recognises that qualifications are markers of broader differences in social advantage. If this proposition holds true, then educators with higher-level qualifications (as defined by the AQF) may be expected to have higher levels of capital of other kinds. The analysis aimed to identify aspects of cultural, economic and social capital that increase or decrease consistently along the AQF-based qualifications continuum. The analysis also examines the variance across qualification groups for key indicators, by finding the standard deviation of the four values (for each qualification group: degree-qualified, diploma-qualified, certificate-qualified, and unqualified). This method enables indicators with high variance across qualification groups to be identified, even if they do not conform to the pattern anticipated by the hypothesis.

b) To identify other notable findings with possible implications for educators' practice

The analysis is not solely concerned with proving or disproving the above hypothesis. Writing about the limitations of secondary data analysis, Thorne (1998) cautions that approaching secondary data with a preconceived intention exposes researchers to "a serious risk of finding what they seek rather than learning what is there" (p. 10). The analysis therefore remains open to "learning what is there" by also considering notable findings arising in the analysis that do not address the hypothesis, but provide other insights into social advantage for the Australian ECEC workforce. The analysis therefore considers how the indicators in each data set may vary between groups of educators at different qualification levels in unexpected ways, in mediating the relationship between capital, *habitus*, and practice.

Defining qualification groups

The first step in analysis involved grouping the educators identified in each data set into qualification groups for comparison: degree-qualified, diploma-qualified, certificate-qualified and unqualified.¹⁶ The method applied to each data set is set out below.

ABS Census of Population and Housing

The ABS Census *Non-school Qualification: Level of Education* variable captures the approximate AQF level of the highest qualification a respondent has completed, defined

¹⁶ While it may be possible to disaggregate these groups further—for example, by separating educators with bachelor and postgraduate degrees, or advanced diplomas and diplomas— these distinctions are not made in the qualification requirements in the National Quality Agenda, and were therefore considered to be irrelevant to the study.

using the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) (ABS, 2001). The categories within this item were collapsed into four groups for the purposes of this study:

- Not applicable (signifies no post-school qualification)
- Certificate Level
- Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level
- Degree Level (composite field comprising Bachelor Degree Level, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level, and Postgraduate Degree Level)

As the ABS Census does not distinguish between certificate levels, it was not possible to excluded Certificate I or II qualifications from analysis, even though they are below the minimum Certificate III threshold for work in ECEC services. However, this is unlikely to affect results, as VET qualifications in ECEC (or Children's Services, as the field was previously known) commence at Certificate III level (Australian Government, 2018).

The *Non-school Qualification: Field of Study* (QALFP) variable in the ABS Census data captures the field of the highest post-school qualification, using categories defined by the ASCED. The fields of study identified as relevant to ECEC are listed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 – QALFP categories used for identifying ECEC-related qualifications

Teacher Education: Secondary
Teacher Education, nec
Education, nec
Children's Services

Note: "nfd" means "not further defined", "nec" means "not elsewhere classified"

The inclusion of non-ECEC teaching qualifications reflects the fact that they may be granted equivalent status to ECEC qualifications for regulatory purposes (ACECQA, n.d.). As these requirements have varied in the past across Australian states and territories, and as the content of teaching qualifications has also changed, any further limitation on these fields risks excluding educators with older qualifications. Inclusion of non-ECEC teaching fields is consistent with ABS national guidelines on ECEC data collection (ABS, 2013).

Analysis of the ABS Census data also considered groups of educators whose highest qualification (certificate, diploma or degree) is in a non-ECEC-related field. Although these groups may be considered "unqualified" for industrial purposes in their employment in the ECEC sector, their out-of-field qualifications are nevertheless important in applying Bourdieu's theories about the relationship between qualifications and capital; that is, their

out-of-field qualifications may indicate higher stores of capital than are held by educators with no qualification at all. These groups are therefore separated from the four key ECEC-related qualification groups, for the purposes of analysis. It is not possible to know from the ABS Census data how many of these educators also hold ECEC-related qualifications, at a lower or equivalent AQF level.

ECEC National Workforce Census

The NWC is designed to be a source of national information about the qualifications of the ECEC workforce, and therefore clearly identifies whether educators hold a relevant qualification, and at which level. The four qualification groups used in this study are:

- No ECEC qualification (includes a small group reporting an ECEC qualification below Certificate III, which is below the minimum qualification for ECEC work)
- ECEC Certificate III/IV
- ECEC Advanced Diploma and Diploma
- ECEC Bachelor degree and above

ECEC-related qualifications are defined in the NWC using a broad group of fields: early childhood teaching, primary teaching, other teaching, child care, nursing (including mothercraft nursing), and other human welfare studies (SRC, 2011, 2014). The NWC does not identify whether educators simultaneously hold other qualifications in another field, or whether they are working towards a further ECEC qualification at a higher level. This may have implications for the relationship that NWC data shows, between the level of educators' highest ECEC-related qualification and their levels of capital, if some educators hold higher out-of-field qualifications that are not captured in the data.

Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

As noted above, the participants selected for analysis in the LSAY data include young people studying in an ECEC-related field, as well as those already in the ECEC workforce. This presented a number of complexities in assigning LSAY participants to ECEC qualification groups. The first is that participants might transition between qualification groups over time; for example, by completing a certificate, working in ECEC for a while, and then commencing a diploma. For the purposes of categorisation, participants were assigned to the highest level of ECEC qualification that they commenced at any point in the survey, as most indicative of their institutionalised capital.

A second complexity arose from variation between LSAY waves in the methods for classifying qualifications. This varied not only between waves, but sometimes between survey items within waves (for example, a different set of categories might be used in a variable denoting the level of a qualification being undertaken, compared to the level of a qualification already completed). A substantial task for the analysis was therefore coding these variables to create four uniform groups, corresponding as closely as possible to the levels used in the other data sets: unqualified, certificate, diploma or advanced diploma, and degree. A full list of variables used is provided at Appendix 4.

The inclusion of young people both studying and working in ECEC required a narrower definition of ECEC as a field of study than had been used for the other data sets. Unlike the ABS Census, LSAY participants had not already been identified as "educators" due to their occupation and industry of employment, so a broad definition of their field of study would risk including too many young people destined for other kinds of teaching work. For this reason, only the ASCED fields *Teacher Education: Early Childhood* and *Children's Services* were included for analysis.¹⁷

Young people studying *Teacher Education: Primary* (without early childhood) were also selected, as a comparison group. Due to the "case study" approach to sampling in the LSAY data, it seemed preferable to compare young people engaged in ECEC study and work to another specific occupational group, rather than to the sample as a whole (which would create difficulties applying weights consistently to both comparison groups). Primary school teachers were chosen as a logical group for comparison, as it is an occupational group engaged in comparable work with children, whose progress along the path to professionalisation is arguably further advanced (see Hoyle, 2008). This comparison group only includes young people who have *not* also engaged in ECEC-related work or study, to guard against duplication between the groups.

As with the ABS Census, a further complexity arose in the treatment of out-of-field qualifications, compounded by movement of LSAY participants into, and out of, the ECEC sector over time. While posing a challenge to categorisation, this complexity also offered a rich vein of analysis in charting patterns in young people's ECEC pathways and transitions. Further detail on the variation in young people's pathways that lie behind their classification into ECEC qualification groups is provided in the analysis in Chapter 6.

¹⁷ Early LSAY waves used the Field of Study Classification of Tertiary Education Courses (FOSCTEC – superseded by ACSED), or a custom field-of-study code. FOSCTEC has no distinct code for child care, so some early-wave educators may have been overlooked.

Analysing the relationship with capital and its effects

The next stage of analysis involved making comparisons between these qualification groups, on various indicators of the effects of cultural, economic and social capital, and other indicators that may constitute mediating factors on the relationship between social advantage and practice. This involved intensive conceptual work in identifying which constructs to measure, and determining how to report and interpret them against the study's research goals—reflecting the movement "from words to numbers and back to words" typical of quantitative social research (Blaikie, 2003, p. 21). The identification of indicators constituted an iterative interaction between issues identified in the literature and theoretical framework as potentially of interest, and the indicators that each data set could supply. For the LSAY data, variation in survey items across waves and cohorts was an additional concern. Due to the relatively low number of educators identified in the LSAY data, priority was given to indicators that were included in the highest possible number of waves and cohorts.

The analysis of each data set commences with general information about the educators in the sample, using basic demographic variables, followed by the description of each indicator and the extent of its variation across the four qualification groups. This includes discussion of any notable findings for each indicator, in terms of its relationship to educators' level of qualification, and other information it may provide about educators' cultural, economic or social capital. Each chapter concludes with a table of key indicators, summarising patterns of variation across the four qualification groups.

The comparisons themselves are presented in simple descriptive form. Usually, the indicators appear in the data as categorical (rather than continuous) variables, meaning that comparisons mainly focus on the percentage of each qualification group in each category, rather than comparison of means on a scale. Where a large number of response categories exist, these are often collapsed into composite categories that best highlight salient trends, to support clarity and efficiency in presentation. The use of census data for the ABS Census and NWC means that tests of statistical significance in the relationship between variables are unnecessary; results can be taken as an accurate representation of the population (*n* is given for all major figures and tables, to account for variation in response rates across survey items). For LSAY data, the "case study" approach means that no statistical generalisation is attempted.

The exact analysis performed for each data set depended on its properties. The ABS Census enables comparisons between educators and the entire Australian population, to place educators in the broader social context. The dynamic TableBuilder interface also enables some cross-tabulation of variables at aggregate level, when the relationship between indicators themselves is of interest to the study. Cross-tabulation of indicators is not possible for the NWC data, as tables were provided in static aggregate form, but the availability of 2010 and 2013 NWC results enables comparisons over time. Notionally, the most sophisticated analysis is possible for the LSAY data, as unit record files are available, but the scope for analysis was constrained by the difficulties involved in using LSAY data, with each variable requiring extensive time for analysis. For all data sets, the extent of analysis is sufficient to provide worthwhile insight into the research questions, while leaving ample scope for possible further research.

4. Considering implications for practice

The value of this study does not lie in simply accounting for the economic, social and cultural capital of educators in different qualification groups. Linking data to theory is an important part of translating quantitative information into meaning (Bourdieu, 1988), to avoid the "empty empiricism" (Lingard, 2011, p. 378) common in policy-oriented quantitative research (see also Ball, 2006; Lauder, Brown, & Halsey, 2004). This study's greatest value therefore lies in the power of its theoretical framework to enable the empirical findings to be translated into implications for educators' practice.

The final part of the study draws together the findings from the data analysis, and the principles of quality ECEC practice set out in the National Quality Agenda, using the theoretical framework of the study to build a conceptual bridge between them. Through the lens of capital, the analysis aims to identify how aspects of educators' being, belonging and becoming may—through *habitus*—have consequences for their professional practice. This connects the study back to the goals of the National Quality Agenda—to improve quality and consistency in Australian ECEC services—in a way that responds to the actual characteristics of educators themselves.

This return from the empirical to the theoretical field is necessarily speculative—theory is, after all, the language of "imagination" (Ball, 2006, p. 19)—and the relationships it proposes between educators' capital and practice would require substantial further empirical research to confirm. The test of rigour in this discussion is therefore not the verifiability of its conclusions, but its plausibility in bringing theory and data together in a credible logic, and pointing towards constructive pathways for further inquiry. It follows Ball's (2006) advice that theoretical work must be guided by "a particular concern to maintain coherence", while resisting "closure" and leaving spaces open for uncertainty, multiplicity, and alternative interpretations (p. 20). This accords with Bourdieu's own epistemological stance, that social research—even when this "runs counter to the usual

idea of intellectual rigour"—must embrace what is "complicated, confused, impure, [and] uncertain", as the defining characteristics of any sphere of human activity (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1991, p. 259).

Ethical considerations

At face value, the ethics involved in research using existing data may seem relatively straightforward, as steps have already been taken to protect participant consent and anonymity at the point of data collection (Thorne, 1998). However, the greater distance between the researcher and participants in such studies arguably places a greater responsibility on the researcher, to consider whether the research aligns with the intentions of the original data collection, and the possible impact of the findings on participants themselves (Smith, 2008). This is a particular risk when findings may position certain groups as somehow in "deficit" (see Yu, 2011, p. 7, for a discussion of this issue in research on Australian Aboriginal communities).

The absence of direct participation from educators is a notable limitation of this study. In terms of the study's aims, it is well-justified by the theoretical framework, as the inherent invisibility of *habitus* means that "agents are not in a better position than academics when it comes to translating into explicit discursivity the inherent logic of their own practice" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 63). At the same time, it necessitates the establishment of principles for analysis that aim to mitigate any risk of harm to participants arising from the study, especially to guard against positioning any group of educators in a "deficit" role. The principles that guided data analysis and interpretation in this study are set out below:

- The value attributed to capital is arbitrary. The arbitrariness of how different forms of capital are valued is central to Bourdieu's theory of practice. While recognising that the kinds of capital valued by the dominant class are important for achieving social mobility, this leaves open the possibility for other forms of capital to exist, which have less widely-recognised value. Yu (2011) urges researchers to take seriously what is valued by researched populations themselves, and this study therefore attempts to consider what capital may be valued outside the dominant class. This capital can itself become a strong foundation on which other forms of capital can build.
- Every educator is capable of high-quality practice. This principle is one of the driving assumptions of the study, underpinning its aim to reveal the dimensions of socio-economic diversity that may make quality practices more difficult to achieve for some educators than others. Revealing this diversity is not intended to mark certain groups of educators as less capable, but to highlight the kinds of opportunities that may best support their professional growth. This assumption reflects Bourdieu's view

of educational success as the product of opportunity, not of intrinsic merit. It gives attention to the "deep-seated inequalities and their reproduction" that are often obscured in the "policy as numbers" process of data analysis (Lingard, 2011, p. 375).

- Every educator is an individual. This principle recognises that practices themselves are made up of individuals, and that quality ECEC practice may be embodied in many different ways. It aims to avoid the "hegemonic" perceptions that may be reinforced through large-scale statistical analysis (Little & Bartlett, 2010, p. 288). While educators are grouped in this study for the purposes of analysis, every group contains myriad variations—just as every case in the data files represents a unique individual to whom the findings may apply in a unique combination of ways.
- Inclusive workforce development leads to inclusive practice. This principle reflects a broader ambition for the study, to demonstrate an approach to ECEC workforce development that mirrors the responsive approach that the National Quality Agenda aims to support for children's learning. The connection is simple—if every educator can learn (with the right opportunities), then so too can every child, irrespective of their background. As educators come to recognise and transform their *habitus*, they may in turn become "transformative agents" (Lanas & Kiilakoski, 2013, p. 343), capable of achieving greater equity in outcomes for children.

Innovations, limitations and implications for future research

The flourishing interest in ECEC research calls for ECEC researchers to embrace diverse methods and innovations (Kilderry, Nolan, & Noble, 2004). This study's contribution to the field of ECEC research is innovative in a number of ways. By drawing on multiple large-scale data sets, it helps to demonstrate the value of publicly-available data, and the insights that may be gained when discrete components of Australia's rich data infrastructure are combined to bring new perspectives to bear on prominent policy issues. In this way, it helps to improve return on investment in large-scale data infrastructure, and to justify future investment in its development. It is also an "unobtrusive" method for researched populations (Smith, 2008, p. 4), which increases the benefits derived from information that they have already provided.

The preference for large-scale quantitative studies in policy (Blackmore & Lauder, 2005; Gorur, 2015; Lingard, 2011; Lingard, Sellar & Baroutsis, 2015) means that "well-designed quantitative research studies" also have great potential to influence policy decisions; a power that is arguably under-utilised by the ECEC research community (Harrison, 2010, p. 149). At the same time, this study aims to avoid the tendency of quantitative policy-oriented research to reduce complex areas of human activity to

simplistic indicators (see Lingard, 2011; Apple, 2006; Ryan, 2015). In relation to largescale public data, Smith (2008) challenges social researchers to "engage with the data, with full understanding of their limitations and to help establish the link between the empirical data, their social context and the theoretical models that might help explain them" (Smith, 2008, pp. 28–29). This study has attempted to take full advantage of the opportunity that the use of existing data offers to "think more closely" about theoretical interpretation, rather than spending time grappling with the practicalities of data collection (Hakim, 1982, p. 16, as cited in Smith, 2008, p. 42).

Such studies are likely to work best when connected to qualitative research agendas in a mutually reinforcing way. Quantitative studies can be useful for giving greater definition and rigour to qualitative constructs, through empirical analysis. Cheadle and Amato (2011) provide an illustrative example, using large-scale longitudinal survey data to test Lareau's (2011) qualitative observations about parenting styles across social classes. This study pursues a similar goal, to quantify the differences in social advantage between educators that Osgood (2005; 2009; 2012) and Andrew (2015a) have identified through qualitative research as important for ECEC workforce development.

Chapter 4 — Educators being

This chapter presents the first tranche of analysis of educators' levels of economic, social and cultural capital, and their relationship to educators' qualifications. It uses data from the ABS Census of Population and Housing (ABS Census) to examine educators' *being*; that is, who they are, in the broader context of Australian society. The ABS Census provides high-quality data on a range of variables relating to social advantage, as well as enabling comparison between educators and the Australian population as a whole.

Most of the analysis in this chapter compares indicators for the four key qualification groups of greatest interest to this study: educators with an ECEC-related degree, diploma or certificate, or with no qualification at all. These represent the qualification groups set out in the National Quality Agenda (see National Regulations 2011), to whom the relationship between qualifications and quality of practice is assumed to apply. Three further qualification groups were also identified within the ABS Census data: educators with degree, diploma or certificate-level qualifications outside the ECEC field. These educators are not included in the ECEC-related qualification groups, as the relationship between their capital and practice may be expected to differ, due to the absence of ECEC-related content in their studies. These groups of out-of-field-qualified educators are presented in this analysis only where there are marked differences in their indicators, compared to the four key qualification groups, that are worthy of discussion.

The number of educators in each qualification group is shown in Table 4.1, including the four main groups for analysis (educators with ECEC-related or no qualifications), and those whose highest qualification is in another field. This presents a snapshot of the Australian ECEC workforce in the year before the implementation of the National Quality Agenda commenced. It may therefore be thought of as the baseline cohort from which the "highly-skilled, professional workforce" (VDEECD, 2009, p. 27) was to emerge.

	ECEC-rel	ated or no	qualificat	Out-of-fie	Total			
	Deg	Dip	Cert	Unq	Deg	Dip	Cert	
n	17,423	31,387	25,920	26,999	6,164	3,592	5,504	116,989
% row	14.9%	26.8%	22.2%	23.1%	5.3%	3.1%	4.7%	100%

Note: Deg=Degree, Dip=Diploma/Advanced Diploma, Cert=Certificate, Unq=Unqualified.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

This chapter next briefly considers the demographic profile of these groups in terms of age and gender¹⁸. It then begins examining any indicators of the effects of economic, cultural and social capital that may be found in the ABS Census data, as well as other mediating factors that may affect the influence of capital on practice, and their relationship to educators' qualifications. The final section of the chapter summarises variation in key indicators across the four qualification groups.

Demographic variables

The key demographic variables examined below set the scene for the analysis of indicators that will follow. Demographic factors not only help to explain some of the differences in capital across qualification groups, where demographic factors and access to capital are strongly associated. They also help to contextualise and mediate the effects of capital on *habitus* and practice, and thereby aid consideration of the kinds of supports that may best assist each group of educator's professional learning and growth.

Age and gender

Age is a key demographic variable to consider, when discussing qualification groups within the ECEC workforce. If higher-level qualifications take longer to achieve, then educators with lower-level qualifications may be expected to be younger than their more highly-qualified colleagues. Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of each qualification group in each age bracket, using the five-year age brackets in the ABS Census. The same information is shown for all employed Australians¹⁹ at the same qualification level, to explore whether the age distribution for educators differs from the workforce as a whole.



Figure 4.1 – Proportion of educators in each five-year age bracket compared to proportion of all employed Australians, by qualification (% qualification group)

 ¹⁸ The self-identified term "gender" is preferred in this study to the ABS Census item label Sex.
¹⁹ Total working Australian population includes all persons working full-time or part-time.

n	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
Educators	Educators										
Degree	13	1,135	2,951	2,736	2,836	2,313	1,839	1,772	1,199	485	148
Diploma	360	4,373	5,653	4,188	4,138	3,549	3,162	2,989	1,814	901	259
Certificate	1,992	6,121	3,552	2,375	2,416	2,666	2,514	2,161	1,320	664	136
Unqualified	5,481	6,583	2,026	1,553	1,855	2,133	2,139	2,002	1,671	1,121	438
All employed	Australia	าร									
Degree	776	155,259	382,710	374,146	352,721	314,409	272,273	249,593	191,326	112,339	60,868
Diploma	5,251	69,923	105,741	103,949	122,529	130,137	123,869	115,010	89,160	55,678	29,939
Certificate	57,037	225,435	254,484	232,583	251,424	263,041	265,932	239,381	178,198	115,895	55,632
Unqualified	443,047	435,441	272,288	260,308	305,064	368,261	393,875	376,200	308,656	219,681	126,357

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

To some extent, Figure 4.1 supports the expected association between higher-level qualifications and older age groups, as the proportion of educators aged under 25 decreases markedly as the level of qualifications increases (44.7 per cent unqualified, 31.3 per cent certificate-qualified, 15 per cent diploma-qualified, and 6.6 per cent degree-qualified). However, the proportion of educators aged 50 or over is relatively similar across the four qualifications groups (20.7, 19, 16.5 and 19.4 per cent respectively). This shows that educators' qualifications are not only a function of the time that they have had available to acquire them, and that all qualification groups span a broad range of ages.

The comparison with all employed Australians shows that the ECEC workforce is younger than the overall Australian workforce for most qualification groups. The degreequalified educator group is the only one for which the age profile is similar to the total population, with the unqualified educator group having a particularly disproportionate share of young workers. Certificate-qualified educators are also substantially younger than similarly-qualified workers in the general population, with more than twice the proportion in the under-25 age group (31.3 per cent, compared to 13.2 per cent).

Gender is another key demographic variable, with particular significance for the highlyfeminised ECEC workforce. Males constitute only 3.6 per cent of the educators identified in the ABS Census²⁰, despite constituting over half (53.8 per cent) of the working Australian population. The experiences and characteristics of the small group of male educators is a worthwhile topic of study in its own right, and other current Australian research is investigating this distinctive workforce group (Sullivan, Thorpe & McDonald, 2016). This study therefore does not single out males for analysis on most indicators,

²⁰ This proportion is slightly lower than in the National ECEC Workforce Census (4.0 per cent in 2010, 4.1 per cent in 2011²⁰). This may have occurred because the NWC double-counts educators working in more than one service, and the ABS Census does not count educators who have another main occupation—which is a plausible scenario for males in the sector.

but briefly notes here some features of the male educator group that distinguish them from the female educators identified in the ABS Census data.

The first distinctive feature of this group appears in their level of qualification. The percentage²¹ of male educators in each qualification group is set out in Table 4.2. Both ECEC-related and out-of-field qualifications groups are shown, because differences in gender variation were apparent for the out-of-field groups.

	ECEC-re	lated or no	o qualifica	tions	Out-of-fi	Total		
	Deg	Deg Dip		Unq	Deg	Dip	Cert	
n								
Male	384	443	479	2,016	323	213	373	4,231
Female	17,042	30,946	25,437	24,985	5,840	3,386	5,143	112,779
% column								
Male	2.2%	1.4%	1.8%	7.5%	5.2%	5.9%	6.8%	3.6%
Female	97.8%	98.6%	98.2%	92.5%	94.8%	94.1%	93.2%	96.4%

Table 4.2 – Proportion of male educators, by qualification (% qualification group)

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

A striking feature of Table 4.2 is the relatively high proportion of males in the unqualified group (7.5 per cent), compared to the groups of educators with ECEC qualifications (1.4 to 2.2. per cent). The proportion of males is also relatively high in the groups of educators with out-of-field qualifications (5.2 to 6.8 per cent). This suggests that males who work in ECEC are considerably less likely than females to have acquired a relevant qualification (although may be working towards an ECEC-related qualification), and more likely to enter ECEC having already obtained a qualification in another field. It implies that ECEC may be a transient or secondary career in many male educators' working lives.

In part, the differences between male and female educators' qualifications reflect a difference in their age. When the age categories shown in Figure 4.1 are disaggregated by gender, some striking differences emerge. Over half (50.8 per cent) of the male educators in the ABS Census are under 25 years of age, compared to fewer than one-quarter (23.5 per cent) of female educators. Conversely, over half (51 per cent) of female educators are 35 or older, compared to just over one-quarter (28.6 per cent) of males. This suggests either that ECEC is a career that men pursue early in their working lives, or that ECEC careers are growing in appeal to a new generation of Australian men.

²¹ Throughout this chapter, percentages have been derived using cell counts shown below the graphs. Actual percentages may vary slightly, where small cells have been adjusted by ABS.

Despite being younger than female educators overall, another feature of the male educator group is its distribution across the occupational categories used to identify educators for this study (see Chapter 3). Table 4.3 shows the proportion of male and female educators with ECEC-related qualifications who identify as "Child care centre managers". The table also shows the proportion of all ECEC managers in each gender group whose highest qualification is in an ECEC-related field, to give a sense of how many male and female non-ECEC-qualified managers are excluded from this analysis.

Table 4.3 – Proportion of qualified educators who are managers, and proportion
of ECEC managers with qualification in ECEC, by gender (% qualification group)

	% in each E who a	ECEC qualificative ECEC man	ation group agers	% of qualified ECEC managers whose qualification is in an ECEC field				
	Deg	Dip	Cert	Deg	Dip	Cert		
Male	19.0%	23.0%	4.2%	29.8%	64.6%	20.8%		
Female	11.8%	13.6%	1.4%	80.4%	93.3%	71.0%		

Note: Excludes educators and ECEC managers with no qualification.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Table 4.3 shows two notable trends about gendered roles in the ECEC sector. The first three columns show that, at all ECEC qualification levels, males are more likely than females to identify as being in management roles. This difference is greatest for the diploma-qualified groups, in which almost one-quarter (23.0 per cent) of males identify as ECEC managers, compared to 13.6 per cent of females. These data suggest that maleness increases the likelihood of being a manager, independently of qualification.

On the other hand, male ECEC managers who hold a qualification are much less likely to have one in an ECEC field. In total, if female ECEC managers hold a qualification, it is more than twice as likely that the qualification is in the ECEC field than it is for males (87.5 per cent, compared to 39.1 per cent). This difference in likelihood can be seen in Table 4.3 for qualifications at all levels. This means that there is a sizeable group of males managing ECEC services, with qualifications that do not relate directly to the field. While this group of managers is not included among the educators identified for this study (see Chapter 3), it is notable when considering proportions of men and women in ECEC. It also suggests that male ECEC managers are less likely to work directly with children, as they are less likely to have a relevant qualification. While the analysis in this study only considers workers in ECEC services in which males are more strongly represented.

Although males are over-represented in ECEC management relative to their proportion in the sector, the feminised nature of ECEC overall means it is a leading industry in the proportion of women in management roles. Of the 17,304 ECEC managers identified in the ABS Census data (with any or no qualification), 92.4 per cent are female. In comparison, the proportion of females among managers in the Australian workforce as a whole (in any industry) is only 34.8 per cent.

ECEC is also a sector with a high proportion of young people in management roles. For all qualified educator groups, over half the educators identifying as managers are under 40 (55.2 per cent of degree-qualified managers, 57.2 per cent diploma-qualified managers, and 54.3 per cent certificate-qualified managers), which is a far higher proportion than for similarly-qualified managers in the general Australian population (40.2, 35.9, and 35.9 per cent respectively). This suggests that—like women—young people carry a greater proportion of leadership in the ECEC sector than they do in the Australian population as a whole.

Just as women and young people make an important contribution to the ECEC sector, the reverse is also true—the ECEC sector makes an important contribution to the employment of young women. Figure 4.2 shows ECEC educators as a proportion of all Australian women, by age bracket and qualification group. Males are not shown in this chart, as ECEC educators constitute a negligible percentage (0.4 per cent or less) of males in all age and qualification groups.



Figure 4.2 – Proportion of employed Australian women working as educators, by age and qualification (% all employed women in age/qualification group)

	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
Female educat	tors										
Degree	13	1,093	2,891	2,668	2,782	2,266	1,801	1,742	1,174	478	139
Diploma	358	4,299	5,559	4,120	4,085	3,491	3,127	2,964	1,792	890	255
Certificate	1,944	5,950	3,465	2,336	2,381	2,633	2,482	2,151	1,313	651	136
Unqualified	4,830	5,703	1,868	1,497	1,809	2,078	2,083	1,966	1,643	1,099	410

All employed Australian women											
Degree	458	95,576	216,909	195,319	180,479	162,573	140,200	127,481	93,550	49,669	21,308
Diploma	3,717	41,046	57,204	53,996	65,322	71,839	69,194	64,817	47,631	27,139	12,344
Certificate	30,003	91,879	88,763	74,658	80,190	87,137	88,515	76,076	51,617	27,533	9,321
Unqualified	225,986	198,995	109,647	105,970	139,066	187,151	209,414	199,710	158,734	104,114	49,839
Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field											

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.2 shows that ECEC is a particularly important sector of employment for young women with VET qualifications, especially those with diplomas. In the 15–29-year-old age group, approximately one in ten diploma-qualified women who are working do so in the ECEC sector. It suggests that ECEC makes a relatively significant contribution to providing a pathway into a meaningful career for vocationally-oriented young women, who are less likely than men to pursue apprenticeships in manual trades (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab, & Huo, 2015).

In summary, the ECEC workforce is considerably more feminised and somewhat younger than the Australian workforce as a whole, and the dominance of these characteristics flows through into management roles. At the same time, these characteristics are not uniform across qualification groups, and both youth and maleness are most prevalent in the unqualified educator group. The diploma-qualified educator group is the most feminised by a small margin, but leads the other groups by a larger margin in the proportion of all women at that qualification level that it employs.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

Australia is one of the most multi-cultural societies in the world (Miranti, Nepal, & McNamara, 2010). The ABS Census therefore includes a range of indicators for exploring cultural and linguistic diversity in the ECEC workforce. This section presents selected high-level indicators of cultural and linguistic diversity that may have some relation to educators' level of social advantage, and which are therefore relevant to the research questions in this study. It does not examine the rich diversity of educators' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in detail, and a more comprehensive mapping of all aspects of cultural and linguistic diversity in the Australian ECEC workforce would constitute a worthwhile research project in its own right.

Australia's Indigenous population constitutes a distinctive cultural group, which includes a high proportion of Australia's most socio-economically disadvantaged citizens. While these disadvantages may also be captured in other indicators in this study, Indigenous status also arguably exerts an intensifying effect, due to the enduring effects of colonial genocide and racism on Australian Indigenous communities. Indigeneity is therefore an important potential mediator in the relationship between capital, *habitus* and practice.

Indigenous Australians constitute a small proportion of the ECEC workforce, reflecting their representation in wider Australian society. The proportion of Indigenous Australians in each qualification group is shown in Figure 4.3, with all similarly-qualified employed women and employed Australians as comparison groups. Due to small numbers of Indigenous educators in each qualification group, these data are presented here as indicative only, as ABS data cells were adjusted to protect anonymity²². The Indigenous category includes respondents identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both.

Figure 4.3 – Proportion of educators identifying as Indigenous, compared to all employed women and Australians, by qualification (% qualification group)



n	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous					
Educators							
Degree	173	17,176					
Diploma	385	30,844					
Certificate	713	25,072					
Unqualified	918	25,865					
All employed v	vomen						
Degree	7,814	1,270,587					
Diploma	5,760	505,884					
Certificate	15,710	685,871					
Unqualified	31,202	1,645,741					
All employed	Australians						
Degree	12,114	2,444,328					
Diploma	9,019	937,244					
Certificate	36,551	2,088,995					
Unqualified	68,844	3,414,472					

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field. Data is approximate only, due to adjustments.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

²² The ABS Census has other limitations in representing Indigenous populations, especially those living in geographically remote communities (see Yu, 2011).

Figure 4.3 shows that the ECEC workforce has a higher representation of Indigenous Australians than the total female workforce, or total Australian workforce. The unqualified group of educators has the highest proportion (3.4 per cent), with the proportions decreasing with higher qualification levels. This suggests that the ECEC workforce may be a relatively valuable pathway to employment for Indigenous Australians, especially those who have not yet gained a post-school qualification, or completed school.

Indigenous educators are also over-represented in regional and remote areas of Australia, compared to non-Indigenous educators, who are more highly concentrated in major cities. While low numbers of respondents mean that ABS Census estimates are approximations only, it appears that the geographic spread of Indigenous educators is especially wide for the unqualified group. Based on place-of-residence data for the approximately 900 unqualified Indigenous educators for whom data were available, the unqualified Indigenous group is split almost evenly between major cities (32.4 per cent), regional areas (34.6 per cent), and remote locations (33 per cent) (ABS, 2011a). In contrast, each group of Indigenous educators with an ECEC qualification is roughly split between major cities and regional areas, with only small proportions in remote locations (figures are not provided, due to the small numbers of educators in these groups).

The experience of ECEC reform for Australian Indigenous educators is another topic worthy of further research, which is beyond the scope of this study to address. ECEC services that meet the specific needs of Indigenous communities are currently excluded from the new regulations under the National Quality Agenda (Australian Government, 2017b), raising questions about how well concepts of quality can be translated across cultural contexts. Indigenous communities may also contain high stores of cultural capital and capability that may not be readily visible in data collected from a non-Indigenous worldview (Bamblett, 2015). The relationship between qualifications and quality of practice may be particularly contestable in Indigenous contexts, as knowledge and skills may be developed through non-formal systems of learning (Hughes & More, 1997).

Australia's migrant population is drawn from many parts of the world, with varying implications for social advantage. The major entry pathways for Australian migration are the "skilled" or "family" categories, with migrants frequently originating from socially-advantaged backgrounds, with a small proportion of migrants entering Australia annually on humanitarian grounds. This means that Australia's migrant population is generally more highly-skilled than the Australian population as a whole—albeit not always able to deploy their skills in relevant employment in Australia (Miranti et al., 2010). Migrants' success in securing social advantage in their adopted country may depend upon what

Pöllmann (2013) describes as "intercultural capital", or the ability to move readily between cultural fields without losing advantages in the transition (p. 1).

Country-of-origin provides one way of considering how migrant status may relate to educators' social advantage. In this study, country-of-origin for migrant educators was examined according to the World Bank economic classification of countries (World Bank, 2017). While this did not reveal any notable patterns across qualification groups for high and middle income countries—and is therefore not presented graphically—it did reveal that migrant educators with lower-level qualifications are more likely to come from low-income countries (1.7 per cent of migrant educators with ECEC-related degrees, 3.3 per cent with ECEC-related diplomas, 5 per cent with ECEC-related certificates, and 6.5 per cent of those with no ECEC-related qualification). Proportions are slightly higher for out-of-field qualifications, with the same pattern of decrease at higher qualification levels.

Figure 4.4 shows the total proportion of educators in each qualification group who were born outside of Australia, distinguishing between those who report being Australian citizens, and those who do not. Australian citizenship may be seen as a marker of social advantage for migrant groups, as it conveys certain benefits for social capital, in formalising membership of Australian society; and economic capital, in providing access to benefits related to economic welfare. Educators qualified in non-ECEC-related fields are included in this graph, as their results are strikingly different from the ECEC-qualified groups. Proportions among all employed Australians are shown as a comparison group.



Figure 4.4 – Proportion of non-Australian-born educators (citizens/non-citizens) compared to all employed Australians, by qualification (% qualification group)

	Born in Australia (<i>not shown)</i>	Born overseas, Australian citizen	Born overseas, Non-citizen/not stated
Educators with	h ECEC-related/no qualification		
Degree	12,867	2,763	1,668
Diploma	24,376	4,464	2,195
Certificate	20,075	3,742	1,840

Unqualified	21,315	3,347	1,993
Educators with	n out-of-field qualification		
Degree	2,114	2,094	1,928
Diploma	2,139	798	615
Certificate	4,263	756	403
All employed	Australians		
Degree	1,501,084	587,249	362,516
Diploma	636,083	187,774	119,046
Certificate	1,669,022	282,755	162,597
Unqualified	2,663,002	507,617	292,942

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Of the ECEC-related qualification groups, degree-qualified educators are the most likely to be born outside Australia (25.6 per cent), and unqualified are the least likely (20.1 per cent). Developed countries are increasingly recruiting school teachers from less wealthy nations to address labour shortfalls (Little & Bartlett, 2010), and the higher prevalence of migrants among degree-qualified educators suggests the same may be happening in the Australian ECEC sector. Both *Early childhood teacher (pre-primary)* and *Child Care Centre Manager* are currently on the Skilled Occupation List prioritised for migration (Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2016). At the same time, comparison between the left-hand and right-hand clusters in the graph indicates that the proportion of migrants among educators with an ECEC diploma or degree is far lower than in similarly-qualified groups in the entire Australian workforce.

Among educators with out-of-field qualifications, the proportion of migrants increases dramatically, especially among those with out-of-field degrees (65.5 per cent). This suggests that a large proportion of educators with degree-level qualifications in other fields have brought their qualification from their country of origin, perhaps working in ECEC as an alternative or stop-gap to the profession they were qualified to pursue in their homeland. It is consistent with analysis of Australia's migrant population in general, which found that many highly-skilled migrants are working in "low or medium skilled jobs" (Miranti et al., 2010, p. 1). These educators may bring valuable knowledge and skills to the ECEC sector from their study and work in other fields, but may suffer a reduction in social advantage if they previously worked in a more prestigious profession.

The proportions of overseas-born educators in each qualification group who have obtained Australian citizenship is mostly similar to the proportions in the general Australian workforce—around 30 to 40 per cent—and slightly higher for the out-of-field degree-qualified and diploma-qualified groups (47.9 and 43.5 per cent respectively). This amounts to over 10,000 educators who are unable to access citizenship benefits such as loans to meet the costs of study (Australian Government, n.d.). Despite this, further analysis of these data found that the proportion of educators studying is higher among

non-citizens than citizens, for each qualification group (for all overseas-born educators combined, the total proportion studying is 19.2 per cent for those with Australian citizenship, and 25.8 per cent for those without). While a lack of citizenship therefore does not constitute a barrier to the pursuit of qualifications, it does increase the financial disadvantage that engagement in further study can incur.

Further analysis of these data examined educators' year of arrival in Australia. This found that migrant educators with degrees are most likely to be recent arrivals, with over onequarter (28.7 per cent) of overseas-born educators with ECEC-related degrees having arrived within five years of the Census (2006 or after), and close to half the out-of-field degree-qualified group (42.3 per cent). The analysis also found that migrant educators with no ECEC qualification are most likely to have arrived more than 30 years before the 2011 Census (before 1981), with almost one-quarter (24.1 per cent) of overseas-born unqualified educators falling into this group. This confounds any assumptions that unqualified ECEC work is a "foot-in-the-door" occupation for recent migrants, but shows that the ECEC sector in fact employs many established migrants.

Another factor that impacts on culturally diverse educators' social advantage is their acquisition of English, the dominant language spoken in Australia. While multilingualism can convey certain advantages in ECEC practice (Sims, Ellis & Knox, 2017), limited proficiency in English can limit educators' advantages in mainstream Australian society. Figure 4.5 shows the self-reported English ability of educators who speak another language at home, according to whether they speak English "very well" or not.²³



Figure 4.5 – Multilingual educators' self-reported English proficiency compared to all employed Australians, by qualification (% qualification group)

²³ Includes "well", "not well" or "not at all". The latter two categories contain very low numbers of respondents, so all three have been combined to signal any level below maximum proficiency.

	Speaks English only (not shown)	Speaks other language and speaks English very well	Speaks other language and speaks English well/not well/ not at all
Educators with	n ECEC-related/no qualification		
Degree	14,327	2,256	813
Diploma	26,721	3,159	1,427
Certificate	21,695	2,200	1,964
Unqualified	23,061	2,203	1,653
Educators with	n out-of-field qualification		
Degree	2,704	1,971	1,466
Diploma	2,553	573	448
Certificate	4,719	463	311
All employed	Australians		
Degree	1,819,933	490,929	149,825
Diploma	759,030	131,832	57,902
Certificate	1,897,141	164,247	72,319
Unqualified	2,980,230	293,661	224,408

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.5 shows that multilingual educators with ECEC-related qualifications are similar to the Australian workforce as a whole, in that all qualification groups are more likely than not to speak English "very well". The certificate-qualified group differs most markedly from the Australian population, in that it includes a roughly even percentage of multilingual educators who speak English very well (8.5 per cent) and who do not (7.6 per cent). This suggests that multilingual educators with ECEC certificates are at a linguistic disadvantage, compared to other similarly-qualified Australian workers.

Educators with out-of-field qualifications include a relatively large proportion of multilingual educators, especially among the out-of-field degree-qualified group, over half (56 per cent) of whom speak a language other than English. Close to one-half of the multilingual group (23.9 per cent of the total group) do not speak English "very well". Consistent with findings above about citizenship and year of arrival, this further indicates that the out-of-field degree-qualified group includes many educators who may be at a disadvantage in Australian society, even though their qualifications are high. It also demonstrates how cultural and linguistic diversity may disrupt the flows of capital expected to be associated with qualifications, as individuals with high stores of capital in their country of origin struggle to translate this into social advantage in Australia.

Indicators of social advantage

The analysis now turns to examining indicators of social advantage provided in the ABS Census data, and their prevalence for educators in different qualification groups. The ABS Census is an excellent data set for examining economic capital in its objectified (monetary) form, as it includes many items related to employment, income and unpaid work, as well as measures of wealth at household and community level. It is also valuable for investigating the effects of educators' cultural capital, as indicated by their attainment

in school and further education—both of which may be important mediating factors on their *habitus* and practice. The last set of indicators in this section considers the level of social advantage in the communities in which different groups of educators work. These community-level indicators not only provide further insight into influences on educators' levels of social advantage, but also show the extent to which communities have access to educators whose social advantage may be similar to, or different from, their own.

Individual income

Figure 4.6 uses ABS Census data to illustrate the economic position of Australian early childhood educators, relative to the total Australian working population. It compares the proportion of educators (both full-time and part-time) in each income bracket with the proportion of the total employed Australian population. As female Australians earn less than males overall, percentages for all employed Australian women are also shown, as a comparison group more likely to be equivalent to the feminised ECEC workforce. Both full-time and part-time workers are included in this graph, as the purpose is not only to show differences in salary, but actual differences in total individual income, once both wages and working hours are taken into account.

Figure 4.6 – Proportion of educators in each individual income bracket compared to all employed women and Australians, by qualification (% qualification group)



	\$1- \$10,399	\$10,400- \$15,599	\$15,600- \$20,799	\$20,800- \$31,199	\$31,200- \$41,599	\$41,600- \$51,999	\$52,000- \$64,999	\$65,000- \$77,999	\$78,000- \$103,999	\$104,000 or more
Educators										
Degree	370	548	673	2,101	3,207	2,968	2,857	1,695	1,648	236
Diploma	686	1,067	1,802	5,282	9,954	5,920	2,617	966	696	161
Certificate	1,029	1,651	2,713	7,647	8,349	1,565	686	228	108	50
Unqualified	4,413	3,612	4,042	6,506	3,885	1,177	494	180	113	91

All employed Australian women										
Degree	29,346	34,806	45,799	105,557	140,243	154,772	208,573	175,641	224,179	147,751
Diploma	17,053	23,084	32,846	75,303	93,583	78,071	71,849	47,681	45,076	19,834
Certificate	30,881	41,321	61,790	149,577	166,725	104,914	71,470	33,117	21,626	10,017
Unqualified	212,961	138,781	169,093	331,102	312,438	194,243	138,484	66,818	50,060	29,679
All employed	Australian	s								
Degree	40,608	50,235	68,207	156,117	214,467	244,673	339,183	309,796	462,729	548,276
Diploma	22,741	32,227	46,641	104,974	138,088	126,953	131,483	102,764	125,830	101,713
Certificate	47,984	67,145	102,677	261,860	371,927	338,367	323,120	212,607	209,509	152,667
Unqualified	347,902	222,942	280,454	557,270	630,306	461,934	368,489	206,525	190,516	144,078

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.6 shows that educators in all qualification groups are at an economic disadvantage relative to similarly-qualified Australian workers, far greater than the economic disadvantage of women relative to men. Degree-qualified educators come closest to the distribution across income brackets of similarly-qualified women, although a negligible proportion of these educators (1.5 per cent) are in the highest income bracket. Educators in other qualification groups are strongly over-represented in the middle income brackets, and under-represented in the upper income range. Unqualified educators are also over-represented in the lowest income bracket relative to all Australian women, with close to one in five (18 per cent) earning under \$10,400 per year.

Table 4.4 expands on this analysis, to show the gap between the mean salary earned by educators at each qualification level, and the mean salary for similarly-qualified workers in the Australian workforce as a whole (females only, and total workers). This table includes separate analysis for all workers, and for full-time workers only, to show how differences in salary relate to differences in total individual income. As ABS Census data obtained for this study provide income ranges, rather than discrete values, the midpoint of each range was used as a proxy value in order to calculate means. An arbitrary value was set as the mid-point of the highest income range.²⁴

Table 4.4 – Estimated mean annual individual income for educators, all employed
women, and all employed Australians, by qualification (\$)

	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified			
Employed full-time							
Educators	\$59,386	\$44,989	\$35,457	\$32,537			
All employed women	\$78,485	\$60,486	\$48,241	\$48,426			
All employed Australians	\$89,854	\$72,465	\$63,040	\$54,560			
Employed full-time and part-time							
Educators	\$49,393	\$38,990	\$30,213	\$23,449			

²⁴ The arbitrary mid-point for the upper range is \$150,000.

All employed women	\$66,200	\$48,959	\$38,628	\$34,646
All employed Australians	\$78,776	\$60,884	\$55,196	\$42,262

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Table 4.4 reinforces the previous data on educators' relative economic disadvantage, by estimating the actual dollar value of the gaps between educators' earnings, and their similarly-qualified counterparts. As anticipated by Figure 4.6, the gap is proportionally larger for the unqualified group of educators. Among those working full-time, the gap between the educator mean income, and mean income for all unqualified females, is \$15,889, or close to half (48.8 per cent) of the mean income value for the unqualified educators group. For full-time workers, the gap is proportionally lowest between educators and similarly-qualified women for the degree-qualified group, but still substantial. At \$19,099, this gap represents around one-third (32.2 per cent) of the degree-qualified educator group's mean income value. While these figures are estimates only, they are strikingly illustrative of the difference in economic prospects between those who enter the ECEC workforce in Australia, and those who choose to enter other careers.

Labour force participation

The low objectified economic capital of the ECEC workforce is compounded by the fact that many educators work part-time. Figure 4.7 shows the proportion of employed educators (full-time or part-time) who work part-time in each qualification group. Out-of-field qualification groups are shown in this graph, as their results differ markedly from the main ECEC-related categories. The comparison group used in this graph is all employed Australian women, as females are generally more likely than males to work part-time.



Figure 4.7 – Proportion of educators employed part-time compared to all employed Australian women, by qualification (% qualification group)

	Employed full-time	Employed part-time				
Educators with ECEC-related/no qualification						
Degree	9,511	6,989				
Diploma	17,815	11,776				
Certificate	12,930	11,475				
Unqualified	9,181	15,918				
Educators with	n out-of-field qualification					
Degree	2,497	3,320				
Diploma	1,426	1,951				
Certificate	2,054	3,068				
All employed A	Australian women					
Degree	803,280	480,244				
Diploma	285,938	228,311				
Certificate	363,925	341,773				
Unqualified	751,961	936,659				

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.7 shows that the high rates of part-time work for educators cannot be explained fully by the high proportion of females in the sector. For the unqualified and degreequalified groups, early childhood educators are more likely to work part-time than similarly-qualified women in the general population (42.4 per cent for ECEC compared to 37.4 per cent for all employed women in the degree-qualified group, and 63.4 and 55.5 per cent respectively for the unqualified group). For degree-qualified educators, this may be explained in part by the sessional hours of many preschool services, which are not conducive to full-time roles. For unqualified educators, the younger age profile of this qualification group provides a possible explanation, as full-time employment options for young Australians are increasingly scarce (Healy, 2014). The only educator group less likely to work part-time than all Australian women is diploma-qualified educators, reinforcing the importance of ECEC as a meaningful career path for this group.

The relatively high rates of part-time work among out-of-field qualification groups suggest that ECEC may be serving as a secondary career for these educators. This may include parents choosing to work in ECEC while their own children are young, or educators who hold multiple part-time jobs that are not captured in the ABS Census. The analysis of educators' engagement in study later in this chapter supports this view.

Although the ABS Census also includes more detailed information about hours worked in the Census week, this is not analysed here. Hours of operation is one of the key structural differences between the four main types of ECEC services in Australia (see Chapter 1), and it is therefore more appropriate to examine working hours using ECEC National Workforce Census data, in which type of ECEC service can be distinguished (Chapter 5). A more valuable use for the ABS Census data lies in examining the potential reasons for educators' engagement in part-time work, which assists in understanding their social and economic circumstances.
Figure 4.8 shows the proportion of part-time educators at each qualification level engaged in other activities, which suggest that part-time work is a positive choice: either unpaid care (for their own or someone else's children, or for a person with a disability), further study, or a combination of these. The proportion of educators volunteering is also shown, as another unpaid activity that may be a positive complement to paid part-time work. This analysis also serves to identify a residual group of educators whose part-time employment cannot be explained by any other apparent activities (notwithstanding that other non-apparent unpaid activities may exist, such as invalid or elderly care, creation of artworks, or representation in amateur sport²⁵). In economic terms, these educators may be considered most vulnerable to underemployment; that is, placed at an economic disadvantage by being willing but unable to secure full-time work.

Figure 4.8 – Proportion of educators working part-time who participate in other unpaid work or study*, by qualification (% qualification group)



* Includes part-time and full-time study.

	Unpaid care	Study	Unpaid care and study	Volunteer	No unpaid work or study
Degree	4,149	416	510	468	1,320
Diploma	6,200	901	1,146	628	2,569
Certificate	4,624	1,338	1,527	570	3,040
Unqualified	3,894	5,275	2,293	540	3,392

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.8 shows some clear trends in the circumstances of part-time educators across the four qualification groups. Degree- and diploma-qualified educators are most likely to balance part-time work with care for children or people with a disability, while unqualified

²⁵ The ABS Census includes a further measure of unpaid work, Unpaid Domestic Work: Number of Hours. This not reported here, as--although hours of domestic work are higher for part-time than full-time educators—it has lower face validity as a positive reason to choose part-time work (that is, educators may do more domestic work because they work part-time, not *vice versa*).

part-time educators are by far the most likely to combine work and study, with over onethird (34.3 per cent) of part-time educators in this group enrolled in further education. The different age ranges of each qualification group are clearly factors in these patterns.

The graph also shows that around one in five educators working part-time in each qualification group do not have a clear reason for doing so, based on their engagement in other unpaid activities. The proportion is highest for certificate-qualified educators (27.4 per cent), suggesting that this is a particularly economically-vulnerable qualification group. Figure 4.9 examines the age distribution of this residual group, compared to the same residual group in the general population (for all employed women, and for all Australians). Age brackets have been condensed to 10 years in this figure, to reduce the number of cells with very low numbers.





	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+						
Educators app	arently underemplo	yed									
Degree	118	403	212	458	341						
Diploma	389	485	465	994	671						
Certificate	987	485	462	923	525						
Unqualified	1,035	314	411	1,004	994						
All apparently	All apparently underemployed Australian women										
Degree	10,253	27,934	14,136	30,468	33,539						
Diploma	6,400	8,619	8,374	21,894	20,930						
Certificate	18,326	13,302	14,114	34,802	24,819						
Unqualified	43,875	20,371	35,601	100,404	98,969						
All apparently	underemployed Au	stralians									
Degree	16,758	46,527	22,317	40,457	60,513						
Diploma	10,348	15,269	11,892	26,861	33,715						
Certificate	31,908	28,336	26,006	55,812	65,570						
Unqualified	91,100	48,126	57,658	132,159	161,175						

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Figures should be treated as approximate due to ABS adjustment of small cells.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

For the degree-qualified and diploma-qualified groups, Figure 4.9 shows that the group of educators who are apparently underemployed has a similar age profile as the general population. For the certificate-qualified and unqualified groups, however, the educator group has a much younger profile, with over one-quarter of each underemployed group aged from 15 to 24 years old (29.2 and 27.5 per cent respectively). The rise of underemployment has been identified as a major trend in the Australian youth labour market (see Foundation for Young Australians, 2014), contributing to economic marginalisation even for young people who succeed in finding paid work. Figure 4.9 suggests that the ECEC workforce includes a disproportionate share—relative to other industries—of the growing number of vulnerable young Australians in this situation.

Household composition and income

bun

Cert

Dip

Couple family,

no children

Deg

Dip

Couple family

with children

Cert Jng

The discussion so far has focused on the objectified economic capital that educators hold themselves. The ABS Census also enables educators' economic circumstances to be examined in the context of their households (as defined by their Place of Enumeration on Census night)²⁶. For Bourdieu (1986), the family is the main unit of the acquisition of capital of all kinds, and for the reproduction of the classed practices that this capital enables. This contextualisation of educators within their households is therefore essential to gain a better understanding of the capital they have at their disposal.

The first analysis of household data concerns educators' household composition. Figure 4.10 shows the proportion of educators living in each type of household, by qualification group. As the proportions in each type of household differ for men and women, employed Australian women are shown as a comparison group. Categories are based on *ABS Family Household Composition (Dwelling)* categories, with small groups combined.



Figure 4.10 – Proportion of educators in different types of households compared with all employed women, by qualification (% qualification group)

²⁶ Household income is calculated from imputed personal income values (ABS, 2016).

bu

Dip

Dip

One parent

familv

Deg

Cert

Multiple family

household

Jng

Lone person

household

Deg

0eg

Cert

Other

household

g

n	Couple family, no children	Couple family with children	One parent family	Multiple family household	Lone person household	Other household					
Educators with	Educators with ECEC-related/no qualification										
Degree	3,866	8,983	1,571	447	1,474	944					
Diploma	6,800	15,729	3,798	1,092	2,086	1,612					
Certificate	4,586	12,832	4,137	1,110	1,389	1,642					
Unqualified	3,802	14,448	4,093	1,112	1,106	1,650					
All employed	Australian wome	n									
Degree	465,250	762,733	133,147	41,827	208,070	143,863					
Diploma	207,180	322,756	85,736	23,358	94,027	48,901					
Certificate	249,440	455,078	163,890	38,260	106,787	69,265					
Unqualified	1,005,005	3,036,533	898,780	252,065	547,190	304,167					

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

As might be expected from the nature of their work, educators are generally more likely than similarly-qualified women to live in a household with children. The difference is most notable for couples with children, but also evident for lone parent families. Conversely, educators are less likely than women in general to live in a couple family without children, and also notably less likely to live in a lone-person household. Degree-qualified educators are the most likely qualification group to be in both these kinds of households, perhaps related to their older age profile (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.10 appears to intensify the relative levels of economic advantage between qualification groups. Degree-qualified educators—whose incomes are highest—are most likely to live in household circumstances without economic dependents. In contrast, unqualified educators and certificate-qualified educators—who earn the least—are equally or more likely, compared to degree- or diploma-qualified educators, to live in couple households with children, and more likely to be lone parents. This means that the educators with the least stores of objectified economic capital (in the form of income) are most likely to be responsible for the sole care of dependents. Due to the low incomes of educators relative to similarly-qualified women (see above), many such educators' individual incomes fall within the threshold for government child support benefits (Australian Department of Human Services, 2017, n.p.)²⁷, These educators may be engaged in the balancing act between paid work and welfare eligibility common to many low-income Australian parents (Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008).

Other factors also may affect the impact of the care of dependents on educators' economic circumstances, including age of fertility, and number of children. Figure 4.11 shows the proportion of female educators who have given birth to at least one child,

²⁷ At 2016, partial parenting payments commenced for incomes below \$2,088.85 per fortnight (\$54,310 per year). This is well within the range of most educators' individual incomes.

disaggregated by age. Five-year age brackets up to 44 years are shown, as most women have concluded child-bearing by this point.

Figure 4.12 follows with the number of children ever born to educators, counting only educators aged 45 or over (to control for the association between younger age groups and fewer children). In both graphs, results for all employed Australian women are also shown as a comparison group.

Figure 4.11 – Proportion of educators with at least one child, compared to all employed women, by age and qualification (% age/qualification group, 2011)



			At least	one child	ł		Total stated					
^{//} 15-		20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
Educators with ECEC-related/no qualification												
Degree	-	37	646	1,506	2,206	1,916	-	1,082	2,864	2,662	2,786	2,253
Diploma	4	384	1,839	2,606	3,209	3,046	340	4,239	5,518	4,089	4,070	3,479
Certificate	21	684	1,449	1,643	2,004	2,411	1,908	5,874	3,437	2,316	2,361	2,629
Unqualified	58	424	839	1,097	1,574	1,884	4,706	5,568	1,844	1,473	1,794	2,059
All employed	l women	1										
Degree	-	1,210	21,174	75,386	121,018	124,627	-	94,499	215,174	194,244	179,799	161,974
Diploma	39	1,721	10,963	26,296	46,752	57,823	3,633	40,358	56,643	53,667	65,042	71,525
Certificate	291	7,395	26,617	44,267	62,104	73,760	29,413	90,587	87,983	74,173	79,743	86,660
Unqualified	1,000	11,267	32,711	63,161	107,826	156,512	220,170	195,088	108,088	104,977	138,083	185,904

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Degree-qualified educators in the 15–19 age group are excluded due to low numbers.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.



Figure 4.12 – Number of children ever born to educators compared to all employed women, by qualification (% qualification group, aged 45 and over)

	No children	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 or more children							
Educators with ECEC-related/no qualification (aged 45 and over)												
Degree	522	539	2,211	1,405	627							
Diploma	663	832	3,694	2,488	1,290							
Certificate	388	624	2,595	1,989	1,102							
Unqualified	354	612	2,746	2,091	1,335							
All employed v	vomen (aged 45 and	l over)										
Degree	82,104	57,625	163,615	89,511	37,214							
Diploma	30,985	26,959	87,456	51,225	23,306							
Certificate	26,525	27,836	100,544	63,914	32,428							
Unqualified	81,355	79,325	289,187	177,617	88,977							

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.11 and

Figure 4.12 suggest that the age of first childbirth increases, and total number of children ever born decreases, with higher-level qualifications. Educators (and all women) with certificate-level or no qualifications are more likely to have given birth at a younger age, with the differences between qualification groups levelling out in older age brackets (with a range of only 6.5 percentage points by age 40–44).

Figure 4.12 also shows that educators (and all women) with lower-level qualifications are likely to have given birth to more children by the end of this age range. Educators in all qualification groups also tend to have more children, and earlier, than Australian women in general.

These findings suggest that educators' household economic capital must stretch further than other similarly-qualified women's, from an earlier age. Again, this constitutes an apparent compounding of economic disadvantage, given that educators' individual incomes are also lower than their similarly-qualified counterparts'. These factors may also impact on social capital, as early or high fertility rates have been identified as having a potentially negative impact on Australian women's social status (Pini & Previte, 2014). With regard to cultural capital, earlier and higher fertility rates may reduce opportunities to acquire objectified cultural capital through further education—while also opening up other, non-formal avenues for learning about childhood through hands-on experience.

Educators who live in family households may not only *have* dependents; they may also *be* dependents themselves (as either children or partners). A truer picture of educators' economic situation can be taken using the total Household Income (weekly) variable in the ABS Census. Figure 4.13 shows results for all educators (both full-time and part-time), as well as all employed women and Australians. All employed Australians and all employed female Australians are again shown as comparison groups, although the differences between them are far smaller than for individual incomes (see Figure 4.6). This disappearance of gender differences in household income reflects the dominance of "male breadwinner" households in Australian society (Crabb, 2014, p. 230).





n	\$1-\$31,199	\$31,200- \$51,999	\$52,000- \$77,999	\$78,000- \$129,999	\$130,000- \$181,999	\$182,000 or more
Educators						
Degree	467	1,439	2,565	6,076	3,461	1,743
Diploma	1,196	3,749	5,491	11,147	4,455	1,895
Certificate	1,812	3,551	5,081	7,995	3,141	1,416
Unqualified	2,045	3,236	4,550	7,089	3,752	2,297

All employed women												
Degree	31,237	74,641	152,636	355,436	311,998	230,561						
Diploma	23,343	53,052	79,775	154,104	94,130	52,387						
Certificate	44,808	93,682	125,075	215,456	97,994	46,836						
Unqualified	113,912	215,213	286,039	478,451	248,394	139,105						
All employed	Australians											
Degree	55,818	133,485	270,324	635,726	666,548	463,404						
Diploma	36,760	88,083	141,533	283,351	195,142	102,904						
Certificate	93,422	243,012	390,077	669,296	335,919	157,155						
Unqualified	209,394	452,725	623,741	991,792	517,899	285,682						

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

The most striking contrast between Figure 4.13 (household income) and Figure 4.6 (individual income) is that the differences between educators and the general population almost completely disappear for the certificate-qualified and unqualified groups. That is, the household incomes of educators in these qualification groups are close to those of similarly-qualified female workers, and to all Australian workers as a whole. Given that these educators' individual incomes are substantially lower than similarly-qualified Australians (Figure 4.6), this suggests a significant contribution to total household income by other members of their households—whether partners, parents, or other economic contributors. This is consistent with findings from another major recent study of the Australian ECEC workforce, that an "unexpected" number of educators report being financially reliant on other members of their households (Irvine et al., 2016, p. 5).

Household incomes for degree- and diploma-qualified educators remains below household incomes for similarly-qualified females, and all similarly-qualified Australian workers. As for individual income, both qualification groups are substantially overrepresented in the middle income bracket, and under-represented in the two top income brackets. While degree-qualified educators remain the highest-earning group, with 33 per cent in the top two brackets of household income, the proportion of diploma-qualified educators in the top two brackets (22.7 per cent) is in fact lower than the proportion of unqualified educators (26.3 per cent). This suggests that other members of diplomaqualified educators' households do not perform the same level of cross-subsidisation.

These findings are further reinforced using the Equivalised Total Household Income (HIED) data available in the ABS Census. Based on a person's place of enumeration, this figure is calculated by dividing the sum of personal incomes reported by all persons aged 15 and over in the household by the number of persons in the household, applying a weighting to each person according to the "modified OECD" equivalence scale (ABS, 2011b, n.p.). It provides another lens through which to examine educators' individual economic position, in the context of the objectified economic capital in their households.

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Results for educators, compared to all employed women and Australians, are shown in Figure 4.14. The lowest three ABS income brackets are combined, due to low numbers.

Figure 4.14 – Proportion of educators in each equivalised income bracket compared to all employed women and Australians, by qualification (% qualification group)



	\$1-\$20,799	\$20,800- \$31,199	\$31,200- \$41,599	\$41,600- \$51,999	\$52,000- \$64,999	\$65,000- \$77,999	\$78,000- \$103,999	\$104,000 or more
Educators								
Degree	578	1,274	2,166	2,463	3,113	2,389	2,499	1,173
Diploma	1,547	3,370	5,519	5,427	5,389	3,097	2,567	924
Certificate	2,273	3,944	5,104	4,076	3,813	1,958	1,309	420
Unqualified	2,757	3,985	4,683	3,696	3,441	2,089	1,646	577
All employed	Australian wo	omen						
Degree	34,490	62,297	102,733	127,443	184,637	173,842	242,937	218,139
Diploma	25,887	45,328	66,395	68,206	80,938	60,080	65,380	41,189
Certificate	50,091	85,628	115,325	104,518	108,500	66,740	59,623	29,290
Unqualified	134,546	211,204	275,480	241,911	242,478	153,531	138,748	74,252
All employed	Australians							
Degree	67,001	118,857	192,589	241,124	350,987	332,687	459,783	440,907
Diploma	43,735	79,419	117,460	124,128	148,665	113,368	128,133	85,624
Certificate	114,018	232,946	332,164	316,917	336,972	218,066	209,626	110,542
Unqualified	263,481	443,190	580,734	506,264	504,337	314,660	288,973	157,108

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.14 confirms that differences in equivalised income are minimal between unqualified educators, and unqualified Australians in the workforce as a whole. Given that these educators have notably lower personal incomes than other unqualified workers (Figure 4.6), this reinforces the impression of a compensatory economic role being played by other members of their households. Nevertheless, the equivalisation is not sufficient to eliminate differences in economic resources between educator groups; nor between educators and the total Australian workforce. While degree-qualified educators continue to display the highest levels of income out of the four qualification groups, they are also the group for whom the income gap relative to similarly-qualified workers persists more prominently when personal incomes are equivalised.

This analysis implies that educators with higher-level qualifications contribute a higher proportion of their total household income. This assumption can be tested, by estimating the fraction of household income that educators in each group contribute, with their individual income as numerator and household income as denominator. As income data is presented in ranges in the TableBuilder application used for this analysis, an exact calculation is not possible, but an approximation can be reached by taking the mid-point of each range. An arbitrary value was set as the mid-point of the highest income ranges.²⁸

Figure 4.15 shows the result of this analysis. Fractions of household income have been grouped into four categories, with the small number of negative income values excluded. The same analysis has been performed for all employed women as a comparison group, as gender is clearly an important factor in this analysis. Given the feminised nature of the ECEC workforce, women are the most relevant group for comparison.





Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

²⁸ Arbitrary mid-points for upper ranges are \$150,000 (individual) and \$300,000 (household).

Figure 4.15 shows that educators contribute less to their total household income than all similarly-qualified employed Australian women, with lower proportions of educators contributing more than half the household income in all qualification groups. This may be explained to some extent by the higher proportion of educators in households with children, which may affect decisions about household division of labour. For degree- and diploma-qualified educators, the under-representation among those contributing from 26 to 50 percent. For certificate-qualified and unqualified educators, it is offset by high proportions in the lowest contribution range (zero to 25 per cent).

The proportion of unqualified educators in the lowest contribution range is perhaps the most striking feature of this graph. Almost half (47.8 per cent) of this qualification group contribute one-quarter or less of their household income, far above the proportion in the general population. A likely explanation can be found in the youth of this group, compared to unqualified workers more generally (see Figure 4.1). This is reinforced by another variable collected in the ABS Census—the relationship of the respondent to the key householder completing the survey. Among the unqualified educator group, 14.8 per cent identified their relationship as "dependent student", compared to a maximum of 1.3 per cent (certificate-qualified) for any of the other ECEC qualification groups.

This finding demonstrates the value of considering educators' economic capital in the context of their households. The above analysis provides a much richer view of educators' economic circumstances than can be gained through attention to their wages alone. It also begins to provide insight into the complex relationship between economic capital and other forms of capital, in that unqualified educators with apparently low levels of economic capital may in fact be pursuing the cultural and social capital that can be acquired through further study. This is examined further in the next section.

Further education and schooling

The ABS Census collects data on the proportion of Australians engaged in any kind of further education or training (university or VET). Results for educators are shown in Figure 4.16, including educators enrolled in either full-time or part-time study, with the entire Australian working population shown as a comparator for each qualification group. This graph is disaggregated by major age groups, given that an educator's age is likely to have a major impact on their likelihood of being engaged in further study. Although numbers are small (and should be treated with caution), educators with an out-of-field qualification are also shown in this graph, because their results on this indicator are notably different from educators with ECEC-related qualifications.



Figure 4.16 – Proportion of educators engaged in further study, compared to all employed Australians, by qualification and age (% age/qualification group)

			Studying			Total stated						
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+		
Educators with ECEC-related/no qualification												
Degree	290	800	571	290	96	1,134	5,664	5,101	3,583	1,835		
Diploma	1,211	1,971	1,123	624	136	4,693	9,759	7,617	6,086	2,939		
Certificate	2,796	1,759	1,154	716	166	8,030	5,881	5,016	4,618	2,082		
Unqualified	7,908	1,275	1,018	661	195	11,985	3,525	3,942	4,081	3,167		
Educators with	າ out-of-fie	eld qualifio	cation									
Degree	312	733	435	183	44	625	2,171	1,615	1,136	560		
Diploma	281	395	278	129	35	547	1,007	902	710	382		
Certificate	714	530	374	197	62	1,463	1,295	1,118	975	604		
All employed A	Australian	s										
Degree	36,913	100,950	53,306	31,434	11,840	155,422	754,300	664,191	518,940	362,086		
Diploma	24,327	34,005	23,173	14,349	4,448	74,687	208,590	251,116	237,201	173,344		
Certificate	59,347	46,153	29,253	17,578	5,123	280,158	483,912	509,673	500,158	345,379		
Unqualified	498,197	55,898	27,086	14,606	4,427	873,247	528,472	666,770	761,776	646,230		

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.16 shows that, even though the ABS Census data used in this study was collected in 2011, before the National Quality Agenda came into force, there was a tremendous amount of study occurring in the ECEC workforce. For educators with ECEC-related qualifications, the likelihood of being engaged in further study decreases markedly with higher-level qualifications, with few degree- and diploma-qualified educators engaged in further study in all age groups, compared to the certificate-qualified or unqualified educator groups. In the latter groups, the proportion of educators engaged in further study in all age groups, the proportion of educators engaged in further study in the latter groups, the proportion of educators engaged in further study far exceeds the proportion of similarly-qualified workers who are studying in the Australian population in general.

Educators with out-of-field qualifications have notably different results on this indicator, compared to educators with ECEC-related qualifications. The proportion of educators with out-of-field qualifications who are studying is far higher than those with ECEC-

related qualifications for all qualification groups, including those with non-ECEC degrees. While it is not possible to ascertain the field of study from the ABS Census data, this suggests that many educators with out-of-field qualifications may be actively engaged in acquiring qualifications that are relevant to their ECEC work.

Another striking feature of this graph is that the pattern of high engagement in further study among educators persists across all the age groups shown. In the general population, the proportion of workers aged 55+ engaged in further study declines to a minimal level (1.7 per cent in total), and the proportion is also low for workers aged 45– 54 (3.9 per cent in total). While the proportion of educators studying also declines among older age groups, it remains far higher than the general population, at 6.3 per cent in total for the 55+ age group, and a substantial 13.2 per cent for educators aged 45–54.

This means that many educators themselves are learners, continuing to pursue their own education at the same time as they work to support children's learning. It demonstrates the scale of the impact of the National Quality Agenda in stimulating the pursuit of further education and training in the Australian ECEC workforce, including among educators in older age groups who are generally less likely to be engaged in formal learning. Returning to the theoretical framework for this study, both these dual roles of educator and learner may be affected by the levels of capital that educators possess, as their *habitus* shapes their teaching and learning practices simultaneously. This important point will be revisited later in this study, in considering implications for educators' practice.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1979), learners' ability to benefit from participation in further education is influenced by the cultural capital that they bring with them. The ABS Census provides another, retrospective measure of the effects of educators' cultural capital, in the highest level of schooling they have completed. Results are shown in Figure 4.17, separated into a simple binary of completing school or not (including completing Year 11 or below, or missing school completely). As school completion rates in Australia have increased substantially over recent decades, especially for females (Lamb & Rumberger, 1999), this analysis is also disaggregated by educators' age. Again, the comparison group is all employed persons in the Australian population.

Figure 4.17 – Proportion of educators who completed school (Year 12), compared to all employed Australians, by qualification and age (% age/qualification group)



		Complete	ed school	(Year 12)		Total stated				
n	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Educators with	n ECEC-re	lated/no q	ualificatio	on						
Degree	1,072	5,415	4,733	3,094	1,562	1,131	5,654	5,121	3,586	1,828
Diploma	3,714	8,069	5,262	3,367	1,607	4,712	9,788	7,639	6,089	2,928
Certificate	5,700	4,013	2,557	1,514	562	8,083	5,915	5,061	4,618	2,114
Unqualified	8,998	2,204	1,768	1,237	690	11,994	3,544	3,946	4,104	3,191
Educators with	າ out-of-fie	eld qualifie	cation							
Degree	613	2,125	1,562	1,071	493	618	2,167	1,606	1,134	565
Diploma	458	872	701	467	207	545	1,001	917	726	383
Certificate	1,018	815	533	342	145	1,460	1,297	1,117	976	582
All employed A	Australian	s								
Degree	153,859	741,524	639,832	475,579	320,752	155,044	752,298	663,722	518,166	361,166
Diploma	66,034	183,659	193,682	154,646	111,670	74,618	208,278	251,244	237,047	173,176
Certificate	166,229	290,865	222,253	144,946	90,389	280,715	484,059	510,121	500,153	344,975
Unqualified	531,805	331,262	310,954	235,946	165,771	872,046	528,814	667,674	761,605	645,930

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.17 shows that school completion is highly variable across qualification groups. As may be expected, given that school is generally the pre-requisite for entry to degreecourses, degree-qualified educators are by far the most likely to have completed school in all age groups, but those with ECEC-related degrees are less likely to have done so than the general population. Educators with out-of-field degrees have a school completion profile more similar to the Australian working population as a whole. A similar pattern may be seen for diploma-qualified educators, with fewer school completers among educators with ECEC-related diplomas, compared to educators with out-of-field diplomas, or the general population.

Certificate-qualified and unqualified educators in younger age groups are slightly more likely to have completed school than their similarly-qualified peers in the workforce in general, especially 15–24-year-olds in the unqualified educator group. Three-quarters of this group (75 per cent) completed school, approaching the proportion for diplomaqualified educators in the same age group (78.8 per cent). As occurs for the general population, the proportion of educators who completed school decreases markedly in older age groups, with only around one-fifth of educators in the 45–54-year-old group with no qualification having completed school (21.6 per cent).

Bourdieu's theory proposes that the advantages conveyed by cultural capital that contribute to success at school are sustained as advantages in the pursuit of further education in adulthood. In Australia, completion of school is one of the key predictors of future outcomes in further education (Lamb et al., 2015a, p. 41). This proposition is also borne out in the tendency for school completers to be most likely to engage in adult learning (see Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2012). Table 4.5 tests this relationship for the ECEC workforce, bringing together the two analyses above. It again shows the proportion of educators engaged in further study, this time separating those in each qualification group who did complete school, and those who did not.

	ECEC-r	elated or	no qualif	ications	Out-of-fi	fications	Total					
	Deg	Dip	Cert	Unq	Deg	Dip	Cert					
Did not complete	Did not complete school											
<i>n</i> studying	207	1,191	2,224	3,024	52	199	709	7,606				
<i>n</i> not studying	1,231	7,856	9,085	8,668	179	629	1,856	29,504				
% studying	14.4%	13.2%	19.7%	25.9%	22.5%	24.0%	27.6%	20.5%				
Completed schoo	l (Year 12	2)										
<i>n</i> studying	1,845	3,841	4,368	7,976	1,658	918	1,151	21,757				
<i>n</i> not studying	13,962	17,992	9,835	6,800	4,169	1,754	1,682	56,194				
% studying	11.7%	17.6%	30.8%	54.0%	28.5%	34.4%	40.6%	27.9%				

 Table 4.5 – Proportion of educators who did and did not complete school

 engaged in further study, by qualification (% completion/qualification group)

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Table 4.5 shows that completing school increases the chances of being engaged in further study for educators in most qualification groups. The exception is degree-qualified educators, in which non-completers are slightly more likely than completers to be studying (14.4 and 11.7 per cent respectively). This suggests that obtaining a degree may have an equalising effect on prior educational attainment, with non-completers who have obtained a degree having already overcome any residual educational disadvantage from their past school attainment.

Unqualified educators show the largest difference, with school completers over twice as likely as non-completers to be engaged in further study (54 and 25.9 per cent respectively). This suggests that the "unqualified" label for this group masks high levels of within-group variation in educators' cultural capital, including two very different cohorts: those whose cultural capital has equipped them to succeed at school, who are then pursuing further educational success; and those who have neither completed school, nor completed a qualification, nor enrolled in a course of study to obtain one.

Where educators live and work

Educators' levels of capital may also be affected by the communities in which they live and work. Communities are especially important to the concept of social capital, which may be measured by the size and socio-economic status of an individual's social connections (Savage et al., 2013; Sheppard & Biddle, 2017; Yang, 2007). Communities may also influence cultural capital, for example through the number and types of cultural institutions available within them; and economic capital, by the opportunities they offer for employment, or by the living costs that they place upon their residents.

The ABS Census Place of Usual Residence database enables basic socio-economic analysis of the communities in which educators live. The indicator chosen for this analysis is the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD), as this measures community socio-economic status by taking into account both the high and low ends of the range. Communities²⁹ have been grouped into IRSAD quintiles for this analysis based on all Australian communities, to indicate levels of low through to high socio-economic status (SES). Results for educators are presented in Figure 4.18, comparing each qualification group to all similarly-qualified employed Australians.

²⁹ Communities are defined using Statistical Area 2, the smallest geographical unit that is available in the TableBuilder interface that was used for accessing ABS Census data.





	Low SES	Low-mid SES	Mid SES	Mid-high SES	High SES
Educators	·	· · ·			
Degree	1,995	2,607	3,320	3,789	4,311
Diploma	5,608	6,301	7,100	6,490	4,929
Certificate	5,599	5,515	5,730	4,986	3,431
Unqualified	5,212	4,475	5,092	5,075	5,357
All employed A	ustralians	· · · ·			
Degree	205,947	291,269	441,241	627,103	897,195
Diploma	119,001	152,996	202,111	226,462	249,404
Certificate	381,429	450,772	493,144	450,988	359,238
Unqualified	657,072	722,307	772,895	719,807	631,517

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.18 shows that educators with an ECEC-related qualification are more likely to live in low socio-economic status communities than similarly-qualified Australian workers in general. The difference is most notable for degree- and diploma-qualified educators, with both groups being approximately 10 percentage points less likely to live in high-SES communities than all similarly-qualified workers (degree: 26.9 compared to 36.4 per cent; diploma: 16.2 compared to 26.3 per cent). This is consistent with the relatively low household income of these qualification groups, compared to the general population. In contrast, unqualified educators are slightly more likely to live in high-SES communities than the general population, adding to the view that this group has access to greater stores of capital than their absence of qualification might suggest.

While the communities in which educators live may have a self-evident link to their economic capital, the communities in which they work may not. Use of ECEC services is lowest in Australia in low-SES communities (Gilley et al., 2015), and recent media from the state of Queensland reports high demand for ECEC in high-SES communities in

which educators "cannot afford to live" (Stigwood, 2017, p. 9). Many Australian low-wage workers commute, sometimes long distances, to work in the affluent communities in which there is greatest demand for their labour (Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008).

The distribution of educators across communities does not only have effects on the availability of ECEC staff (and, consequently, services). If educators with higher-quality practice are unevenly distributed across communities, this has significant consequences for equity of access to the benefits of quality ECEC services in overcoming disadvantage. Findings from the Australian E4Kids study suggest that the quality of ECEC services is lower in low-SES communities (Cloney, Cleveland, Hattie & Tayler, 2016), raising concerns that high-quality ECEC is proportionately less accessible for children and families who need it the most.

The ABS Census Place of Work database enables educators' usual place of work to be analysed for each of the qualification groups. Results are presented in Figure 4.19, again using IRSAD quintiles to indicate community SES. Figure 4.20 delves deeper into educators' situations, by presenting the proportion of each qualification group working in each community SES quintile who completed school. This provides a finer-grained picture of how educators' and communities' levels of advantage intersect.







Figure 4.20 – Proportion of educators working in each socio-economic quintile who completed school, by qualification (% quintile/qualification group)

		Complete	d school	(Year 12)		Total stated				
n	Low SES	Low-mid SES	Mid SES	Mid-high SES	High SES	Low SES	Low-mid SES	Mid SES	Mid-high SES	High SES
Degree	2,102	2,027	2,647	2,931	3,899	2,206	2,119	2,726	3,031	3,979
Diploma	3,329	3,460	4,061	4,236	4,246	5,008	5,009	5,560	5,640	5,212
Certificate	2,409	2,319	2,634	2,671	2,469	4,737	4,462	4,760	4,517	3,913
Unqualified	1,677	1,842	2,202	2,651	3,965	4,014	3,780	4,248	4,477	5,801

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Figure 4.19 presents a finding of some concern to the National Quality Agenda—degreequalified educators are the most likely to be found in high-SES communities, with over one-quarter (28.3 per cent) of this qualification group working in communities in the highest SES quintile. A plausible cause can be deduced from differences in educators' economic capital—degree-qualified educators are most able to afford to live in high-SES communities; as well as being the most expensive to employ, meaning that high-SES communities may be most able to afford them. The effects of this trend are widereaching, both for equity in children's learning and development, and in educators' own access to social, cultural and economic capital in the communities that they serve.

For other qualification groups, Figure 4.19 implies little difference in their distribution across differently-advantaged communities; with the exception of unqualified educators, who are also disproportionately represented in communities in the high-SES quintile. This apparently surprising finding may be explained by the findings in relation to this group revealed in the analysis up to this point, which suggest that it includes a large proportion of relatively advantaged (economically and culturally) young people who are in the process of acquiring qualifications. These young people may reside in high-SES communities, and may also be attractive employees in such contexts.

To understand differences in the distribution of other qualification groups, it is necessary to turn to Figure 4.20, which shows the proportion of educators working in each community SES quintile who completed school. In this graph, the relationship between educators' and communities' level of social advantage is sustained across all qualification groups, in that educators who have completed school are more likely to work in more advantaged communities. This compounds the issue of inequality in the distribution of degree-qualified educators—that is, these educators can consolidate their advantage by accessing capital in the communities they serve, and may also consolidate the advantage of communities by applying their capital to their work with children.

Summary

This chapter has explored various indicators of educators' social advantage, and their relationship to educators' qualifications. Table 4.6 summarises the indicators of social advantage presented in this chapter, for each of the main ECEC-related qualification groups. These indicators do not include all the data presented in the chapter, but rather represent a core group of selected indicators that may be seen to have most relevance to educators' levels of social advantage. As with the analysis throughout this chapter, percentages of those educators for whom data are available are used to show the prevalence of each indicator in each qualification group. The standard deviation for each indicator across the four groups is also shown, to indicate the level of variance.

	Deg	Dip	Cert	Unq	Mean	Std Dev
High individual income (\$41,600 or more)	57.7%	35.5%	11.0%	8.4%	28.1%	23.2
Low individual income (\$20,799 or less)	9.8%	12.2%	22.4%	49.2%	23.4%	18.1
Apparent underemployed (% part-time)	19.2%	22.4%	27.4%	22.0%	22.8%	3.4
High household income (\$130,000 or more)	33.0%	22.7%	19.8%	26.3%	25.5%	5.7
Low household income (\$51,999 or less)	12.1%	17.7%	23.3%	23.0%	19.0%	5.3
One or more children (% aged 25–29)	22.6%	33.3%	42.2%	45.5%	35.9%	10.3
Three or more children (% aged 45+)	11.8%	14.4%	16.5%	18.7%	15.3%	2.9
Contributes >75% of total household income	20.4%	17.9%	15.6%	11.2%	16.3%	3.9
Contributes <=25% of total household income	16.7%	18.5%	28.5%	47.8%	27.9%	14.2

Table 4.6 – Summar	y of key	y indicators,	by c	ualification
		,		

Studying (mean of all age groups)	12.8%	15.1%	22.2%	30.1%	20.1%	7.8
Completed school (mean of all age groups)	90.9%	68.1%	49.7%	46.8%	63.9%	20.4
Living in high SES community	26.9%	16.2%	13.6%	21.2%	19.5%	5.9
Living in Iow SES community	12.5%	18.4%	22.2%	20.7%	18.4%	4.3
Working in high SES community	28.3%	19.7%	17.5%	26.0%	22.9%	5.1
Working in low SES community	15.7%	18.9%	21.2%	18.0%	18.4%	2.3

Note: Excludes educators qualified out-of-field.

High/low income groups were determined by combining income brackets to approximate the upper and lower quartile of income distribution for all educators.

Source: ABS, 2011a. Derived using TableBuilder in 2017.

Some of these indicators reflect elements of the study's hypothesis—based on Bourdieu's theory—that higher-level qualifications are also likely to be markers of higher levels of capital of other kinds. The effects of capital associated with higher qualifications can be seen in higher incomes among more highly-qualified educators, as well as higher levels of school attainment—the indicator with the second-highest standard deviation in this set, signifying substantial variance across qualification groups. Differences in family composition also reflect and compound the effects of differentials in capital, in earlier fertility rates and larger families among educators in lower-level qualification groups. Importantly, the data suggest that differences in capital may be common to educators and the communities they serve, based on the lower levels of qualifications and school attainment among educators serving less socially-advantaged communities.

Other indicators show mediating factors by which the anticipated relationship between qualifications and social advantage is disrupted. The unqualified group, for example, shows higher-than-anticipated results on household income, and community SES (living and working). The same group also breaks the trend among part-time educators who are apparently underemployed (not parenting, studying or volunteering), due to the large proportion of this group engaged in study. This implies that the absence of an ECEC qualification must be interpreted in the context of many other factors, including the presence (or absence) of support from other members of the household; the potential to increase social advantage through the pursuit of further education; and the simple factor of age, given that many unqualified educators are at the early stages of their careers.

Also important is the comparison within this chapter between each group of educators and similarly-qualified workers in the entire Australian population. This shows that educators at all qualification levels appear disadvantaged relative to their similarlyqualified peers, even when gender dynamics are taken into account. While economic differences are reduced with equivalised measures, signalling the compensatory effects of total household income, educators remain at a disadvantage relative to other women. The gap between educators and the general population on other measures—including school completion, and residence in more affluent communities—confirms that the economic disadvantage of educators, which is the subject of current industrial action, flows through to elements of social disadvantage in other areas.

Despite this, perhaps the most striking differences between educators and the general population is the proportion of educators engaged in further study, especially for educators with lower-level or no qualifications. Even after taking the mean across age groups—to reduce the skewing effects of the young, unqualified group—the likelihood of educators engaging in further study still increases at progressively lower levels of the AQF qualifications ladder. This is a significant way in which the ECEC workforce differs from the Australian workforce as a whole, and shows how the National Quality Agenda reforms may be opening opportunities for educators to improve their social position, beginning with the acquisition of a higher qualification. While Australian educators' state of *being* may currently be one of relative social disadvantage, it is therefore also a state of hope and possibility, as a sector undergoing a major transformation in its identity.

Chapter 5 — Educators belonging

The ECEC National Workforce Census (NWC) is the largest-ever survey of the Australian early childhood workforce, conducted in 2010 and 2013; with a further 2016 data collection in progress at time of writing. Many survey items in the NWC are attitudinal, capturing educators' subjective views on various aspects of their engagement in the ECEC sector. It is therefore valuable for examining the second of the three themes in the data analysis: educators' sense of *belonging* in the ECEC sector.

A sense of belonging in the ECEC sector implies a match between educators' habitus (as shaped by their cultural, social and economic capital) and doxa, or norms and expectations, of the ECEC field. It implies a sense of being in the right place—Bourdieu's (1989) "fish in water" metaphor (p. 43)—in accordance with subjectively- and objectivelyformed aspirations and beliefs about one's place in the world. Cultural, social and economic capital may all exert an influence on this feeling, in the sense that one's knowledge is valued, one's social networks are strong and supportive, and one's economic circumstances are neither better nor worse than one's expectations.

This chapter uses NWC data to examine educators' views on their work and their aspirations for the future, both of which may be informed by their social, cultural and economic capital. Results are presented for the same main gualification groups defined in the previous chapter: degree-qualified, diploma-qualified (including advanced diploma), certificate-qualified, and unqualified educators (including the small proportion of educators reportedly qualified below Certificate III).³⁰ The number of educators in each group is presented in Table 5.1, noting that these figures differ from the ABS Census due to different methods for defining the groups (see Chapter 3). Table 5.1 also introduces one of the major analytic advantages of the NWC—its ability to show change over time, before (2010) and after (2013) the National Quality Agenda came into force.

						-		-	
Degree Diploma Certificate Unqualified									
	n	% row	Total n						
2010	14,505	14.1%	26,242	25.5%	30,828	29.9%	31,501	30.6%	103,076

113,817

16.8%

Table 5.1 – Staff in ECEC services, by gualification (*n*, % all educators)

29.3%

Source: SRC, 2011, 2014 (all staff). 31

16.1%

33,382

18,344

2013

42.914

37.7%

19,177

³⁰ Educators with out-of-field qualifications are not captured in the NWC data provided for this study, so qualification groups are defined according to ECEC-related qualifications alone. ³¹ Publicly-available NWC data tables were used for Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1. All other analysis in this chapter uses customised aggregated tables provided by DET for use in this study.

Table 5.1 shows that the total size of the workforce in ECEC services within-scope for this study grew by 11,440 staff from 2010 to 2013, to 113,817 staff in 2013. The increase in overall numbers may be attributable in part to increasing demand for ECEC, and in part to increases in staff:child ratios under the National Quality Agenda (National Regulations 2012). The qualifications profile of the workforce also changed dramatically during this time, especially in the substantial reduction in the size of the unqualified educator group (from 30.6 per cent in 2010 to 16.8 per cent in 2013), and increase in the certificate-qualified group (from 29.9 to 37.7 per cent). The diploma- and degree-qualified groups also increased in proportion during this time, but to a lesser extent.

Another analytic advantage of the NWC is that data are disaggregated by the type of ECEC service in which educators work: preschool, long day care, family day care and school age care (see Chapter 1 for definitions of these services). This disaggregation is used throughout this chapter to explore whether differences between qualification groups are stronger or weaker than differences between service types—another mediating factor that may complicate the relationship between qualifications, capital and practice. The first example is shown in Figure 5.1, which divides the total group of educators by both qualification and type of ECEC service. The 2010 results are presented as dots (no data labels)—a format that will be used in subsequent graphs throughout this chapter. Discussion of results is for 2013 figures, unless otherwise signalled in the text.



Figure 5.1 – Educators by qualification and service type (n)

Source: SRC, 2011, 2014 (paid contact staff).

Figure 5.1 clearly shows the differing numbers of educators at each qualification level in different types of ECEC services, reflecting the different roles that each service has played in the history of ECEC services in Australia. Preschool services are the only type in which degree-qualified educators are the largest qualification group (n=8,697, or 39 per cent of preschool educators), while school age care is the only service type in which

unqualified educators are the dominant group (n=5,927, or 43 per cent of school age care educators). Long day care, by far the largest type of ECEC service, is dominated by educators with VET qualifications (diploma-qualified: n=23,075 or 35 per cent of long day care educators; certificate-qualified: n=26,134 or 40 per cent of educators in long day care). The total number of VET-qualified educators in long day care (n=49,209 or 75 per cent of long day care educators) is in fact larger than the total number of educators in all other service types (n=48,690).

The movement of educators up the qualifications ladder can be clearly seen in all service types, since the new regulations came into force in 2012 – which may also have had an effect on patterns of educator recruitment. As in Table 5.1, the greatest movement is from unqualified to certificate-qualified, especially in long day care. Both preschool and long day care have also seen increases in degree-qualified educators, while family day care and school age care show little change in the absolute number of educators in the degree-qualified category—probably attributable to the absence of regulatory requirements for degree-qualified educators in these types of services.

Revisiting demographics

Before analysing the attitudinal questions in the NWC, the two analytic advantages of the NWC—disaggregation by service type, and change over time—will be used to revisit the key demographic characteristics of the ECEC workforce described in Chapter 4. This provides a deeper understanding of how age, gender and cultural diversity may vary across ECEC service contexts, and how the workforce profile is evolving. These analyses are presented below, beginning with educators' age in Figure 5.2.



Figure 5.2 – Proportion of educators in each ten-year age bracket, by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



			2010			2013				
	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
Preschool										
Degree	243	1,524	2,127	2,410	1,008	310	1,816	2,917	2,605	1,474
Diploma	200	557	1,024	1,147	431	253	734	1,399	1,433	601
Certificate	310	431	1,134	1,056	322	592	783	1,985	2,306	1,021
Unqualified	387	484	1,604	1,938	999	355	274	638	729	503
Long day care										
Degree	563	2,638	1,835	1,037	551	725	3,289	2,550	1,470	802
Diploma	3,775	8,025	4,920	3,252	1,190	3,842	9,526	6,483	4,286	1,694
Certificate	7,514	5,594	3,792	3,118	1,078	8,786	6,880	4,829	4,169	1,984
Unqualified	5,545	3,110	3,348	3,324	2,250	4,495	1,878	1,830	1,868	1,478
Family day car	e									
Degree	8	141	229	164	109	0	175	237	104	119
Diploma	47	465	773	623	268	51	517	1,219	1,043	607
Certificate	102	700	1,432	1,392	747	186	1,152	2,041	1,973	1,411
Unqualified	122	1,043	1,696	1,539	1,211	109	646	888	602	548
School age ca	re									
Degree	434	443	242	191	158	569	596	290	228	158
Diploma	404	710	607	716	357	469	807	699	765	508
Certificate	814	638	526	589	268	1,045	672	593	693	412
Unqualified	4,402	964	815	1,040	667	4,164	783	455	524	477

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.2 reveals striking differences in age profiles between ECEC service types. Preschool services have the oldest profile, with every qualification group having its highest proportions in the 35–44 and 45–54-year-old age brackets. Long day care services have much younger staff, with degree- and diploma-qualified staff most likely to be 25–34-year-olds, and certificate-qualified or unqualified staff most likely to be aged 15–24. Family day care has an age profile closer to preschool, although (as shown in Figure 5.1), the qualification profile is very different. School age care has a very young workforce, with almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of unqualified educators—who constitute 43 per cent of the total school age care workforce—aged 15–24. The interaction between age and qualification profile is important when considering the capacity for each type of ECEC service to meet the new qualification requirements – for example, the high proportion of young people among unqualified educators in long day care suggests that they may be in the process of pursuing their first ECEC qualification.

Figure 5.2 does not show much change in the age profile of service type and qualification groups from 2010 to 2013. The one notable change is an increase in the proportion of the unqualified group in the youngest age bracket. This trend is consistent across all service types except family day care, as it is the service type least likely to attract young educators overall. This suggests that the unqualified group of educators is increasingly made up of new entrants to the ECEC workforce; which may be expected, as older, more experienced educators move to comply with new qualification requirements.

Figure 5.3 shows the proportion of males in each service type and qualification group. In all service types, the proportion of males in the unqualified group has also increased. This is consistent with the relationship between gender and age shown in Chapter 4, in that male educators are more likely to be younger, and possibly on their way to other careers. Figure 5.3 also shows a startling difference in the proportion of males across ECEC service types, with school age care significantly more likely to attract males, especially in the unqualified group (26.3 per cent male). There are many potential explanations for this, including the older age group of the children; the fact that many school age care educators may be completing primary or other teaching degrees; or the involvement in the school age care sector of sporting groups such as the YMCA and Police-Citizens' Youth Club (PCYC), which have strong histories of male involvement.





		20	10			20	13	
n	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool								
Male	914	45	44	109	718	40	81	73
Female	24,254	3,528	3,450	5,685	26,130	4,485	6,820	2,506
Long day care								
Male	1,734	278	382	866	2,039	362	599	787
Female	66,185	20,976	20,830	16,794	73,492	25,747	26,423	10,906
Family day care								
Male	150	17	27	73	392	55	138	146
Female	13,421	2,161	4,346	5,538	13,659	3,393	6,640	2,649

School age care									
Male	2,498	130	186	1,763	2,893	162	259	1,696	
Female	13,770	2,687	2,665	6,173	14,903	3,115	3,188	4,764	

Source: DET, 2016.

The other key demographic variable captured in the NWC data is Indigenous status. The proportion of Indigenous educators in the NWC was too small to be disaggregated by qualification in the data provided, but is shown in Table 5.2 disaggregated for service type. The table shows the proportion of Indigenous educators working in each service type, as well as the total proportion across all ECEC services included in this study.

Table 5.2 – Indigenous educators, by service type (% service group)

	Pres	chool	Long d	ay care	Family o	day care	School a	age care	То	tal
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Indiger	nous									
2010	725	3.2%	988	1.8%	92	0.8%	267	2.1%	2,072	2.0%
2013	813	3.3%	1,242	1.9%	91	0.7%	288	2.2%	2,434	2.1%
Non-In	digenous	6								
2010	22,006	96.8%	53,438	98.2%	11,541	99.2%	12,699	97.9%	99,684	98.0%
2013	23,623	96.7%	64,783	98.1%	12,851	99.3%	13,013	97.8%	114,270	97.9%
~	DET 00	1.0								

Source: DET, 2016.

Table 5.2 shows that Indigenous educators are most likely to be found in preschool services (3.3 per cent), followed by school age care (2.1 per cent). In all service types except family day care (which has a minimal proportion of Indigenous educators), the proportion of Indigenous educators has increased slightly from 2010 to 2013. This may reflect efforts by governments to attract more Indigenous educators to the field through scholarship programs (for example, VDET, 2016a, New South Wales Department of Education, n.d.), and points to the value of sustaining strong pathways into ECEC work for Indigenous Australians, to continue to improve their representation in the sector.

Attitudes to work

The attitudinal items in the NWC Staff Survey provide a unique insight into the subjective experiences of a substantial proportion³² of educators in the Australian ECEC workforce. Taken together, these survey items may be seen as an indication of educators' sense of *belonging* in the ECEC workforce, or the extent to which they feel that their *habitus* is aligned with the expectations of the ECEC *field*. Attitudes to work may be informed by capital through many mediating factors; for example, in the tasks that educators are

³² See Chapter 3 for information about response rates for the NWC Staff Survey.

asked to perform (based on their competence or *habitus*), their sense of their own worth and value (including the potential effects of *symbolic violence*), and the emotional resources they have available to cope with the job (including emotional capital as defined in Chapter 2). These indicators therefore leave another layer of questions unanswered about the mediating factors that may contribute to these attitudes for different qualification groups—but nevertheless provide a valuable picture of the differences in attitudes that are present among different groups in the ECEC workforce.

Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.5 explore two fundamental attitudinal questions for educators at different qualification levels, using data from the NWC. The items presented here captured educators' agreement and disagreement³³ with two statements: "I am satisfied with my job" and "The job is stressful". Results are disaggregated by both service type and qualification group. Data labels represent percentages in the 2013 survey³⁴, and dots represent corresponding percentages from 2010 (not labelled). This format will be used for all graphs representing attitudinal questions throughout this chapter.



Figure 5.4 – Educators agreeing that they are satisfied with their job, by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)

		20)10		2013				
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool									
Agree	3,361	1,625	1,666	2,988	3,898	1,868	2,842	2,018	
Disagree	113	61	31	42	193	68	59	39	
Neutral	236	121	117	182	310	165	248	172	
Long day care									
Agree	2,728	7,216	8,093	6,299	3,804	8,662	10,763	4,620	
Disagree	160	342	309	170	224	406	453	145	
Neutral	350	1,033	1,131	692	520	1,267	1,516	515	
Family day care									
Agree	411	981	1,709	1,641	418	937	1,572	627	
Disagree	18	32	37	58	14	20	72	22	
Neutral	37	95	153	172	30	87	165	74	

³³ A neutral option was also available for all attitudinal questions, not shown in the graphs.

³⁴ Percentage symbols are omitted from attitudinal graphs in this chapter, for ease of legibility.

School age care											
Agree	669	983	1,236	3,258	903	1,219	1,641	3,306			
Disagree	21	27	22	50	31	42	39	56			
Neutral	68	93	132	201	98	131	167	259			

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.5 – Educators agreeing that their job is stressful, by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



		20	10			20	13	
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool								
Agree	2,586	1,000	736	1,120	3,149	1,150	1,405	800
Disagree	395	303	434	989	414	322	679	677
Neutral	712	487	630	1,056	818	617	1,031	734
Long day care								
Agree	2,154	5,782	5,360	3,227	2,994	6,670	6,747	2,235
Disagree	335	753	1,272	1,566	484	1,022	1,926	1,231
Neutral	716	1,974	2,755	2,273	1,028	2,542	3,886	1,760
Family day care								
Agree	264	662	1,050	930	214	574	991	312
Disagree	62	120	260	282	99	173	308	183
Neutral	131	301	538	588	149	258	476	212
School age care								
Agree	295	611	606	1,001	424	751	721	889
Disagree	226	186	309	1,341	312	236	467	1,427
Neutral	235	292	454	1,139	290	391	637	1,284

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.4 shows that educators' overall levels of job satisfaction are very high, and relatively consistent across qualification groups. Educators with lower-level qualifications demonstrate slightly higher rates of job satisfaction in all service types, except family day care. Levels of satisfaction in long day care are somewhat lower than those in other service types, especially for degree-qualified educators (83.6 per cent). As noted above, there are many possible explanations for these slight differences between qualification groups, including the age profile of each group, and possible differences in the tasks that

they perform. Generally, however, the ECEC workforce shows a high level of satisfaction with their work, which has remained stable between 2010 and 2013.

Figure 5.5 shows a noticeably different pattern in educators' perceived levels of stress in their jobs. In preschool and long day care, degree- and diploma-qualified educators are significantly more likely to perceive their job as stressful than educators with certificates or no qualification, with over seven in 10 (71.9 per cent) of degree-qualified educators in preschool experiencing stress in their job. In contrast, educators without a qualification are far less likely to report stress in their work, especially in school age care—the only group for whom the proportion of educators disagreeing with the statement (39.6 per cent) exceeds the proportion who agree (24.7 per cent). Like job satisfaction, stress levels show little change for all groups from 2010 to 2013.

Relationships are also relevant to a sense of belonging in the ECEC sector, and may be informed by *habitus* in the extent to which educators feel accepted and valued by their colleagues (and accept and value them in turn). The NWC data include two items that examine relationships within ECEC services: the level of spirit and team morale in the educators' workplaces; and the supportiveness that educators perceive in their service management. Again, two statements were presented to educators with which they could agree or disagree. Results for these items are shown in Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7.

Figure 5.6 – Educators agreeing that "There is good spirit and team morale in my workplace", by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



n	2010				2013				
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool									
Agree	3,090	1,511	1,512	2,739	3,634	1,734	2,619	1,900	
Disagree	236	106	95	128	277	108	155	94	
Neutral	371	176	196	311	465	249	344	226	
Long day care									
Agree	2,476	6,493	7,102	5,622	3,389	7,617	9,431	4,098	
Disagree	276	635	666	428	363	736	921	312	
Neutral	456	1,391	1,655	1,035	738	1,845	2,184	804	

Family day care	1							
Agree	325	759	1,411	1,342	359	755	1,278	547
Disagree	17	56	66	87	20	58	93	40
Neutral	102	240	324	353	77	174	338	113
School age care								
Agree	653	977	1,176	3,175	895	1,183	1,548	3,220
Disagree	33	31	48	81	43	40	56	71
Neutral	68	90	151	235	89	143	224	310

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.7 – Educators agreeing that "Management are supportive", by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



n		20)10		2013				
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool									
Agree	2,889	1,422	1,447	2,668	3,461	1,673	2,541	1,860	
Disagree	277	137	98	158	317	130	175	95	
Neutral	513	235	262	339	599	293	401	256	
Long day care									
Agree	2,454	6,275	7,092	5,685	3,461	7,767	9,683	4,314	
Disagree	251	764	747	388	339	758	877	263	
Neutral	495	1,448	1,542	991	680	1,685	1,977	646	
Family day care									
Agree	331	804	1,446	1,405	386	776	1,377	593	
Disagree	19	76	78	75	27	68	71	35	
Neutral	92	192	299	288	48	155	288	73	
School age care									
Agree	613	834	1,086	2,986	828	1,103	1,493	3,118	
Disagree	35	76	71	136	67	83	95	149	
Neutral	108	179	210	361	129	187	239	320	

Source: DET, 2016.

These two graphs signal a generally high level of satisfaction among educators with their relationships with colleagues and with management, which has remained steady from 2010 to 2013. This may perhaps be expected, in a sector where quality of interpersonal relationships is so central to practice. There are nevertheless some differences between different groups of educators, both by qualification and service type. Like job satisfaction, the educators in each service type who appear happiest with their collegial relationships

are those with no qualification; with the exception of family day care, in which degreequalified educators appear happiest (noting that this is a relatively small group).

Both graphs also show clear differences across ECEC service types. Paradoxically, the educators least likely to report good spirit and team morale are located in long day care services, which typically involve long hours working in a collaborative team environment; and in family day care, in which educators spend most of their working lives alone with small groups of children. This suggests that team morale may be equally tested through isolation; or through sustained contact in collegial teams. For the family day care sector, these results are borne out in published data from National Quality Standard assessments, which show that family day care services are far less likely to meet the standard relating to relationships between staff than centre-based services (75 per cent of family day care services, as at January 2017) (ACECQA, 2017a). As assessments for centre-based services are not further disaggregated, it is not possible to consider results for long day care as a group.

The difference between service types is less striking in Figure 5.7, suggesting that the structure of the workplace has less impact on educators' perception of the supportiveness of management. It is unfortunately not possible to examine this measure by the type of management in the service (not-for-profit organisations, for-profit corporate or volunteer committees), through which greater differences in educators' opinions might be expected to emerge. Overall, it is difficult to draw robust conclusions from these data about the factors that influence the quality of educators' relationships, except to be able to say the differences associated with qualifications do not exert a strong effect.

The NWC data accessed for this study offer little information about educators' relationships outside the ECEC sector, except for a single item that explores educators' perceptions of how their work is regarded. This item conflates several concepts— whether the job is important to the educator, whether it has high status, and whether the educator receives positive recognition in the community—meaning that results should be treated with caution, due to the risk of respondents interpreting the question in different ways. Results for the item are shown in Figure 5.8.

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Figure 5.8 – Educators agreeing that "My job is important to me because it has high status and I receive positive recognition in the community", by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



n		20	10		2013				
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool									
Agree	1,632	866	917	1,548	2,009	1,022	1,625	988	
Disagree	874	375	313	533	1,000	415	530	392	
Neutral	1,179	547	571	1,094	1,372	654	953	833	
Long day care									
Agree	1,369	4,129	5,303	3,851	2,034	5,067	7,024	2,818	
Disagree	903	1,972	1,611	1,081	1,158	2,227	2,020	804	
Neutral	931	2,418	2,496	2,138	1,300	2,921	3,497	1,591	
Family day care									
Agree	163	543	1,130	1,012	236	558	1,105	392	
Disagree	145	200	268	267	111	165	242	104	
Neutral	143	337	447	521	114	287	412	212	
School age care									
Agree	335	599	799	1,844	483	782	1,084	2,041	
Disagree	152	187	167	511	205	211	227	445	
Neutral	266	310	407	1,127	341	382	519	1,115	

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.8 shows relatively low levels of agreement with the item overall, compared to other items that examine how educators feel about their work. In most qualification groups, around half the educators agree with the statement, with higher proportions among certificate-qualified educators in family day care and school age care. This item also has one of the highest proportions of educators recording a "neutral" response in each group (ranging from 23 to 37.6 per cent), suggesting that educators may have been confused by the conflation of concepts in the question, or unsure how to respond.

The more striking trend in Figure 5.8 appears in the proportion of educators disagreeing with the statement (from 12.4 to 25.8 per cent). This indicates that at least one component of the item (importance to self, high status, or recognition) struck a discord for many of the educators who responded to the survey. In every service type, degree-

qualified educators are markedly more likely to disagree, including over one-quarter (25.8 per cent) of degree-qualified educators in long day care. The level of disagreement declines steadily as qualifications ascend in each service type, with diploma-qualified educators approaching the level of disagreement of degree-qualified educators, then less disagreement apparent in the certificate-qualified and unqualified groups. This suggests that the higher the status of an educator's qualification, the more sensitive they may be to a perceived lack of status in their interactions outside the sector.

This group of indicators suggests a tension in the sense of belonging in the ECEC sector experienced by educators with different qualifications; in that more highly-qualified educators experience higher levels of stress in their roles, and feel that they receive less recognition from the wider community. Of course, such attitudes are not formed in a vacuum, but depend on the conditions of the workplace, and the level of alignment between workers' expectations and their actual situation (Poggi, 2008). The NWC data includes a range of further indicators through which these factors may be explored.

Pay and conditions

Educators' satisfaction with their remuneration is likely to be an important factor in their satisfaction and sense of belonging in their work. Chapter 4 has already shown that many educators' individual incomes are substantially lower than the average for similarlyqualified workers in the broader Australian labour market. The NWC offers a subjective view on this finding, in educators' satisfaction with their pay and conditions (Figure 5.9).



Figure 5.9 – Educators' satisfaction with their pay and conditions, by
qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)

n	2010				2013			
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool								
Agree	2,030	761	794	1,684	2,235	811	1,247	1,212
Disagree	1,017	662	598	858	1,382	829	1,195	524
Neutral	642	364	403	623	755	444	674	475

Long day care								
Agree	1,391	3,170	3,985	3,598	1,911	3,426	4,866	2,677
Disagree	1,182	3,350	3,303	1,989	1,624	4,381	4,798	1,416
Neutral	623	1,986	2,108	1,482	958	2,388	2,877	1,123
Family day care								
Agree	223	594	1,178	1,136	243	573	989	458
Disagree	134	242	287	296	132	220	337	117
Neutral	100	246	400	386	87	210	433	138
School age care								
Agree	474	610	834	2,601	631	755	1,136	2,770
Disagree	153	245	231	386	225	339	306	338
Neutral	128	237	307	504	175	281	377	489

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.9 reveals an apparently counter-intuitive finding: the qualification group likely to be paid least (unqualified educators) is the most likely to be satisfied with their pay and conditions. This pattern holds across all ECEC service types. For other qualification groups, relative levels of satisfaction vary by service type. The diploma- and certificate-qualified groups are the least satisfied in preschool, long day care and school age care, and the small group of degree-qualified educators are least satisfied in family day care. As with job satisfaction, further investigation of the different tasks performed by educators at different qualification levels – which may have bearing on how they believe their work should be valued – is necessary to interpret the meaning of these results.

Another striking finding in Figure 5.9 is the relative stability of the results from 2010 to 2013. This suggests that the National Quality Agenda had not had a substantial impact on perceptions of pay, either in improving actual wages, or raising educators' levels of satisfaction with them. The two groups with the largest change in satisfaction over this period are degree-qualified educators in preschool (minus 3.9 percentage points), and certificate-qualified educators in family day care (minus 6.9 percentage points). Given the contrasting nature and role of these two groups, this raises questions about how educators' remuneration levels might vary across different ECEC service types.

As noted in Chapter 4, educators' hours of work are an important determinant of their access to personal income. The NWC is a valuable data set for examining educators' working hours, because the disaggregation by service type makes it possible to control for the variability in hours of operation across different types of services (see Chapter 1). Figure 5.10 shows educators' working hours by service type and qualification, using the four categories of weekly working hours defined in the NWC Staff Survey.


Figure 5.10 – Educators'	working	hours,	by	qualification	and	service	type	(%
service/qualification group))							

		20	010		2013				
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool									
1-19 hours	2,687	1,215	1,682	3,389	2,604	1,425	2,986	1,397	
20-34 hours	2,204	1,196	1,085	1,654	3,080	1,676	2,547	788	
35-40 hours	2,149	952	600	590	2,367	1,210	1,194	306	
41+ hours	548	137	38	43	1,061	166	65	24	
Long day care									
1-19 hours	1,052	2,484	3,229	4,956	1,247	3,000	4,616	3,294	
20-34 hours	1,659	5,543	6,858	6,350	2,322	7,571	9,327	4,224	
35-40 hours	3,593	12,544	10,859	6,059	4,777	14,623	12,645	3,965	
41+ hours	348	688	263	301	569	917	428	213	
Family day care	e								
1-19 hours	90	189	194	428	107	216	296	258	
20-34 hours	220	654	833	1,211	226	929	1,274	767	
35-40 hours	178	529	961	1,203	167	851	1,267	696	
41+ hours	164	805	2,376	2,750	138	1,452	3,941	1,074	
School age car	е								
1-19 hours	893	1,024	1,659	6,495	1,027	1,191	2,008	5,257	
20-34 hours	349	1,061	920	1,186	514	1,183	1,084	991	
35-40 hours	204	645	240	205	263	767	306	181	
41+ hours	25	80	29	39	38	135	46	42	

Source: DET, 2016.

As might be expected, Figure 5.10 shows working hours differ more between ECEC service types than between qualification groups. Preschool and school age care have high proportions of part-time workers, reflecting their sessional operating hours. In these services, short part-time hours (1–19 hours) are most likely to be worked by educators with lower-level qualifications. Over four-fifths (81.2 per cent) of the sizeable group of unqualified educators in school age care work fewer than 20 hours per week.

Long day care has the highest proportion of educators working normal full-time hours (35–40 per week), with over half the degree- and diploma-qualified groups in this category (53.6 and 56 per cent respectively). Family day care has a diverse mix of full-time and part-time workers, but is most notable for the high proportion of educators in all qualification groups who work long hours (41 or more hours per week). This suggests that many family day carers increase their economic capital by increasing their workload; perhaps symptomatic of the over-employment common among low-income workers in Australia, including in the ECEC sector (Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008).

The most notable change over time appears in preschool services. From 2010 to 2013, there is a decrease in educators working 1–19 hours in all qualification groups, and an increase in those working 20–34 hours, possibly due to government investment in increasing preschool participation for Australian children (see Chapter 1). While the proportion of preschool educators working over 40 hours per week is small, the change in this group is notable, especially for the degree-qualified group. The increase from 7.2 per cent (2010) to 11.6 per cent (2013) constitutions the largest proportional increase for any qualification group (61.2 per cent), and suggests that the impact of reform is being felt in educators' workloads. It suggests a potential reason for the decrease in this group's satisfaction with their working conditions identified in Figure 5.9.

The other notable change is in family day care, with a marked decrease in unqualified educators working over 40 hours, from nearly half (49.2 per cent) to 38.4 per cent. Given that Figure 5.1 showed a large movement of family day carers from the unqualified to the certificate-qualified group, this is less likely to reflect a change in working conditions, and more likely to reflect a change in the composition of the unqualified group to younger, less experienced educators. The decline in satisfaction among certificate-qualified family day carers (Figure 5.9), and the fact that over half (58.1 per cent) continue to work long hours, suggests that the process of obtaining a qualification has not resulted in an increase in economic capital sufficient to enable them to lighten their workloads.

As the NWC data were provided in aggregate form, it is not possible to directly match the number of hours an educator works to their income.³⁵ Educators' ratio of hours to income is therefore examined here using two analyses of the data on working hours from the NWC Service Survey shown above, with income data provided through NWC Staff Survey. This analysis provides a revealing approximation of the ability of educators in each qualification group and ECEC service type to translate their labour into economic gain. The first analysis (Figure 5.11) compares the proportion of educators in the highest income bracket recorded in the NWC, with the proportion working long hours (over 40 per week). This indicates the extent to which higher earnings are a function of excess work, rather than favourable remuneration.

Figure 5.11 – Proportion of high-income educators compared to educators working long hours, by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



	High-inc	High-income (\$50,000 or more per year)				Total responded (income)			
11	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool	2,167	275	80	153	4,238	2,006	3,002	2,113	
Long day care	1,759	1,580	594	295	4,342	9,870	11,827	4,854	
Family day care	108	270	343	120	426	965	1,608	667	
School age care	169	274	110	102	938	1,315	1,656	3,181	
	Long	hours (41+	hours per w	veek)	-	Total respor	nded (hours)	
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool	1,061	166	65	24	9,112	4,477	6,792	2,515	
Long day care	569	917	428	213	8,915	26,111	27,016	11,696	
Family day care	138	1,452	3,941	1,074	638	3,448	6,778	2,795	
School age care	38	135	46	42	1,842	3,276	3,444	6,471	

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.11 suggests that the ability of educators to gain remuneration for their labour varies markedly between service types and qualification groups. In preschool services, a high proportion of degree-qualified educators are in the highest income bracket (51.1

³⁵ Data from the ABS Census could have been matched in this way, but the variable of service type—which evidently has a strong bearing on both income and hours—would be lost.

per cent), but only around one-third (31.0 per cent) of this group of educators work long hours. This indicates that the relatively high incomes in preschool services do not generally result from excessive working hours. A similar pattern is evident for other qualification groups in preschools, and all groups in long day care.

In family day care, the relationship between long hours and high incomes is reversed, and the proportion of full-time educators working long hours in all qualification groups far exceeds the proportion of high earners. Notably, over three-quarters (75.7 per cent) of certificate-qualified family day carers (who constitute a substantial proportion of the sector) work long hours, but only 21.3 per cent earn in the top income bracket. The fact that so many educators work long hours without reaching this bracket is suggestive of unusually low wages in these services.³⁶

This finding is further validated by examining educators at the other end of the wage spectrum, and comparing the proportion of educators in the low-income bracket (combining the lowest two income brackets recorded in the NWC, due to low numbers) with the proportion working short part-time hours. In this analysis, the difference between the percentages indicates the proportion of educators whose low incomes cannot be explained by minimal hours of work. Figure 5.12 shows the results.

Figure 5.12 – Proportion of low-income educators compared to educators working short hours, by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



n	Low-in	come (up to	o \$30,000 pe	er year)	Total responded (income)			
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool	863	1,009	2,074	1,512	4,238	2,006	3,002	2,113
Long day care	805	2,159	5,214	3,206	4,342	9,870	11,827	4,854
Family day care	166	282	638	316	426	965	1,608	667
School age care	550	569	1,207	2,834	938	1,315	1,656	3,181

³⁶ Based on the hourly rates estimated in Table 2.1, a certificate-qualified educator in long day care only needs to work slightly above a normal full-time workload to enter the highest income threshold (\$23.31 multiplied by 42.5 hours, multiplied by 52 weeks=\$51,515 per year).

	Short hours (1–19 hours per week)				Total responded (hours)			
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool	2,604	1,425	2,986	1,397	9,112	4,477	6,792	2,515
Long day care	1,247	3,000	4,616	3,294	8,915	26,111	27,016	11,696
Family day care	107	216	296	258	638	3,448	6,778	2,795
School age care	1,027	1,191	2,008	5,257	1,842	3,276	3,444	6,471

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.12 further illustrates the economic advantage of degree-qualified educators, especially in preschools. The proportion of this group on low incomes is less than half the proportion working short hours (20.4 and 45.8 per cent respectively), suggesting that even part-time degree-qualified educators in preschools are more highly remunerated than educators in other qualification groups and service types. Degree-qualified educators in long day care show a similarly favourable ratio, with around one-third (34.9 per cent) working short hours, and 18.5 per cent on low incomes.

School age care services show relatively small gaps between the proportion of educators in each qualification group on low incomes, and the proportion working short hours. This suggests that low incomes in this sector are more likely to be a function of hours worked, than rate of pay. At the same time, as with preschool, the high prevalence of short parttime work in these services means that educators also have fewer opportunities to improve their financial position by working longer hours if they want to.

Family day care again stands out as the lowest-remunerated service type, especially for unqualified and certificate-qualified educators. In the unqualified group, close to half (47.4 per cent) are on low incomes, but only around one-quarter (25.2 per cent) can explain their low incomes by working short part-time hours. The gap is proportionally wider for the certificate-qualified group, with over twice the proportion of educators on low incomes as working short hours (39.7 and 18.9 per cent respectively), supporting the observation made above, that gaining a certificate does little to improve these educators' economic position. In long day care, there is also a considerable gap between the proportion of unqualified educators on low incomes, and the proportion working short hours, suggesting that this group is in a similarly economically-vulnerable position.

This analysis shows that pay and conditions vary widely across different types of ECEC services, as well as across qualification groups. Further gradations of pay may exist within service types that are not visible in the data, such as between commercial and not-for-profit providers³⁷, or between communities. The analysis also suggests that the

³⁷ In the United Kingdom, average hourly earnings in government-owned child care have been found to be around 30 per cent higher than in private (commercial) services (Simon & Owen, 2006, p. 20). Market forces may be expected to produce a similar result in Australia.

variation in educators' satisfaction with their pay and conditions shown at the start of this section (see Figure 5.9) may arise from a complex combination of their circumstances and—when taken alongside the data in Chapter 4, which situated educators' economic positions in the context of Australian society—expectations relative to similarly-qualified peers. Educators' expectations are themselves complex, and may vary according to their background, circumstances, aspirations and opportunities. These expectations and aspirations are the subject of the next analysis presented in this chapter.

Expectations and aspirations

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, a sense of belonging relates to a sense of alignment between where one is, and where one wants to be. Professional aspirations are themselves a component of *habitus* (see Dumais, 2002), in that they represent subjective hopes and expectations, as well as the internalisation of limitations and possibilities made available to individuals by objective social structures. This section uses attitudinal data from the NWC Staff Survey to examine the extent to which ECEC is a career of choice for those who work in the sector, including educators' original motivations for working in the sector, and their hopes regarding their future career path.

Two statements were presented to educators in the NWC Staff Survey regarding their initial motivation for entering the ECEC sector. The first tested whether educators had entered the sector because they always wanted to work with children—an indication that ECEC was a career of choice. The second tested whether entry to the sector was the only option available to them at the time, suggesting that ECEC was a default career, or career of "last resort". Results are shown in Figure 5.13 and Figure 5.14.

Figure 5.13 – Educators agreeing that "I entered the sector because I always wanted to work with children", by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



		20)10		2013			
n	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool								
Agree	3,391	1,617	1,568	2,265	4,000	1,895	2,662	1,345
Disagree	92	54	59	210	113	50	133	229
Neutral	215	132	185	647	286	154	333	591
Long day care								
Agree	2,898	7,701	8,338	5,215	4,050	9,246	11,064	3,663
Disagree	95	214	285	430	151	259	388	424
Neutral	215	609	833	1,353	312	785	1,198	1,056
Family day care								
Agree	399	961	1,583	1,330	399	917	1,567	480
Disagree	23	36	63	150	22	38	59	73
Neutral	37	100	250	345	39	76	191	160
School age care	•							
Agree	616	952	1,126	2,435	830	1,201	1,532	2,513
Disagree	42	33	49	286	48	50	79	290
Neutral	91	115	200	751	145	136	223	788

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.14 – Educators agreeing that "I entered the sector because it was the only opportunity at the time", by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



		20	10		2013					
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified		
Preschool										
Agree	193	148	190	502	268	182	357	395		
Disagree	3,170	1,467	1,346	2,067	3,741	1,667	2,328	1,348		
Neutral	258	148	207	484	317	196	350	399		
Long day care										
Agree	407	801	1,282	1,270	569	1,152	1,839	979		
Disagree	2,390	6,683	6,711	4,467	3,383	7,832	8,719	3,179		
Neutral	325	823	1,189	1,113	470	1,060	1,747	924		
Family day care										
Agree	96	146	379	430	62	166	409	211		
Disagree	302	775	1,103	981	335	698	935	352		
Neutral	51	131	310	351	52	132	367	136		
School age care										
Agree	146	129	205	681	182	176	287	677		
Disagree	476	795	916	2,111	662	971	1,219	2,209		
Neutral	127	152	198	632	160	205	284	678		

Source: DET, 2016.

The differences between the four qualification groups are prominent for these items. Educators with no qualification are notably less likely to have entered the sector because of a desire to work with children (62.1 to 71.2 per cent agreeing, compared to a range of 81.1 to 90.9 per cent for all other qualification groups). Similarly, educators with no ECEC qualification are the most likely in all service types to say that they entered the sector because it was the only opportunity available; especially in family day care, in which over three in ten (30.2 per cent) unqualified educators agreed with this statement.

There is little difference between degree- and diploma-qualified educators on these indicators in most ECEC service types. Degree-qualified educators are the most willing entrants to the sector in preschool services (most likely to agree with the first statement; least likely to agree with the second), while diploma-qualified educators are the most willing in long day care. An exception to this general pattern appears in school age care, in which degree-qualified educators show similar results to the unqualified group on both graphs. This suggests that work in school age care may be more likely to be a "stop-gap" or transitional career in these educators' lives, rather than a career of choice.

Two further items from the NWC Staff Survey address the extent to which educators *currently* see ECEC as a desirable career choice. The first is their level of agreement with the statement: "If I could, I would leave the sector today", while the second tests whether they would recommend work in the sector to others—a telling indication of how educators value their profession.³⁸ Results are shown in Figure 5.15 and Figure 5.16.





³⁸ A third, similar NWC item, "I am interested in furthering my career in the sector" was excluded from consideration, because of uncertainty about what "furthering" might mean to survey participants (continuing in their current career, or augmenting it in some way).

		20	010		2013			
n n	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool								
Agree	330	167	90	181	511	237	224	129
Disagree	2,831	1,357	1,462	2,522	3,234	1,483	2,420	1,695
Neutral	475	242	189	355	603	334	403	319
Long day care				· · · · · ·				
Agree	410	1,157	1,021	606	634	1,537	1,451	491
Disagree	2,197	5,638	6,658	5,193	3,001	6,578	8,671	3,789
Neutral	522	1,539	1,483	1,043	799	1,968	2,217	816
Family day care								
Agree	39	111	190	223	40	129	306	113
Disagree	344	759	1,273	1,204	353	723	1,087	476
Neutral	68	182	310	334	53	144	329	118
School age care								
Agree	71	105	83	217	110	143	140	211
Disagree	569	799	1,022	2,757	735	979	1,389	2,954
Neutral	111	177	228	459	164	235	270	401

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.16 – Educators agreeing that "I would recommend a career in the sector to others", by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



		20	10		2013			
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool								
Agree	2,593	1,229	1,364	2,266	2,801	1,263	2,123	1,443
Disagree	324	166	74	137	546	225	243	157
Neutral	754	387	350	692	1,017	581	716	551
Long day care								
Agree	1,997	5,185	6,115	4,594	2,765	5,908	7,937	3,353
Disagree	328	892	758	515	505	1,286	1,228	403
Neutral	839	2,311	2,375	1,791	1,199	2,950	3,257	1,340
Family day care								
Agree	334	749	1,382	1,287	330	726	1,262	491
Disagree	31	79	98	99	25	84	147	55
Neutral	88	246	346	382	96	197	339	169
School age care								
Agree	549	776	998	2,632	725	925	1,328	2,809
Disagree	53	75	56	142	68	120	110	118
Neutral	151	242	287	666	223	317	367	650

Source: DET, 2016.

A clear majority of educators in all groups (from 63.1 to 82.8 per cent) disagree that they would leave the ECEC sector today if they could. This is nevertheless a much smaller proportion than indicated overall levels of job satisfaction (see Figure 5.4). Smaller proportions still would recommend a career in the sector to others (from 58.2 to 78.5 per cent). This suggests that educators' perception of their work decreases as the level of abstraction in their thinking increases, from the here-and-now (job satisfaction); to contemplating possible futures for themselves; to contemplating possibilities for others. It may be that educators' job satisfaction arises most from immediate situational factors (such as collegial relationships), rather than the intrinsic nature of ECEC work.

The differences between qualification groups in these figures are not large, but a striking pattern emerges when compared to the graphs about educators' original motivations for entering the sector (Figure 5.13 and Figure 5.14)—the same qualification groups that are most likely to have entered the sector for positive, rather than "default" reasons, are also relatively more likely to want to leave it. That is, degree- and diploma-qualified educators in most service types (excluding family day care) are more likely to want to leave the sector today, and least likely to recommend the sector to others. This apparently contradictory finding is borne out by recent research by Irvine and her co-authors (2016), which also found that those who were most motivated to enter the sector because of a love of working with children were also those most likely to leave the ECEC sector.

In family day care, certificate-qualified educators are the group most likely to leave today if they had the chance (17.8 per cent), but also among the most likely to recommend an ECEC career to others (72.2 per cent). Recalling Bourdieu's theory of internalised expectations, this paradox suggests that this group may not necessarily regard ECEC as a desirable career choice in its own right, but as a reasonable option for "people like them"—who may not have many other options. That is, they may prefer a career other than ECEC if their options were unlimited, but given their constraints (whether economic, cultural or social), ECEC work is a recommendable way to make a living.

The largest change over time in these graphs is evident in the proportion of preschool educators who would recommend a career in ECEC to others (Figure 5.16), which has decreased notably for all qualification groups (although the proportions *disagreeing* with this statement have not increased correspondingly). A related decrease can be seen in preschool educators disagreeing that they would leave the sector today if they could—although again, the proportion of those *agreeing* shows little movement. The downward shift in how these educators value careers in the ECEC sector is therefore perceptible, but subtle, suggesting some ambiguity in their changing attitudes to their work in a time

of major upheaval in the sector. Certificate-qualified educators in family day care are the other group to show notable change between 2010 and 2013 in both graphs, matching their decreasing levels of satisfaction with their pay and conditions (Figure 5.9).

Career trajectories

As well as educators' expectations and aspirations, the NWC contains data about educators' actual trajectories in the sector. This information is important in considering educators' stores of capital, for several reasons. As opportunities for wage increases in the ECEC sector are limited (Productivity Commission, 2011), long-staying educators are unlikely to have experienced much increase in their economic capital over time, especially if they are in one of the lower-level qualification groups. On the other hand, long-staying educators may have accumulated rich stores of social and cultural capital within the ECEC sector, in their enduring relationships with colleagues, children and families, and the *embodied* cultural capital gained through experience on the job.

The NWC Service Survey captures length of experience³⁹ for educators in three types of ECEC services: long day care, family day care and school age care. Preschool services are excluded from this item—although the older age profile of preschool educators (Figure 5.2) suggests that their stores of experience may be considerable. Results for the three service types are shown in Figure 5.17, for each qualification group.



Figure 5.17 – Educators' years of experience in ECEC, by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)

³⁹ Length of experience is not necessarily continuous. Periods of absence of three months or more have been subtracted from educators' total estimated experience (SRC, 2011, 2014).



		20	10		2013				
n n	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Long day care									
<1 year	216	279	983	3,495	313	247	1,279	2,932	
1–3 years	847	2,802	8,759	5,203	1,257	3,415	11,193	3,409	
4–6 years	1,004	4,889	5,791	1,802	1,351	6,069	6,572	796	
7–9 years	737	3,052	1,952	818	887	3,989	2,671	348	
10+ years	2,639	7,453	2,905	2,252	3,659	9,268	4,288	877	
Family day care									
<1 year	22	40	177	643	26	56	369	405	
1–3 years	84	189	993	1,486	91	283	1,867	910	
4–6 years	78	297	871	721	74	550	1,265	288	
7–9 years	64	256	649	542	40	389	789	143	
10+ years	288	1,119	1,599	1,787	259	1,746	2,383	553	
School age care									
<1 year	69	37	92	1,348	97	44	145	1,347	
1–3 years	372	269	952	3,546	588	338	1,197	3,212	
4–6 years	344	499	721	1,130	414	580	794	764	
7–9 years	101	351	307	280	144	434	379	209	
10+ years	348	1,220	552	685	399	1,506	720	389	

Source: DET, 2016.

Educators' length of experience varies with their qualification, although the patterns of experience also vary across service types. In long day care and family day care, degreeand diploma-qualified educators have by far the most experience, with between 40.3 (diploma, long day care) and 57.7 (diploma, family day care) per cent of these groups having a decade or more of experience in the ECEC sector. In school age care, over half (51.9 per cent) of diploma-qualified educators have worked in the sector for over a decade, but the small degree-qualified group is much less experienced, compared to other service types, with only 24.3 per cent long-stayers.

Educators with no qualification have the least experience in all service types—a trend that has strengthened in all service types since 2010, as experienced educators have moved into the qualified groups. In long day care in particular, over one-third (35.1 per cent) of unqualified educators have been working in the sector for under one year. On the other hand, the proportion of unqualified educators with 10 or more years' experience remains significant, at approximately one-quarter (24.1 per cent) in family day care, and 10.5 per cent in long day care. This indicates that many educators remain in the ECEC

sector whose experience far outweighs their qualifications. Many of these educators may now be working towards their first qualification, as a result of the new requirements.

Long service in the ECEC sector can also offer benefits to educators' sense of belonging, in the formation of stable, enduring relationships with children, families and colleagues. These kinds of benefits are most likely to be acquired if educators remain employed for a substantial period of time at the same service. The NWC data reports the length of time that educators have been with their current employer; but in order to convert this to a measure of workforce mobility, it is necessary to examine it alongside length of service overall. To do this, two categories of educators have been identified in each group:

- **high-mobility**: number of educators with less than one year's tenure in their current service, minus the number of educators with less than one year's experience
- **low-mobility**: number of educators with ten or more years' tenure in their current service—necessarily a subset of the group with ten or more years' experience.

The proportions of educators in these two categories in 2013 are shown in Figure 5.18.





5		High-mobility				Low-mobility				
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified		
Long day care	1,308	2,854	3,144	759	917	2,502	1,567	437		
Family day care	1,308	2,854	3,144	759	61	821	1,793	405		
School age care	255	427	503	515	92	542	220	176		
	Total responded (time in current service)									
	Deg	jree	Dipl	oma	Certi	ficate	Unqu	alified		
Long day care	7,4	7,464		22,967		26,000		350		
Family day care	483		2,993		6,634		2,180			
School age care	1,639		2,901		3,238		5,916			

Source: DET, 2016.

For the high-mobility group on the left of Figure 5.18, stronger differences appear by qualification than by service type. In all ECEC service types, educators with no

qualification have the lowest proportion in the high-mobility group (from 6.6 to 9.1 per cent). This means that, once the high proportion of this group who are new to the ECEC sector are discounted, there are relatively few educators remaining who have been with their current employer for less than a year. In all service types, degree-qualified educators are most likely to be recent arrivals in their current service, having worked for more than one year in the sector. This suggests that the high demand for degree-qualified educators may be generating a comparatively high rate of workforce mobility. While this may offer some benefits for these educators in broadening their networks and experience, it may exact a cost on stability and efficiency in their services.

For the low-mobility educators shown on the right of Figure 5.18, the difference is greater across service types than qualification groups. Family day care services have a very high proportion of long-staying educators in all qualification groups, with over one-quarter of educators with diplomas (27.4 per cent) or certificates (27 per cent) having been with their current service for more than ten years. Degree-qualified educators are the least likely educators in family day care to be long-stayers (12.6 per cent), but even this group is more likely to demonstrate low mobility than any non-family day care group; with the exception of diploma-qualified educators in school age care (18.7 per cent). One possible reason might be the structure of family day care services, which can span a wide geographic area, with fewer services covering the same geographic area.⁴⁰ This suggests that the lack of mobility for these educators may reflect limited options.

Another indicator of educators' mobility across services is their intention of remaining with their current employer in 12 months' time, measured through the NWC Staff Survey. Although this a measure of *intended* rather than *actual* movement, it is a strong indication of the extent to which educators identify with their current service as a place in which they hope to work long-term. Figure 5.19 shows educators' responses.

⁴⁰ Based on analysis of the National Register of ECEC services (at August 2017), 96.8 per cent of the 14,687 centre-based services had another centre-based service located in the same postcode, compared to 68.3 per cent of the 870 family day care services (ACECQA, 2017a).





		20	10		2013			
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool								
Yes	3,105	1,541	1,580	2,783	3,659	1,800	2,723	1,864
No	214	70	59	112	231	95	75	117
Don't know	404	204	195	336	538	220	366	262
Long day care								
Yes	2,451	6,756	7,487	5,781	3,467	8,330	10,174	4,094
No	301	639	631	467	387	630	734	371
Don't know	498	1,241	1,466	966	703	1,403	1,875	823
Family day care								
Yes	385	964	1,730	1,629	356	882	1,584	591
No	24	53	64	84	44	38	69	63
Don't know	55	93	121	161	62	130	191	87
School age care								
Yes	509	938	1,116	2,698	716	1,189	1,530	2,795
No	118	50	77	287	115	61	81	283
Don't know	137	121	195	535	205	143	240	535

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.19 shows that in all services, diploma- and certificate-qualified educators are the most likely to expect to remain with their current service, relative to other educators in their service type. Degree-qualified educators in all service types are the least likely to anticipate staying in their current service for the next 12 months, with the difference being most marked for school age care. This is consistent with the relatively high proportions of high-mobility educators in this qualification group (see Figure 5.18), suggesting that many degree-qualified educators do follow through on this intention.

Overall, educators' opinions on this question show little change between 2010 and 2013, with the exception of educators in family day care. This suggests a shift in the culture of family day care services, from the lowest-mobility service type, to one in which educators can increasingly "shop around" for a favourable employer. Anecdotal evidence suggests

that the growth of private provision in the family day care sector may be driving more competitive recruitment practices across services, increasing workforce mobility.⁴¹

Preschool services show the greatest consistency across qualification groups, in the proportion of educators intending to remain at the same service, and a relatively high level of stability overall (82.6 to 86.1 per cent). This suggests that the high mobility among degree-qualified educators shown in the previous graphs may not apply to the preschool sector (for which actual mobility data were not available). Preschools may in fact be beneficiaries of staff turnover in the long day care sector—especially among degree-qualified educators—as preschool services can typically offer "higher salaries, shorter hours and more holidays" (Productivity Commission, 2014, p. 329).

In the NWC Staff Survey, educators who signalled an intention to leave their current workplace in the next 12 months were asked to identify a reason. Of the twelve reasons suggested in the survey, seven were selected by a sufficiently large proportion of educators to warrant discussion (that is, at least 20 per cent of any educator group)⁴². The proportion of educators selecting these reasons in 2013 is shown in Figure 5.20.

Figure 5.20 – Reasons educators intend to leave their current employer within 12 months, by qualification and service type (% educators intending to leave)



 ⁴¹ Based on the author's experience in regulation of ECEC services in the state of Victoria.
 ⁴² The five other excluded reasons were: maternity leave; workplace culture; retirement; difficulty managing children's behaviour; and employer/business closing down/downsizing.

Returning to study/ travel/family reasons



Seasonal/temporary job/ fixed contract finishing



Unable/Unwilling to complete qualification requirements



	Seekir	ng employm	ent outside	sector	Dissa	tisfaction w	ith pay/cond	litions
n	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool	139	63	67	64	162	99	104	55
Long day care	316	582	715	317	416	796	932	281
Family day care	26	33	68	32	25	46	77	22
School age care	148	68	112	378	58	55	71	92
		The job is	stressful		Returnin	g to study/t	ravel/family	reasons
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool	171	66	73	48	82	45	65	58
Long day care	256	608	627	159	211	426	632	298
Family day care	19	34	77	35	13	31	38	33
School age care	33	47	53	43	65	48	75	245
		Job/contra	ct finishing		Q	ualification	requiremen	ts
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool	224	68	128	94	17	10	2	51
Long day care	86	103	170	157	15	16	39	92
Family day care	14	17	0	6	0	2	9	30
School age care	12	11	10	23	6	2	9	58
		Other	reason		Total (inte	ending to lea	ave, reason	provided)
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified
Preschool	202	79	124	94	755	306	428	365
Long day care	326	525	583	289	1,071	1,977	2,483	1,158
Family day care	25	60	89	27	98	156	245	145
School age care	101	59	68	253	313	199	302	807

Source: DET, 2016.

Differences in these reasons are generally more notable by service type than qualification level. Seeking employment outside the sector is a common reason cited by all groups, most notably in school age care. This fits with the role of school age care work in educators' lives as a temporary career while pursuing other opportunities—a pattern that has been visible in earlier graphs about educators' age and length of experience.

Dissatisfaction with pay and conditions also drives many educators' decisions, especially in long day care, where it is the most common reason for all groups of educators except those with no qualification. In preschool services, the conclusion of a temporary contract is a much more commonly-cited reason than in any other service type, for all qualification groups. Substantial proportions of educators in all groups selected "other reason" among their reasons for leaving, suggesting that the options given did not fully capture educators' strongest motivations for intending to seek employment elsewhere.

A finding of particular interest for this study is the proportion of educators identifying inability or unwillingness to meet qualification requirements as motivating their intention to leave. This proportion is relatively low for most groups (from zero to three per cent for all groups with a qualification), but much higher for educators with no ECEC qualification (from 7.2 to 20.7 per cent). The largest result by far appears for family day care educators with no ECEC qualification, of whom over one in five (20.7 per cent) cited this as a reason they intend to leave their current service. This calls for consideration of new qualification requirements' impact on educators' sense of belonging in the ECEC sector.

Engagement in further study

The proportion of educators pursuing any course of study was explored using the ABS Census data in Chapter 4. The NWC data captures the proportion of educators enrolled in a course of study *towards an ECEC-related qualification*. Figure 5.21 shows the proportion of educators engaged in further study in 2013, in each qualification group and ECEC service type. The vast majority of educators shown in this graph are pursuing a higher qualification than the one they held at the time of the NWC data collection.⁴³

⁴³ The NWC qualification categories did not distinguish between certificate levels, between diplomas and advanced diplomas, or between bachelor and postgraduate qualification. It is therefore not possible to quantify precisely how many educators were studying at a higher level.

Figure 5.21 – Educators studying in an ECEC-related field, by qualification and service type (% service/qualification group)



	2010				2013				
	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	Unqualified	
Preschool									
Studying	222	283	504	641	312	274	760	594	
Not studying	3,504	1,530	1,334	2,576	4,113	1,834	2,401	1,643	
Long day care									
Studying	546	1,822	4,320	3,307	732	1,829	5,452	2,783	
Not studying	2,711	6,815	5,264	3,874	3,835	8,546	7,304	2,496	
Family day care									
Studying	84	216	554	636	73	127	363	305	
Not studying	380	884	1,362	1,242	388	915	1,457	426	
School age care									
Studying	162	212	588	1,387	195	260	743	1,631	
Not studying	603	890	795	2,122	840	1,137	1,106	1,987	

Note: Data provided include some unpaid contact staff who could not be identified or excluded.

Source: DET, 2016.

Figure 5.21 confirms that educators who already hold the highest-level qualifications are least likely to be engaged in further study, with degree-qualified educators in preschools being the least likely group (7.1 per cent). In all service types, educators with no qualification are most likely to be studying, with at least two-fifths of unqualified educators studying in long day care (52.7 per cent), family day care (41.6 per cent), and school age care (45.1 per cent). The proportion of this group studying in preschools is notably lower, at only around one-quarter (26.6 per cent) of unqualified educators, suggesting that unqualified preschool educators are less upwardly mobile than those in other services.

For most qualification groups in all service types, the proportion of educators studying has decreased since 2010. The exception is educators with no qualification, for whom the proportion studying has increased substantially since 2010 in all ECEC service types (between 5.6 and 7.7 percentage points). This suggests that the category of "unqualified" educator is increasingly occupied by those who are on their way to obtaining their first

ECEC qualification; and that educators in other qualification groups are approaching the qualifications necessary to meet the new regulatory requirements.

The NWC data also explore the reasons motivating educators' decisions to engage in further study. Table 5.3 shows the top three reasons that educators selected for engaging in further study. These data were not included in the disaggregated NWC data provided for this study, so cannot be examined by service type or qualification.

Table 5.3 – Educators' top three reasons for engaging in further stue	dy (%
studying educators)	

	2010	2013
Upgrade skills or qualifications	69.6%	69.7%
Own motivation	46.0%	42.8%
Desire to improve effectiveness in role	45.1%	41.7%

Note: Percentages total over 100 per cent because educators could select multiple reasons. Source: SRC, 2011, p. 32; SRC, 2014, p. 36.

Upgrading skills or qualifications remained a significant motivating factor from 2010 to 2013, with over two-thirds of educators in both years agreeing with this statement (69.6 per cent in 2010, 69.7 per cent in 2013). It is unfortunate that the question conflated the desire to gain *skills* with the desire to gain a *qualification*, as this may be an important distinction in educators' motivation to improve their practice, or simply their employability. The relatively high proportion of educators who selected "upgrade skills or qualifications", compared to "desire to improve effectiveness in role", suggests that many regarded the qualification itself as more important than the impact it would have on their practice.

The two more intrinsically-motivated reasons for study (own motivation, or desire to improve effectiveness) showed a slight decline over this period. This may reflect the shift in composition of the studying group shown in Figure 5.21, with an increasing proportion of studying educators in 2013 taking the first step from unqualified to certificate-qualified status. These educators may be most likely to value their qualification in employability terms, as they may be eager to secure eligibility to continue working in the sector, while developing their skills primarily through the on-the-job learning that occurs in a new role.

The NWC data also explored the reasons behind educators' decisions not to study, for those not enrolled in an ECEC-related course. These data were provided in disaggregated format by service types and qualification group, so it is possible to examine them more closely. The top four reasons for not studying, as ranked by educators at different qualification levels and in different service types, are shown in Table 5.4⁴⁴. This includes the ranking of each reason for each group (1 is highest), and proportion of non-studying educators who expressed agreement with each reason.

Table 5.4 – Top four reasons for not engaging in further study, by qualification and service type, showing proportion agreeing and rank of reason for each group (% non-studying educators in each service/qualification group)

	vice	n	Cost too	o high	No tin	o time incr be		Any wage increase would be too small		Not interested in further study	
Qualification	Ser type		% agree	Rank	% agree	Rank	% agree	Rank	% agree	Rank	
Degree	PS	4,051	39.1%	3	55.3%	1	50.7%	2	33.9%	4	
	LDC	3,731	42.9%	3	54.0%	1	51.3%	2	27.8%	4	
	FDC	383	46.8%	3	52.6%	1	49.7%	2	33.2%	4	
	SAC	819	33.6%	3	37.3%	2	40.9%	1	31.4%	4	
Diploma	PS	1,790	48.4%	3	55.0%	1	52.4%	2	34.0%	4	
	LDC	8,290	54.5%	2	57.1%	1	54.2%	3	26.3%	4	
	FDC	882	58.6%	2	63.9%	1	49.6%	3	24.8%	4	
	SAC	1,102	46.0%	3	47.7%	1	47.3%	2	29.4%	4	
Certificate	PS	2,347	40.6%	3	48.0%	2	55.2%	1	35.5%	4	
	LDC	7,048	41.8%	3	49.0%	2	51.5%	1	31.8%	4	
	FDC	1,394	42.6%	3	59.8%	1	51.5%	2	36.5%	4	
	SAC	1,077	47.0%	1	40.8%	2	40.6%	3	26.8%	4	
Unqualified	PS	1,552	31.2%	4	37.8%	2	38.9%	1	36.3%	3	
	LDC	2,345	32.2%	4	34.9%	2	37.2%	1	33.6%	3	
	FDC	412	38.9%	2	41.4%	1	38.4%	3	35.9%	4	
	SAC	1,951	26.0%	3	27.7%	2	24.9%	4	28.8%	1	

Note: Response rates varied slightly across the four reasons. The *n* value given is the maximum number of educators in each group that responded to any reason in the survey. Source: DET, 2016.

The reasons for not engaging in further study are similarly ranked, across educators at different qualification levels, and in different service types. Lack of time is the top-ranked or second-ranked reason for all qualification groups, selected most frequently by family day care educators in most qualification groups (and by preschool educators in the degree-qualified group). This is consistent with earlier findings about educators working long hours in these services (Figure 5.10).

⁴⁴ The three further reasons suggested in the survey—difficulty accessing training facilities, difficulty undertaking the Recognition Assessment Process, and lack of support from managers—were not ranked in the top four for any qualification or service type group.

A perception that further study would not deliver sufficient wage increases is also frequently ranked first or second, with around half the educators in most qualification groups selecting this reason. In all service types, educators with no prior qualification are least likely to hold this view—perhaps because a qualification is now a condition of entry to the sector. Overall, more educators appeared deterred by the lack of return-on-investment from gaining a qualification, than concern at the cost required to obtain one. This suggests that the relationship between cultural and economic capital in the ECEC sector is not currently calibrated to offer sufficient financial incentives for study⁴⁵.

In general, the top three reasons relate to economic capital—lack of time, high cost, or insufficient increase to wages—with lack of interest being significantly less likely to be selected in most groups. While this is unsurprising in a sector in which economic capital is demonstrably limited, it may also reflect an economistic slant in the survey instrument, as most options presented to educators related to economic factors (time and money). For example, the survey did not explore educators' confidence in formal learning environments, which—as will be shown in the next chapter—may be a salient concern.

Summary

This chapter has used the specialised ECEC data available through the NWC to better understand some of the indicators introduced in Chapter 4, especially how they vary across different types of ECEC services. A further focus of the chapter has been on educators' subjective experience of their work, as an indication of their sense of belonging, or of how well their *habitus* aligns with the expectations of the ECEC *field*. Table 5.5 summarises some of the key indicators in this chapter, with their variance (standard deviation) across the four qualification groups of interest to this study. An additional column is presented, showing the standard deviation of total proportions for the four ECEC service types (or three types, for indicators not included in the preschool survey). This capitalises on the service-specific properties of the NWC data, to identify indicators upon which ECEC service type may impact more strongly than qualifications.

⁴⁵ Further disaggregation of these data by jurisdiction (state and territory) suggests that jurisdictional differences in funding arrangements for VET and higher education (through scholarships) may cause variation in educators' perceptions of return-on-investment.

	Deg	Dip	Cert	Unq	Mean (Qual)	Std Dev (Qual)	Conform?	Std Dev (Service)
Satisfied with job*	82.0%	81.7%	82.9%	87.0%	83.4%	2.4	No	8.2
Job is stressful*	52.7%	50.3%	33.6%	6.1%	35.7%	21.5	Yes	1.2
Good spirit and team morale*	73.2%	70.7%	71.1%	78.8%	73.4%	3.7	No	9.9
Management are supportive*	71.4%	70.0%	72.2%	79.7%	73.3%	4.3	No	2.4
Job is important because high status	22.1%	30.0%	40.6%	38.3%	32.8%	8.5	No	0.8
Satisfied with pay/conditions*	16.0%	-1.4%	8.3%	40.2%	15.8%	17.8	No	1.5
High-wage educators minus educators working long hours	33.5%	9.8%	-3.9%	0.4%	9.9%	16.7	No	19.2
Low-wage educators minus educators working short hours	-0.3%	12.8%	28.0%	29.3%	17.4%	14.0	Yes	10.2
Reason for ECEC: always wanted to work with children*	86.1%	86.9%	83.2%	60.2%	79.1%	12.7	No	4.1
Reason for ECEC: only opportunity available at the time*	-69.0%	-65.7%	-54.7%	-42.0%	-57.9%	12.2	Yes	0.1
Would leave sector today if could*	-58.9%	-53.3%	-60.5%	-69.2%	-60.5%	6.6	No	0.1
Would recommend sector to others*	53.2%	48.7%	57.3%	63.8%	55.8%	6.4	No	3.7
Three or fewer years' experience in ECEC	24.7%	15.2%	44.7%	73.7%	39.6%	25.9	No	9.7
10+ years' experience in ECEC	45.0%	43.3%	20.6%	11.0%	30.0%	16.9	Yes	8.9
High mobility (<1 year with employer, >1 year in ECEC)	17.2%	12.2%	12.3%	8.6%	12.6%	3.5	No	1.3
Low mobility (10 years or more with employer)	11.2%	13.4%	10.0%	6.2%	10.2%	3.0	No	9.9
Still be with current employer in 12 months*	70.8%	76.2%	76.6%	71.6%	73.8%	3.0	No	0.0
Not studying	87.5%	83.3%	62.6%	55.2%	72.2%	15.7	Yes	9.2

Table 5.5 – Summary of key indicators, by qualification, also showing variance by type of ECEC service

* Attitudinal indicators here are presented as the total proportion of educators agreeing, minus the total proportion disagreeing with the statement.

Note: Table includes a mix of indicators derived from the NWC Service Survey and NWC Staff Survey. Response rates will therefore vary.

Source: DET, 2016.

Table 5.5 shows that the indicators presented in this chapter seldom increase or decrease consistently along the qualifications spectrum. In total, only five indicators behave in this way. Indicators that increase with higher-level qualifications comprise: the perception that the job is stressful; years of experience in the ECEC sector; and lack of engagement in further study. Indicators that decrease with higher-level qualifications are: low remuneration not explained by short hours; and entering the sector because it was the only available opportunity. These indicators may relate to previously-examined characteristics of each qualification group, including indicators of social advantage, as well as to broader demographic factors (especially age). They point to the desirability of further research, to investigate how these patterns might emerge, and what they might mean for educators' practice and professional growth.

Many indicators in this chapter vary more by service type than by qualification. Job satisfaction and team morale are two examples, largely due to high satisfaction and morale among the large group of unqualified educators in school age care (Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.6). Service type also has a major impact on the indicator concerned with educators who work long hours, due to high prevalence of long working hours in family day care (Figure 5.10). The indicator of low mobility also varies more by service type than qualification, due to unusually low mobility in family day care (Figure 5.18). These findings illustrate the importance of context as well as capital in the diverse ECEC sector.

Diploma-qualified educators are a notable group in many of the attitudinal indicators presented in this chapter. Diploma-qualified educators are the least positive group on several indicators, including job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay and conditions, supportiveness of management, desire to leave the sector if they could, and likelihood of recommending the sector to others. On the other hand, they are also the group most likely to have entered the sector because of a desire to work with children, and to have worked with the same employer for ten years or more, as well as being one of the longest-staying groups in the ECEC sector (similar to degree-qualified).

This paradox of the most committed being the least "at home" in the sector suggests a troubling mismatch between the expectations and realities of ECEC practice. It indicates that the workforce development challenge for ECEC may be twofold—not only to support educators' learning, but to help educators with existing skills to improve their sense of belonging in the sector. Achieving these dual aims requires understanding of the origins of the differences between educators' expectations and aspirations, and the actual circumstances that they experience in their ECEC careers. It requires attention to the process of *becoming*—that is, the pathways that lead to ECEC work.

Chapter 6 — Educators becoming

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) data provide unique insight into the earlier life circumstances of young people who have gone on to become members of Australia's ECEC workforce. The relevance of LSAY to this study arises from the centrality of school experiences and post-school transitions in Bourdieu's theory, as critical periods for the formation and deployment of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). The LSAY data therefore offer an innovative way to explore the study's main hypothesis, that educators' qualifications reflect deeper differences in social and cultural capital—which were manifest while they were at school.

This chapter uses LSAY data to examine Australian young people's family circumstances and school experiences in adolescence⁴⁶, to explore how their early accumulation of capital relates to their later participation in ECEC work and study. It thereby helps to shed light on the journey of *becoming* that educators follow throughout their lives. The EYLF uses the concept of *becoming* in a holistic way, to refer to children's changing "identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7). A similarly holistic approach is adopted in this chapter, using a range of indicators of cultural, economic and social capital to examine *belonging* across multiple dimensions.

Aspirations are also important to Bourdieu's theory, and shaped by capital in all its forms (see Chapter 2). Young people form their aspirations through the subjective and objective lens of their *habitus*, as they come to internalise the expectations that their objective circumstances suggest. Their process of *becoming* is therefore bounded not only by what they can do, as enabled by their capital, but their *perceptions* of what they can do, based on what they see as appropriate for the "likes of us" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 185). As a longitudinal study, LSAY also enables young people's aspirations to be followed from conceptualisation through to realisation—or to diversion or failure.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the LSAY data yield only a relatively small number of educators for analysis, relative to the data sets examined in previous chapters. LSAY captures data from national sample cohorts of young people over time, beginning at age 15 or Year 9, and following their pathways beyond school into study and work. Table 6.1 shows the total number of young people identified as engaged in ECEC study or work at some point in the LSAY survey, across all cohorts and waves. Although the qualification

⁴⁶ See Chapter 3 for a description of age ranges for the LSAY baseline cohorts.

groups are labelled similarly to previous chapters, the methods for assigning young people to these groups is slightly different, due to the structure of the LSAY study:

- The four main groups for analysis are young people enrolled in ECEC-related study (degree, diploma, or certificate⁴⁷ level), as well as a smaller group who are engaged in ECEC work with no concurrent study in another field ("unqualified" group).
- Three further groups for analysis comprise young people engaged in ECEC work while studying in another field, at the three qualification levels used throughout this study: degree, diploma and certificate. These young people may be thought of similarly to the out-of-field groups identified in Chapter 4, in that they possess stores of capital that are not reflected in their institutionalised knowledge of ECEC practice. Like the out-of-field group in Chapter 4, these young people are only included in the analysis where there is a notable difference between them and the ECEC groups.

Table 6.1 shows the number of young people in each of these groups, and the proportion that each group constitutes of the total number of young people engaged in ECEC work or study. As described in Chapter 3, young people were allocated to each of the ECEC qualification groups based on the highest-level ECEC course in which they were enrolled at any point in the LSAY study; or to the unqualified ECEC group, if they worked in ECEC without enrolling in any course. The proportions clearly show the disproportionate representation in LSAY of young people studying at degree level, due to the higher rates of attrition among less advantaged young people (Rothman, 2009). The unqualified group (young people who worked in ECEC at some point in the survey, without ever studying) is particularly poorly represented, so results for this group should be treated with particular caution.

	Eng	gaged in E nqualified	CEC stud	y or rk	Engage and o	Total		
	Deg	Dip	Cert	Unq	Deg	Dip	Cert	
n	238	269	327	102	206	33	50	1,225
% row	19.4%	22.0%	26.7%	8.3%	16.8%	2.7%	4.1%	100%

 Table 6.1 – Proportion of young people⁴⁸ engaged in ECEC study or work, by

 qualification (% qualification group)

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

 ⁴⁷ Educators recorded as studying in ECEC below Certificate III level are grouped with the unqualified educator group, as engaging in ECEC work/study at the minimal level.
 ⁴⁸ "Young people" is used in all captions to refer to the unweighted LSAY sample (all cohorts).

Table 6.2 shows the same information, disaggregated by sex. It demonstrates that the gendered patterns of engagement in ECEC study and work shown in previous chapters are reflected in the LSAY data, with males being more likely to work at unqualified level, or to work in ECEC while studying towards a qualification in another field. It raises questions about whether the intake of young people entering ECEC work may become even more feminised over time, as the new qualification requirements exclude males who may have entered the ECEC sector on their way to a career in a different sector.

	Er or	ngaged in unqualifie	ECEC stu d ECEC w	dy ork	Engage and o	Total		
	Deg Dip Cert Unq Deg Dip						Cert	
n								
Male	12	13	16	15	41	2	5	104
Female	226	256	311	87	165	31	45	1,121
% column								
Male	5.0%	4.8%	4.9%	14.7%	19.9%	6.1%	10.0%	8.5%
Female	95.0%	95.2%	95.1%	85.3%	80.1%	93.9%	90.0%	91.5%

 Table 6.2 – Proportion of males and females among young people engaged in

 ECEC study or work, by qualification (% qualification group)

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

The messiness of young people's pathways means allocation to these groups is not always clear-cut. To maximise the number of educator cases, young people were allocated to one of the seven groups in Table 6.1 wherever possible, even if they later moved out of that group in the course of the survey. For example, 28 of the "unqualified" group commenced study in another field *after* their work as an unqualified educator (all in VET or unspecified courses, none in university degrees). Similarly, 133 of the young people assigned to the three ECEC-related qualification groups later went on to study at a higher level in another field, mostly from the ECEC certificate group (n=89).

Attrition from the LSAY study can also affect the accuracy of group allocation, as some young people may transition between groups after ceasing their participation in the survey. Table 6.3 shows the mean number of waves of LSAY participation for each of the seven groups in Table 6.1, as well as the standard deviation for each group. It also shows the proportion in each group that completed full participation in the LSAY study up to age 25, recalling that not all cohorts had the opportunity to do so (see Chapter 3).

	E or	ngaged in unqualifie	ECEC stu d ECEC w	ldy vork	Engage and o	Total		
	Deg	Dip	Cert	Unq	Deg	Dip	Cert	
Mean waves	9.0	8.2	7.7	5.8	9.4	10.4	9.0	8.3
Standard deviation	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.4	2.2	3.1	2.8
12 waves (maximum)	25.6%	19.3%	14.7%	5.9%	25.2%	51.5%	36.0%	20.7%

Table 6.3 – Waves in LSAY study for young people engaged in ECEC study or work, by qualification (mean, variance and % qualification group in 12 waves)

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Table 6.3 shows that young people pursuing degrees are far more likely to have been retained until the final survey of each cohort than those in lower-level qualification groups. This is consistent with the general pattern of attrition noted above. The mean number of waves for each ECEC-related qualification group shown in Table 6.3 is similar to the mean for all LSAY participants studying at the same level (which are: Degree: 8.6, Diploma: 8.4, Certificate: 7.6). The three out-of-field groups in Table 6.3 have higher means than for all participants, and higher proportions who had completed the full LSAY study.⁴⁹

Overall, the complexity involved in identifying educators in a longitudinal study is a valuable reminder that the process of *becoming* is neither linear nor finite, and that the journey to becoming an early childhood educator can itself be a step along the journey to becoming something else. This fluidity applies equally to all data used in the study, as the cross-sectional surveys examined so far also provide only a point-in-time snapshot of educators' life courses and careers. The next section capitalises on the longitudinal properties of the LSAY data to examine these journeys in greater detail.

Pathways into ECEC study and work

Although time does not feature as a prominent consideration in Bourdieu's theory, the passage of time may be seen as an important mediating factor in the conversion of capital into *habitus*, and *habitus* to practice. Time may exert an effect on the accumulation, activation and conversion of capital—and is therefore an especially important factor to take into account when considering an individual or group's capacity for change. In a simple example, an individual with limited economic capital may delay

⁴⁹ This reflects a higher relative proportion of these groups in earlier cohorts. For example, 28 of the 33 young people in the out-of-field diploma group were in the 1995 or 1998 cohorts.

the acquisition of the cultural capital necessary for skilled professional practice, due to the time it takes to accumulate sufficient funds to meet the costs of formal study.

The variable of time is applied here to LSAY participants enrolled in courses leading to an ECEC-related qualification. Figure 6.1 shows the number of waves from the LSAY baseline survey (see Chapter 3), to their first wave of their enrolment in an ECEC-related course. The use of waves in this way approximates the point in the education system at which the young person commenced their ECEC course. Differences in baseline year level introduce some instability into these results, as participants from the 2003 intake onwards were selected based on their age, rather than their position in the school system. Instability is also introduced in the availability of study opportunities—for example, rural students may delay engagement in study due to the high costs of leaving home, while students in different states might have different levels of access to opportunities to study while they are still at school (for example, through VET in Schools programs). While these limitations would warrant further investigation in a closer examination of these data, the analysis presented here serves to give an approximate indication of how patterns of enrolment vary across ECEC qualification groups.

In Figure 6.1, the labelled percentages show the proportion of each qualification group that commenced their ECEC course in each time period, as a proportion of all young people in that ECEC qualification group who were still in the LSAY study in that wave. This controls for variation between qualification groups in their longevity in the survey⁵⁰. Results for all LSAY participants (unweighted) are juxtaposed in the grey line as a comparison group, based on participants' first wave of enrolment in any course of study.



Figure 6.1 – Waves from baseline to first enrolment in ECEC-related study, and in study in any field, by highest enrolled qualification (% wave/qualification group)

⁵⁰ Proportions in each qualification group do not sum to 100, because *n* changes in each wave.

	1 wa	ives	2 wa	ives	3 wa	aves	4 wav		5+ w	waves	
n	First	In LSAY	First	In LSAY	First	In LSAY	First	In LSAY	First	In LSAY	
	enrolment	study	enrolment	study	enrolment	study	enrolment	study	enrolment	study	
Engaged ir	n ECEC stu	ıdy									
Degree	1	238	17	238	70	237	71	228	79	216	
Diploma	6	269	30	268	100	266	92	250	41	228	
Certificate	18	327	59	323	76	309	100	289	74	251	
All LSAY p	articipants										
Degree	65	17,552	2,223	17,551	7,179	17,415	6,526	16,703	1,559	15,746	
Diploma	115	3,437	473	3,427	1,014	3,353	1,260	3,145	575	2,861	
Certificate	774	7,568	1,784	7,410	1,996	7,038	1,888	6,344	1,126	5,577	

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Figure 6.1 shows that, for certificate- and diploma-level study, the patterns of first enrolment in ECEC-related study broadly mirror the pattern for enrolment in study in any field. For diploma-level study, first enrolment is most likely to occur in the third or fourth wave since the baseline—that is, shortly after the young person has left school. For the certificate-level group, first enrolments are most common in later waves, suggesting a time lag between school completion and commencement of study—but this group also has the largest proportion of young people commencing their qualification only two years after the LSAY baseline, suggesting that some young people pursue ECEC certificates instead of (or as part of) completing their school education.

Out of all the ECEC-related qualification groups, the ECEC degree group has the highest proportion of first-time enrolments amongst participants surveyed five or more years after the baseline (36.6 per cent). This is notably higher than the proportion of all young people studying at degree level who commence in this time period, only 9.9 per cent of whom were identified as first-time enrolments after five or more waves. This suggests that young people pursuing ECEC degrees are more likely than other degree-level students in general to have had other life experience in the period between completing compulsory schooling and beginning their university course.

Table 6.4 explores these findings further, by analysing the trajectories of LSAY participants engaged in ECEC-related study. The table considers two variables:

- whether the young person also engaged in work in the ECEC sector, as well as undertaking ECEC-related study (either before, after or concurrently)
- whether the young person also studied in another field, as well as undertaking ECECrelated study (either before, or after/concurrently).⁵¹

This analysis includes all young people studying ECEC courses, irrespective of their number of waves of LSAY participation. It is therefore possible that attrition may have

⁵¹ "After" and "concurrent" are combined due to low numbers in the "concurrent" category.

affected the results in the "after ECEC-related study" category—particularly for the ECEC certificate group, whose rates of early attrition are the highest (Table 6.3), as well as for young people who had not yet completed all possible waves of LSAY participation.

	Er	ngagement i	in ECEC wo	ork			
	ECEC	degree	ECEC o	diploma	ECEC certificate		
	n	% column	n	% column	n	% column	
Worked in ECEC after ECEC-related study	42	17.6%	68	25.3%	34	10.4%	
Worked in ECEC before ECEC-related study	15	6.3%	31	11.5%	25	7.6%	
Worked in ECEC during ECEC-related study	23	9.7%	59	21.9%	78	23.9%	
Did not work in ECEC	158	158 66.4%		41.3%	190	58.1%	
	Er	ngagement i	in other stu	dy			
	ECEC	degree	ECEC o	diploma	ECEC ce	ertificate	
	n	% column	n	% column	n	% column	
Studied something else before ECEC	80	33.6%	48	17.8%	74	22.6%	
Studied something else after/during ECEC	7	2.9%	4	1.5%	6	1.8%	
Did not study anything else besides ECEC	151	63.4%	217	80.7%	247	75.5%	

Table 6.4 – Engagement in ECEC work and other study for young people engaged in ECEC study, by highest enrolled qualification (% qualification group)

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

The upper section of Table 6.4 shows that young people pursuing VET qualifications in ECEC (certificate or diploma) are far more likely to have worked in ECEC either before or during their studies, than young people pursuing ECEC degrees. Over one-third (33.4 per cent) of young people pursuing ECEC diplomas have done so, compared to only 16 per cent of young people pursuing ECEC degrees. For both diploma-level and certificate-level groups, it is much more common to work in ECEC at the same time as studying for an ECEC qualification, than it is to work in ECEC before commencing ECEC-related study. This suggests that the ability to "earn and learn" simultaneously is an attractive pathway for young people entering ECEC careers through VET pathways.

In contrast, young people pursuing ECEC degrees are the most likely to have previously studied something else in another field, with 33.6 per cent of the group having done so. This accords with the later commencement of ECEC degrees shown in Figure 6.1, suggesting that ECEC may be a second-choice pathway for many who study at degree

level. It also suggests that many young people with ECEC degrees bring additional cultural capital from other fields, whether or not they completed their first-choice course.

This analysis also provides worthwhile insights into the group of young people working in ECEC and studying out-of-field (with no ECEC-related study). Table 6.5 shows the proportion of this group who studied in another field before their employment in ECEC services, and those studying in another field while working in ECEC. None of this group worked in ECEC *before* studying in another field, so this category is not shown.

Table 6.5 – Order of engagement for young people engaged in ECEC work and
study in another field, by highest enrolled qualification (% qualification group)

	Out-of-field degree		Out-of-field diploma		Out-of-field certificate	
	n	% column	n	% column	n	% column
Studied out-of-field before ECEC work	144	69.9%	25	75.8%	34	68.0%
Worked in ECEC while studying out-of-field	62	30.1%	8	24.2%	16	32.0%

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Table 6.5 shows that most young people working in ECEC who have studied out-of-field did so *before* commencing their ECEC work. This holds true across all qualification levels, although very low numbers in the VET groups in this table mean data should be treated with caution. These findings add another layer of insight into the relationship between ECEC work and out-of-field study, suggesting that for young people studying out-of-field, ECEC is not just a means of earning income while they complete their qualification—but may in fact be a stop-gap or fall-back source of income while they are looking for work in their field of choice.

Articulation through qualification levels *within* the ECEC field is another factor that may contribute to the later start of ECEC degrees shown in Figure 6.1. Of the 231 young people whose highest ECEC-related study is at degree level, 34 (14.7 per cent) had previously studied ECEC at diploma or certificate level. Of the 252 whose highest ECEC-related study is at diploma level, 31.3 per cent recorded previous certificate-level study in ECEC. The latter finding is likely to simply reflect the structure of ECEC VET courses, in which the early units of a diploma confer a certificate—with VET providers varying in whether they enrol students in certificates initially, or in diplomas directly (CRES, 2011). The former finding is of greater interest, as it shows how ECEC enables young people to build cultural capital over time, from diploma to degree. This opportunity is especially important to the discussion of second-chance education in Chapter 7 of this study.

Home environment

The pathways that young people follow between completing school and starting a career are themselves the culmination of a process of becoming, which begins in the earliest years of life. Bourdieu (1986) recognises that the transmission of cultural capital in its most durable form occurs in early childhood, with the family being the primary vehicle for this transmission. The capital transmitted by the family can either provide a "head start" in an individual's later attempts to accrue capital at school and in adulthood, or constitute "wasted time", by accruing negative influences that take time to overcome (p. 244).

While it is not possible to examine educators' early childhood experiences using LSAY data, it is possible to gain some impressions of the home environments of young people who grow up to engage in ECEC study and work. The first of these impressions—which is widely recognised as having a strong influence on educational achievement—is the level of education of the parents of young people in the LSAY study. Figure 6.2 compares two results for young people engaged in ECEC study and work, based on the highest level of education of either parent: young people with at least one parent with a university degree; and young people of whom neither parent completed school. The grey dots mark the proportion for all LSAY participants, at the same level of study. No comparison group is shown for the "unqualified" ECEC group, as the total group of LSAY participants working without studying is too diverse for meaningful comparison.⁵²



Figure 6.2 – Highest parental education level of young people engaged in ECEC study and work, by highest enrolled qualification (% qualification group)

⁵² Entry into a course of study is a clearly-defined choice that offers a point of comparability with the ECEC qualification groups studying at the same level. Conversely, the *absence* of study can occur for many reasons (from lack of money, to desire to travel). This greatly reduces the meaningfulness of comparisons between the "unqualified" ECEC group and the whole sample.

	Degree-qualified parent(s)	Neither parent completed school	Other (completed school/VET)			
Engaged in ECEC study or work						
Degree	94	32	97			
Diploma	55	59	131			
Certificate	68	62	159			
Unqualified	32	15	51			
All LSAY participants						
Degree	9,368	1,589	5,790			
Diploma	1,005	530	1,574			
Certificate	1,638	1,384	3,875			

Note: Excludes LSAY participants engaged in ECEC work and out-of-field study.

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Figure 6.2 confirms that young people pursuing ECEC degrees are more likely to have at least one degree-qualified parent (42.2 per cent) than are young people engaged in ECEC study and work at other qualification levels. At the same time, this proportion is still substantially lower than the proportion of all young people pursuing degrees who have a degree-qualified parent (55.9 per cent). Similarly, the proportion of young people pursuing ECEC degrees with neither parent having completed school is higher than the general degree-enrolled group (14.3 and 9.5 per cent respectively). This shows that even educators in families with higher levels of parental education do not have the same levels as their similarly-qualified peers.

For the other groups of young people engaged in ECEC work or study, parental education in fact decreases with higher-level qualifications. Young people pursuing ECEC diplomas have the lowest proportion of degree-qualified parents (22.4 per cent), and highest proportion of parents who did not complete school (24.1 per cent). They also have lower parental education levels than the whole group of LSAY participants enrolled in diploma-level courses (for whom these indicators are 32.3 and 17 per cent respectively). Parental education increases slightly for young people pursuing ECEC certificates—to closely match the total certificate-level group—and increases again for the group of young people working in ECEC without enrolling in any course of study.

These differences between qualification groups are further borne out in their parents' occupational status. LSAY codes parental occupation according to the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) of occupational status (see Ganzeboom et al., 1992). Table 6.6 compares the means on this scale for the ECEC related qualification groups and all LSAY participants at the same qualification level, taking the highest of the two parental ISEI scores (or only score, if only one parent had data).

	In ECEC study or work			All LSAY participants			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	
Degree	60.7	18.2	223	61.7	17.3	16,497	
Diploma	55.9	21.3	248	57.2	19.5	3,092	
Certificate	56.7	21.9	302	55.3	19.8	6,822	
Unqualified (ECEC)	54.6	22.1	95				

 Table 6.6 – Parental occupational status of young people engaged in ECEC study

 and work, by highest enrolled qualification (mean for qualification group)

Note: Excludes LSAY participants engaged in ECEC work and out-of-field study.

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

As with parental education, young people pursuing ECEC-related degrees have notably higher levels of social advantage on this measure. The mean for the ECEC degree group is 60.7, compared to 55.9 for the ECEC diploma group. The mean for the ECEC degree group is lower than the mean for all young people pursuing degree-level qualifications (61.7), although the gap is much smaller than for parental education (Figure 6.2). Unqualified educators have the lowest mean of all ECEC groups (54.6), but the largest standard deviation (22.1), suggesting high variability in parental occupation.

LSAY also looks beyond parental education and occupation, to other forms of objectified capital (Bourdieu, 1986) found in the home. The LSAY data include three scales that measure relative socio-economic advantage in the home through the objectified capital of material possessions: family wealth possessions (such as televisions and bathrooms), home educational resources (such as reference books), and cultural possessions (such as works of art, or musical instruments). The scales are created from international data from the entire PISA cohort, to have a mean of zero across the OECD, and a standard deviation of one (OECD, 2014, p. 315).

Figure 6.3 shows the mean score on these three scales for the four main groups of young people engaged in ECEC study and work. Although these scales are often combined into composite indices of socio-economic advantage (see OECD, 2014), they are shown separately here, as each represents objectified capital of a different kind. The grey dots represent the mean score for all LSAY participants, at the same qualification level.

Figure 6.3 – Measures of objectified capital for young people engaged in ECEC study or work, by highest enrolled qualification (mean for qualification group)



	Family wealth possessions		Home educati	onal resources	Cultural possessions	
	n	Std. Dev.	n	Std. Dev.	п	Std. Dev.
Engaged in E	CEC study or wo	rk				
Degree	83	0.79	139	0.70	139	1.01
Diploma	116	0.71	184	0.90	183	0.94
Certificate	176	0.67	218	0.98	217	1.01
Unqualified	83	0.79	139	0.70	139	1.01
All LSAY parti	cipants			· · ·		·
Degree	7,931	0.75	11,910	0.71	11,883	1.01
Diploma	1,089	0.76	1,894	0.85	1,886	0.99
Certificate	2,891	0.75	4,488	0.92	4,450	0.98

Note: Excludes LSAY participants engaged in ECEC work and out-of-field study.

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

The first scale in Figure 6.3—family wealth possessions—shows that all young people entering ECEC study and work have a level of family wealth (as measured by possessions) above the OECD average (zero), and similar to all LSAY participants at the same qualification level. There is little variation between the four ECEC qualification groups on this measure, and this scale has the lowest standard deviation across the whole LSAY sample (0.79, compared to 0.91 for educational resources and 1 for cultural possessions). This suggests that the relative ease with which material goods can be acquired in Australia may mean that the number of goods possessed by a family is not a particularly discriminating measure of their economic advantage.

The other two scales are far more discriminating between the qualification groups. Young people pursuing ECEC degrees are the most likely to score above the OECD mean for the educational resources in their home, as well as cultural possessions—reflecting the cultural capital gained from their higher levels of parental education. Young people pursuing ECEC diplomas and certificates score close to or below zero on these scales,
with the ECEC diploma group also well below the LSAY participant mean on cultural possessions, and the ECEC certificate group well below the LSAY mean on home educational resources. The relatively low scores of the unqualified ECEC group on these scales is surprising, given that their levels of parental education are more similar to the young people pursuing ECEC degrees (Figure 6.2). It suggests that the advantage of the degree-qualified group comes not only from parents who acquire higher levels of education, but who actively convert this into learning resources for their children.

A further indicator of capital obtained and deployed outside of school can be derived from the leisure activities in which young people engage. Two measures of out-of-school activities are shown in Figure 6.4: reading for pleasure, and volunteering or unpaid work. Sullivan (2002) identifies reading as an indicator that is directly relatable to cultural capital (p. 897). Volunteering was also selected because of its association with social advantage among young people (see Dean, 2016). LSAY also includes other out-of-school activities such as listening to music and watching television, but these are unreliable measures of social advantage unless more fine-grained analysis—such as type of television program—can be performed (see Sullivan, 2001 for a detailed critique).

Each of these measures of young people's behaviour requires the caveat that the behaviours demonstrated at the commencement of the LSAY surveys at age 15 or Year 9 (when these data were collected) may not accurately reflect behaviour at later stages of adolescence or young adulthood. Unlike the previous measures related to young people's parents and home environments, which may be expected to remain relatively durable over time, indicators based on behaviours may be more subject to change. The analysis nonetheless signals some differences in the adolescent experiences of young people who go on to ECEC study and work that may warrant further investigation, beyond the scope of data that are available through the LSAY study.

Figure 6.4 shows the hours per week that LSAY participants spend on reading for pleasure and volunteering. As participation in both activities differs by gender, results are presented here for females only, in both the ECEC qualification groups and total LSAY sample. This prevents gender differences from exaggerating the difference between the mostly-female ECEC groups, and LSAY participants overall.

Figure 6.4 – Hours spent reading for pleasure and in volunteer/unpaid work among young women engaged in ECEC study or work, by highest enrolled qualification (% qualification group)



	Re	ading for pleasu	ıre	Volunteer/unpaid work							
	No time	1 to 5 hours	>5 hours	No time	1 to 5 hours	>5 hours					
Females engaged in ECEC study or work											
Degree	22	75	25	58	55	5					
Diploma	50	90	26	86	61	15					
Certificate	56	108	30	107	69	17					
Unqualified	18	33	11	36	21	6					
All female LSA	Y participants										
Degree	1,055	4,273	1,463	3,887	2,427	324					
Diploma	313	568	176	598	365	73					
Certificate	590	899	263	997	547	158					

Note: Excludes LSAY participants engaged in ECEC work and out-of-field study.

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Figure 6.4 shows that young women pursuing ECEC degrees are more likely to read for pleasure than those engaged in ECEC study and work at other qualification levels. Only 18 per cent of the degree-level ECEC group report spending no time reading, compared to approximately 30 per cent of each other group. The differences between the diploma, certificate and unqualified ECEC groups on this measure are minimal, and all four ECEC groups have similar results to young women at similar qualification levels overall.

In contrast, the right-hand side of Figure 6.4 shows more difference between the ECEC groups and the comparison group of all young women. All three groups pursuing ECEC qualifications are more likely to volunteer or undertake unpaid work than young women pursuing similar courses overall. While the differences are not large, this is still a noteworthy finding, and accords with the voluntary, altruistic ethos that has historically prevailed in the Australian ECEC sector (see Chapter 1). Also notable is that young women pursuing VET qualifications, or working in ECEC without studying, are more than twice as likely to do five or more hours of volunteer work per week than those pursuing

degrees. It is unfortunate that LSAY does not differentiate between charitable volunteer work, and unpaid work in the home or family, as these different types of unpaid work may relate to economic, social and cultural capital in very different ways. The likelihood of undertaking no unpaid work at all increases for young people pursuing lower-level ECEC qualifications; but the likelihood of undertaking five or more hours of unpaid work per week increases as the level of qualification decreases, suggesting that those who do engage in unpaid work in these groups may have the heaviest workloads.

Young people's engagement in paid work was also examined for this study, as the necessity of working part-time may be a potential indicator of young people's economic capital. However, this indicator reveals little difference between qualification groups. Among young women engaged in ECEC study or work, approximately half report doing no paid work (degree 49.6 per cent, diploma 48.8, certificate 52.6, unqualified 50), and these proportions are similar for all female LSAY participants studying at the same level (degree 51 per cent, diploma 49.7, certificate 45.4). As for family wealth possessions (see Figure 6.3), then, it seems that the differences in economic capital that emerge in adulthood between educators at different qualification levels are not evident in the economically-oriented indicators that are available in LSAY. Alternatively, the point at which the indicator is measured (the survey baseline) might be at fault, and differences in engagement in part-time work might emerge later in young people's schooling.

This section has shown that the differences between young people studying ECEC courses at different qualification levels are more evident in their cultural than economic capital. Young people studying ECEC degrees have the most opportunity to access cultural capital in their home and out-of-school environments. This fits with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) observation that cultural capital in the home is a valuable resource for successful engagement at all stages of the education system, supporting higher levels of achievement at school which then flows through to higher-level qualifications. The next section examines the extent to which young people engaged in ECEC study and work translate their home-based cultural capital into scholastic success, as indicated through the institutionalised cultural capital of standardised school achievement tests.

School achievement

Alongside the family, the school system is the other main mechanism through which capital is transmitted and accumulated prior to adulthood (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). Through curriculum, the school system consecrates and institutionalises which knowledge is most valued, and certifies its acquisition through assessment. The school system also works through its relationships with other educational institutions (such as

universities) to sift and sort students into subsequent educational and occupational pathways. Achievement at school is therefore not only a marker of the knowledge, or cultural capital, that has been acquired, but an indicator of access to later opportunities.

For educators, the cultural capital acquired at school has additional significance. As the ECEC sector's role in supporting children's educational achievement gains increasing recognition, educators become not only the recipients of cultural capital through the mechanism of schooling, but instruments of its transmission to the next generation. The consequences of acquiring this capital (or not) for their practice are therefore twofold—like all occupations, educators can gain advantage from school-consecrated cultural capital in pursuing professional career pathways and the social and economic benefits that go with them; but unlike other professions, they must also be able to transmit this capital to children, as the main stock-in-trade of the educational component of their work.

This twofold imperative can be clearly seen in current debates in Australia about literacy and numeracy skills for the school teaching workforce. As a result of recent reforms, all teacher education students are now required to pass a basic literacy and numeracy test before graduation (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2017). School achievement requirements for entry into teacher education courses have also been raised in one state (VDET, 2017c), with other states expected to follow⁵³. While the assumption is contested—as evidenced in submissions to a recent government inquiry into teacher education (Australian Government, 2015a)—the reforms reflect a belief that acquired skills in literacy and numeracy are necessary for effective teaching practice.

This policy logic has potential flow-on effects for thresholds for entry into ECEC teacher education courses (see VDET, 2016b, p. 13). It begs the question of how far the logic of the school teaching workforce can extend into the ECEC sector. For this reason, an additional comparison group is included in the graphs in this section—young people who pursued primary (elementary school) teaching degrees at some point in the LSAY study.⁵⁴

Scholastic achievement is measured in LSAY through the PISA tests of reading and mathematical literacy. As PISA is an international assessment, it does not measure mastery of any particular curriculum, but aims to measure how well students are "prepared to use their knowledge and skills in particular areas to meet real-life opportunities and challenges" (Thomson, De Bortoli, & Underwood, 2016, p. xi). It is

 ⁵³ As only a small proportion of teacher education students enter university based on school achievement scores (Lloyd, 2013), other entry pathways into teaching will also remain available.
 ⁵⁴ Young people who engaged in ECEC study and work, as well as studying primary teaching, are excluded from the comparison group, to prevent overlap with the ECEC qualification groups.

nevertheless accepted that PISA assesses skills and knowledge that are transmitted through the school system; that is, school-sanctioned cultural capital.

Figure 6.5 shows the scholastic achievement of young women engaged in ECEC study and work, using quintile of achievement in mathematics.⁵⁵ Mathematics was chosen because it is seen as a higher-status subject in Australian schools (see Teese & Polesel, 2003), and therefore arguably a better representation of what knowledge is valued in the school system.⁵⁶ Mathematics achievement also differentiated most effectively between the groups of young women going on to ECEC study and work at different qualification levels, and their peers who pursued courses at the same level in other fields. The grey lines show the achievement quintiles of all young women in the LSAY study, calculated using the same method.⁵⁵

Figure 6.5 – Mathematics quintile for young women engaged in ECEC study or work, or primary teaching, by highest enrolled qualification (% qualification group)



Maths quintile:	Low (1)	Low-mid (2)	Mid (3)	Mid-high (4)	High (5)							
Females engaged in ECEC study or work												
Degree	28	60	54	44	38							
Diploma	61	67	68	34	26							
Certificate	91	91	60	46	21							
Unqualified	37	18	15	12	5							
Females engage	d in primary teachi	ng study	·									
Degree	21	86	134	139	110							
All female LSAY	participants											
Degree	440	1,312	2,134	2,766	3,578							
Diploma	399	529	464	327	227							
Certificate	848	963	766	471	295							

Note: Excludes LSAY participants engaged in ECEC work and out-of-field study.

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

⁵⁵ Achievement quintile was calculated separately for each LSAY cohort, applying sample weights, to approximate the student's position among all Australian females (not only those in the LSAY study). For 1995 and 1998 cohorts, quintiles were calculated for the total assessment scores. For 2003, 2006 and 2009 cohorts, quintiles were calculated separately for each PISA plausible value (see OECD, 2014), and the mean quintile taken (rounded to nearest integer).
⁵⁶ The same analysis using reading scores produced similar results.

Figure 6.5 clearly shows the differences in mathematical literacy for young women engaged in ECEC study or work at different qualification levels. Almost half (42.5 per cent) of young women working in ECEC without studying come from the lowest mathematics achievement quintile for their gender, compared to only 12.5 per cent of those studying an ECEC degree. For young women studying ECEC diplomas or certificates, over half come from the bottom two achievement quintiles (52.8 and 58.8 respectively), with a steep decline in proportions through the upper quintiles of achievement.

Although young women pursuing ECEC degrees are the highest-achieving scholastically of the ECEC qualification groups, they are still lower-achieving than the young women entering primary teaching. Over half (50.8 per cent) of female primary teaching students come from the highest two quintiles of mathematics achievement, compared to just over one-third (36.6 per cent) of female students in ECEC degrees. The proportion from the lowest quintile entering primary teaching is also substantially lower than for ECEC degrees (4.3 compared to 12.5 per cent). This suggests that young women studying ECEC at university level may acquire less cultural capital in school and home, as measured in mathematical literacy, compared to their primary school teaching peers.

These findings suggest that efforts to attract the "best and brightest"—as measured by scholastic achievement—to the teaching workforce (Ingvarson, 2013, n.p.) may be even more challenging in the ECEC sector than they are in school education. On the other hand, this analysis also reveals strengths on which ECEC workforce development can be built. Firstly, it shows that there are some young women from high-achieving quintiles in all the ECEC qualification groups. Given that higher school achievement opens up a broader range of options to young people, this suggests that these high achievers' engagement in ECEC work or study is likely to have been a positive and deliberate choice. This idea will be explored further in the next section on aspirations.

A second positive element to these findings is the importance of the ECEC sector in providing a rewarding career pathway for young women who have not achieved highly at school. Figure 6.6 presents the same data from a different perspective, to show the proportion of young women in each achievement quintile who study ECEC (at each qualification level) and primary teaching. The percentages shown on each bar represent young women studying ECEC or primary teaching, as a proportion of all young women in that achievement quintile who are studying at that level.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ For this analysis, young women in the ECEC qualification groups who also studied primary teaching are excluded, to enable a clean-cut comparison between the two disciplines.

Figure 6.6 – Share of all young women studying at each level who are studying ECEC/primary school teaching, by mathematics quintile (% quintile/qualification group)



Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

This simple analysis makes a powerful statement about the role of the ECEC sector in providing a pathway into formal study and professional work for young women with low scholastic achievement. While ECEC degree courses only absorb 3.2 per cent of all young women who study at degree level, Figure 6.6 shows that they absorb 8.5 per cent of young women from the lowest mathematics achievement quintile who pursue a degree. In contrast, primary school teaching makes its greatest contribution in the middle quintiles, enrolling approximately one in ten of every young woman from the lower-middle and middle quintiles who studies a degree (9.5 and 9.3 per cent respectively).

Figure 6.6 also shows the important role of the ECEC sector in engaging low-achieving young women in VET qualifications, especially at diploma level. Significantly, ECEC courses account for over one in five (21.4 per cent) of young women from the lowest achievement quintile who study at diploma level, and over one in six in the next two quintiles (17.2 and 17.8 per cent). ECEC is therefore a key contributor to higher-level VET pathways for all young women, but especially those whose achievement is lowest.

The implication of this analysis is that ECEC courses play a special role in improving educational achievement among Australian young people, as a way in which young people (especially females) can improve upon the education outcomes that they achieved at school. This provides a valuable counter-narrative to the dominant discourse in Australian education policy, that teachers (and implicitly, other educators), should be recruited from among those who have the highest academic skills at the *point of entry* to the workforce. While this discourse may offer an appealing short-cut to guaranteeing the calibre of those who are responsible for guiding the learning and development of the next

generation, it encounters significant difficulties when applied to educators in ECEC services. Firstly, the scale of ECEC provision, and enduring constraints on costs, are likely to require the Australian ECEC sector to continue to recruit educators from outside the highest tiers of academic achievement. Secondly, whatever the future may hold for the Australian ECEC workforce, it currently includes many lower academic achievers for whom ECEC work is a meaningful and satisfying career. The development of the ECEC workforce therefore demands a more constructive response than simply planning to attract higher-calibre candidates in future—which would constitute a missed opportunity to constructively facilitate the professional growth of educators whose efforts have sustained the ECEC sector to date, and will continue to be vital to its future.

Viewed from this angle, the lower levels of scholastic achievement among entrants to ECEC courses are not a matter of concern, but of opportunity. This shift in perspective opens up new possibilities for *inclusive* approaches to workforce development in the ECEC sector, rather than the *exclusive* approaches currently being pursued in school teacher education. This important idea will be expanded in the following chapter.

Educational success in school is more than a matter of ability, but of engagement (Willms, 2003), as well as confidence in one's ability to succeed (Henderson, Hansen & Shure, 2017). These variables were also examined in this study, using a series of purpose-built scales derived from LSAY items relating to young people's attitudes to school.⁵⁸ The means of each scale for the ECEC and primary teaching groups are shown in Figure 6.7, with the grey dots representing the mean for all LSAY participants. The scales showed some variation by gender, so results are again presented for females only, to negate the effects of feminisation in the ECEC groups. Each scale has a range of zero to ten.

⁵⁸ Scales were created using principal component analysis, following the method used in Lamb, Jackson and Rumberger (2015b). All scales achieved a Cronbach's alpha 0.7 or higher (most considerably higher) for each LSAY cohort, except academic self-efficacy in 2003 (alpha=0.66) and teacher relationships in 1995 and 1998 (0.69 and 0.64 respectively). Where a student was missing a single item on a scale, a score was imputed for the missing item, representing the median score on that item for students whose score on other scale items was equivalent.



Figure 6.7 – Attitudes to school and self for young women engaged in ECEC study or work/primary teaching, by qualification (mean for qualification group)

	Enjoyment of school		Relationships with teachers		Value of school		General self-efficacy		Academic self-efficacy	
	n	Std. Dev.	n	Std. Dev.	n	Std. Dev.	n	Std. Dev.	n	Std. Dev.
Females engag	ged in EC	EC study	or work							
Degree	232	1.7	235	1.8	232	1.4	176	1.3	233	2.0
Diploma	265	1.9	266	1.8	264	1.5	197	1.4	266	2.0
Certificate	321	2.1	325	1.8	321	1.5	277	1.4	323	2.0
Unqualified	99	2.0	101	1.8	99	1.8	73	1.6	100	2.0
Females engag	ged in pri	mary teac	hing stud	у						
Degree	491	1.7	492	1.7	491	1.5	385	1.4	489	2.1
All female LSA	Y particip	ants								
Degree	17,308	1.8	17,453	1.7	17,328	1.6	13,341	1.5	17,348	2.2
Diploma	3,387	1.9	3,405	1.9	3,391	1.7	2,582	1.5	3,395	2.1
Certificate	7,462	2.0	7,515	1.9	7,477	1.7	5,864	1.5	7,485	2.1

Note: Excludes LSAY participants engaged in ECEC work and out-of-field study.

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Figure 6.7 clearly shows the contrasting school experiences of young women who pursue ECEC study and work at different levels. On all scales but one, young women entering ECEC without further study, or studying for an ECEC certificate, have the lowest mean score. This reinforces the relationship between enjoyment of school and confidence in their own self-efficacy, and educational achievement as shown above.

Young women studying ECEC diplomas are a noteworthy group. Their mean score is slightly higher than the overall mean for all young women pursuing diplomas on most scales, although still slightly lower than for young women studying ECEC degrees. However, on the academic self-efficacy scale, their mean score is lower than the overall mean, and this scale also has the greatest gap between the ECEC diploma group and those pursuing ECEC degrees (0.6). This suggests that they are young women who are generally comfortable in the school environment, but not in their own academic ability.

The scale with the least variation across qualification groups is relationships with teachers, which has a range of only 0.4 across all groups. This suggests that building relationships—at least with authority figures such as teachers—may be a skill common to the majority of young women who enter ECEC careers, whatever their educational achievement. Alternatively, it may mean that young women entering ECEC careers have benefited from the attentions of teachers who are skilled at fostering positive relationships; who may have left a lasting impression on their students. This finding may have interesting implications for how educators view their own relationships with the children whose learning they support in their work.

Young women pursuing ECEC degree courses are similar to young women pursuing primary teaching degrees on most scales, with the widest gap apparent in academic self-efficacy (0.4). This accords with earlier findings about a higher proportion of ECEC degree students coming from backgrounds of lower scholastic achievement, compared to the primary teaching group. Returning to Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*, it shows how the view formed by an individual of their own academic capability is shaped by messages from test scores and other authorised assessments, which come to be internalised, resulting in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy of low expectations and achievement (or *vice versa*, for high-achieving students). This internalisation is also manifest in young people's aspirations for their future careers, as will be shown in the following section.

Aspirations

As a longitudinal study, LSAY offers a unique opportunity to explore educators' early career aspirations. In the baseline year of each wave, when the participant is aged approximately 15, the LSAY survey asks them to identify the career they plan to have when they finish their education (Cohorts 1 and 2); or the career they plan to have at age 30 (Cohorts 3 to 5). These items have been treated as equivalent for the purposes of analysis, as indicators of the career that students hoped to pursue. Tracking back to this survey question, for the young people who subsequently went into ECEC study or work, provides an insight into whether their engagement in ECEC was deliberate or unplanned.

This analysis has some unavoidable limitations. LSAY collected data on student aspirations in the baseline year only, and students may have changed their career aspirations at later ages. Attrition from LSAY, and the fact that data collection was ongoing for some waves at the time of analysis, also means that the aspiration-to-outcome pathway is incomplete for many respondents. Despite these limitations, LSAY is still a valuable data set for examining the relationship between career intentions and

subsequent pathways for young people in ECEC study or employment—especially in determining whether these pathways differ across qualification groups.

Table 6.7 displays the intended future career of young people engaged in ECEC study⁵⁹ at some point during their participation in LSAY. The first five careers are teaching-related occupations, including work in ECEC. The distinction between "child care worker/manager" and "pre-primary teacher" has been retained in this analysis, as it shows interesting variation across the qualification groups. The remaining categories are broad groupings of ASCO/ANZSCO codes⁶⁰, to show other major groups of participant responses. Proportions of 10 per cent or over are shaded, to highlight significant groups, with bold text used for the highest proportion in each qualification group (column).

	ECEC	degree	ECEC o	liploma	ECEC ce	ertificate	Primary	degree
	n	% col.	n	% col.	n	% col.	n	% col.
Pre-primary teacher (ECEC)	38	21.1%	19	12.3%	8	4.9%	12	3.6%
Child care worker/manager (ECEC)	21	11.7%	54	35.1%	53	32.3%	7	2.1%
Teacher (unspecified)	11	6.1%	8	5.2%	6	3.7%	31	9.3%
Primary teacher	40	22.2%	15	9.7%	11	6.7%	137	41.0%
Secondary or other teacher*	12	6.7%	5	3.2%	4	2.4%	21	6.3%
Social/welfare/ other care	4	2.2%	6	3.9%	11	6.7%	13	3.9%
Other manager/ professional	27	15.0%	23	14.9%	20	12.2%	64	19.2%
Health professional	12	6.7%	6	3.9%	12	7.3%	23	6.9%
Tradesperson/ industrial*	10	5.6%	8	5.2%	14	8.5%	16	4.8%
Clerical, sales and service	5	2.8%	10	6.5%	25	15.2%	10	3.0%
Total	180	100%	154	100%	164	100%	334	100%

Table 6.7 – Future career plans of young people engaged in ECEC study, or primary teaching study, by qualification (% qualification group)

* Includes secondary, tertiary, and other explicitly non-ECEC-related teaching levels.

** Includes production, transport and labour.

⁵⁹ The "unqualified" group is excluded from this analysis due to a low response rate (n = 32).

⁶⁰ ASCO 1 for Cohort 1, ASCO 2 for Cohort 2, and ANZSCO two for Cohorts 3 to 5.

Note: Excludes LSAY participants engaged in ECEC work and out-of-field study. Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Table 6.7 shows that ECEC is a career of choice for a large proportion of young people who pursue ECEC-related courses. Around one-third of young people undertaking ECEC certificates or diplomas aimed to work in child care (32.3 per cent and 35.1 per cent respectively), increasing to almost half (47.4 per cent) for the diploma group once pre-primary teaching is included. In contrast, slightly under one-third (32.8 per cent) of young people pursuing ECEC degrees aimed for a career in either pre-primary teaching or child care, with almost as many aiming for a primary teaching career, or other non-ECEC teaching career (28.9 per cent).⁶¹ Among young people pursuing that the affinity between aspiration and study may be stronger in the primary teaching sector.

Although the proportion of males pursuing ECEC is too small for robust analysis, the data suggest that the relationship between undertaking an ECEC course and aspiring towards an ECEC career may be different for males. Of the 32 young men pursuing ECEC courses for whom career goal data was available, only five (15.6 per cent) aspired towards a career in either child care or pre-primary teaching, compared to 188 of the 466 females (40.3 per cent). Seven of the males in ECEC study (21.9 per cent) aspired towards primary teaching, but most (62.5 per cent) aspired towards other careers. This suggests either that ECEC is less likely to be a planned career choice for young men; or that young men's aspirations towards ECEC careers emerge later than age 15.

The gendered nature of ECEC aspirations can also be seen in analysis of the proportions of young people aspiring to ECEC careers, irrespective of their actual destination. In total, the LSAY data examined for this study recorded the aspirations at age 15 (or Year 9, depending on cohort), for 12,247 young men (unweighted). Of these, only 22 (0.18 per cent) aspired to ECEC careers (7 pre-primary teaching, 15 child care worker or manager). In comparison, 789 of the 14,055 females (5.6 per cent) whose aspirations were recorded chose ECEC careers (245 pre-primary teaching, 544 child care worker or manager). At a total of 3.1 per cent of all young people whose aspirations were captured in the survey, the proportion of young people aspiring to ECEC careers in LSAY exceeds the proportion of actual ECEC educators in the Australian workforce (estimated at 1.3 per cent, based on 2011 ABS Census data used for this study), suggesting a more than ample supply of educators if all these aspirations were followed through.

⁶¹ It is not possible to tell from the LSAY data whether this group were pursuing ECEC degrees that would also enable them to teach in primary schools.

Proponents of higher entry standards for the teaching profession may argue that it is not the quantity of people entering ECEC that matters, but their quality—as measured by their academic achievement (Ingvarson, 2013, n.p.). Figure 6.8 therefore re-examines the young women who aspired to be ECEC educators at age 15, by their mathematics achievement quintile at the same age. Because mathematics quintiles are distributed differently for males and females, and because most young people aspiring to ECEC careers are female, this analysis includes females only. To continue the comparison with the school teaching profession, primary and secondary teaching are also shown.





Maths quintile:	Low	Low-mid	Mid	Mid-high	High
Pre-primary teacher	44	66	65	37	32
Child care worker / manager	168	142	106	66	54
Teacher (unspecified)	42	68	87	77	74
Primary teacher	39	121	157	125	116
Secondary or other teacher	44	90	120	128	147
Other career (not shown)	1,341	2,099	2,339	2,573	3,375

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Around one in eight young women (12.6 per cent) in the lowest-achieving mathematics quintile aspired to work in ECEC, either as a child care worker or pre-primary teacher. In contrast, only approximately one in 45 girls (2.2 per cent) in the highest-achieving quintile had this aspiration. This decrease across the quintiles is particular to ECEC careers, and is not apparent for teaching careers at other levels. As the age of the children to be taught increases, so does the scholastic achievement of the young women who aspire to teach them. Primary teaching aspirations are strongest for the middle achievement quintile (5.5 per cent), whereas secondary, tertiary or other teaching most effectively captures the aspirations of the mid-to-highest quintile of female mathematics achievers (4.3 per cent).

Given the importance of aspirations to work in ECEC in predicting actual engagement in study and work (Table 6.7), it is worth also considering what factors predict ECEC aspirations for young women in each achievement guintile. Three of the variables examined previously in this chapter were identified as significantly associated with ECEC aspirations⁶²: academic self-efficacy, enjoyment of school, and parental occupational status. This accords with prior research findings that suggest that personal, school and family factors combine to influence students' academic and occupational aspirations more broadly (Marjoribanks, 2002).

Figure 6.9 compares the relationship between these factors and young women's intentions to enter ECEC careers, and their relationship with actual engagement in ECEC work or study. It shows the difference on each scale between young women in each achievement quintile who aspired to enter ECEC careers, and those that did not (as a proportion of the standard deviation of the scale for all young women in the quintile). The difference was calculated by subtracting the mean for ECEC aspirants from non-ECEC aspirants, so positive values indicate a higher mean for the non-ECEC aspirant group.





		Aspire to work in ECEC			Do not as	pire to wor	k in ECEC	Total		
		Mean	Std. Dev.	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	n
	Academic	self-efficad	су							
e	Low	3.7	2.0	200	4.0	2.1	5,644	4.0	2.1	5,844
linti	Low-mid	4.1	2.0	212	4.4	2.0	6,678	4.4	2.0	6,890
nb s	Mid	4.5	2.0	161	5.0	2.2	6,614	5.0	2.2	6,775
ath	Mid-high	4.6	1.9	106	5.7	2.2	6,214	5.7	2.2	6,320
Σ	High	5.1	2.0	84	6.6	2.3	6,098	6.6	2.3	6,182

High

⁶² Tests of associated (logistic regression) were performed separately for each achievement quintile, as different factors may be important for different achievement groups. The variables shown in Figure 6.9 were selected based on having a significant association (sig<0.05) with ECEC-related aspirations for at least two of the mathematics achievement quintile groups.

	Enjoyment	of school								
e	Low	4.9	2.1	200	5.3	2.1	5,613	5.3	2.1	5,813
linti	Low-mid	4.9	2.0	212	5.3	1.9	6,653	5.3	1.9	6,865
s di	Mid	4.9	1.9	160	5.5	1.9	6,591	5.5	1.9	6,751
ath	Mid-high	5.4	1.6	104	5.8	1.9	6,200	5.8	1.9	6,304
Σ	High	5.0	1.9	84	6.0	1.8	6,093	6.0	1.9	6,177
	Parental or	ccupationa	I status (IS	EI)						
e	Low	46.7	16.3	158	55.5	23.2	4,946	55.3	23.1	5,104
lint	Low-mid	51.9	17.1	181	54.7	19.7	6,022	54.6	19.7	6,203
s di	Mid	53.9	17.1	144	56.6	18.6	6,022	56.5	18.5	6,166
ath	Mid-high	53.5	15.9	95	58.6	17.7	5,733	58.6	17.7	5,828
Σ	High	52.8	16.6	73	61.9	16.6	5,706	61.8	16.6	5,779

Note: Parental occupational status scores (ISEI) have been divided by 10.

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Figure 6.9 shows that young women who do *not* aspire to ECEC careers have higher mean scores on every scale, compared to those who do. This relationship is constant across all achievement quintiles, but most apparent for the highest achievement quintile. On academic self-efficacy, the difference between high-achievers who do aspire to ECEC careers, and those who do not, is particularly high (1.6 points on the 10-point scale, or 68.9 per cent of a standard deviation). That is, the high-achieving students who choose ECEC careers are those who are less confident in their academic ability.

This graph suggests that all young women, especially high achievers, are more likely to choose ECEC careers if they are affected by self, school or family factors that place downward pressure on their educational and occupational aspirations. This does not preclude the possibility that ECEC is still a positive choice for these young people, but also indicates that the ECEC sector may be less successful at attracting those who have a more optimistic view of their future possibilities. In each achievement quintile, the young women identifying ECEC as their career of choice are less likely to believe in their own ability to learn, less likely to feel positive about the school learning environment, and less likely to have role models in high-status occupations in their immediate family. This not only has implications for the perceived desirability of ECEC careers relative to other options, but—more importantly for this study—implies that those entering ECEC careers may require particular support to develop positive aspirations for professional growth.

Summary

This chapter has used selected indicators from the LSAY study to examine the formation of capital during adolescence, for young people who subsequently engage in ECEC study and work. As with all data sets in this study, the limitations in using LSAY for this purpose must be acknowledged. The measures explored in this chapter are opportunistic rather than ideal (see Sullivan, 2001); and the measures of family wealth appear insufficiently discriminating for the Australian context (see Figure 6.3). LSAY also provides little information on social and family relationships, which may be important for understanding the effects of early formation of social capital (see Semo, 2011).

This chapter is nevertheless sufficient to provide a snapshot of young people's levels of social advantage, and their relationship to engagement in different levels of ECEC study and work. Table 5.5 summarises key indicators for each of the four ECEC qualification groups. The scale and categorical variables (percentage-based) used in this chapter are separated in the table, for ease of interpretation. The mean and standard deviation across the four qualification groups are shown for percentage-based indicators only, as the different scales preclude meaningful comparisons of variance for other indicators.

	Deg	Dip	Cert	Unq	Mean	Std Dev	Conform?
Categorical variables							
Commenced course 5+ years after LSAY baseline	36.6%	18.0%	29.5%		28.0%	9.4	No
At least one degree- qualified parent	42.2%	22.4%	23.5%	32.7%	30.2%	9.2	No
Neither parent completed school	14.3%	24.1%	21.5%	15.3%	18.8%	4.8	No
Reads for pleasure (females)	82.0%	69.9%	71.1%	71.0%	73.5%	5.7	Yes
Engaged in voluntary or unpaid work (females)	50.8%	46.9%	44.6%	42.9%	46.3%	3.5	Yes
In highest mathematics quintile (females)	17.0%	10.2%	6.8%	5.7%	9.9%	5.1	Yes
In lowest mathematics quintile (females)	12.5%	23.8%	29.4%	42.5%	27.1%	12.5	Yes
Aspired to work in ECEC	32.8%	47.4%	37.2%	18.8%	34.0%	11.9	No
Scale variables							
Parental occupational status (ISEI)	60.7	55.9	56.7	54.6			No
Family wealth possessions	0.57	0.52	0.46	0.54			No
Home educational resources	0.21	0.01	-0.19	-0.26			Yes
Cultural possessions	0.23	-0.35	-0.12	-0.32			No
Enjoyment of school (females)	6.0	5.7	5.1	5.4			No
Relationships with teachers (females)	6.3	6.1	5.9	6.2			No

Table 6.8 – Summary of key indicators, by qualification

Value of school (females)	7.3	7.1	6.7	6.9		No
General self-efficacy (females)	7.0	6.8	6.3	6.2		Yes
Academic self-efficacy (females)	5.2	4.6	4.1	4.1		Yes

Source: LSAY, 2015 (unweighted). Data combined from Y95, Y98, Y03, Y06, and Y09 cohorts.

Table 5.5 supports the hypothesis of this study to some extent, in that many of the indicators associated with social advantage examined in this chapter do appear to increase the likelihood of young people's engagement in higher-level ECEC qualifications. Most of these indicators relate to success in the school system, including scholastic achievement (mathematics quintile), reading for pleasure, educational resources in the home, and academic self-efficacy. As might be expected, this suggests that engagement in higher levels of ECEC study is a reflection of higher levels of the kinds of capital required to succeed at school. If such capital is thought to be required to enact quality ECEC practice, then this has important implications for how the relationship between higher qualifications and quality practice might be understood.

Other indicators suggest disruptions in the relationship between young people's levels of capital, and the level of ECEC qualification that they choose to pursue. The home and family indicators listed in Table 5.5 do not increase consistently with the pursuit of higher ECEC qualifications, as young people pursuing ECEC diplomas have the lowest levels of parental education, and cultural possessions in the home. The diploma group is also notable for having by far the highest proportion of young people engaged in ECEC work or study who aspired towards ECEC careers. This raises questions about the relationship between the goals of the National Quality Agenda and the attributes of those who enter the ECEC workforce, and suggest that attention to transition pathways is warranted to ensure that adequate support is available for these young people's learning and growth.

The group of young women pursuing ECEC certificates are notable for having the lowest mean scores on the three scales related to engagement in school—enjoyment of school, relationships with teachers, and the value they place on schooling. Recalling from Chapter 4 that around two-thirds of young certificate-qualified educators did not complete school (Figure 4.13), this suggests that the pursuit of a certificate-level qualification in ECEC may be a kind of compensation for disengagement in higher levels of schooling. This compensatory role of ECEC is both a challenge—in terms of the difficulties these young people may experience in formal learning environments—and an opportunity. It supports the view that ECEC offers a valuable pathway into further education and employment for young women with negative experiences of school education.

The table of indicators does not show perhaps the most valuable contribution of the LSAY data to this study—that is, its depiction of the complexity that exists in the pathways that young people take from school to ECEC study and work. The analysis in this chapter suggests that young people's pathways into ECEC may not be linear, and may pass through other study and work along the way. This is especially true for young people studying for ECEC degrees, who start much later than degree students as a whole, and who may have transitioned into ECEC degree courses via VET or other study. Similarly, although aspirations to work in ECEC are a strong predicator of actual engagement, the relationship between ECEC aspirations and engagement appears relatively fluid (at least in comparison to primary teaching). This suggests that interest and engagement in ECEC work and learning may occur at many different points along the life course—another observation with profound implications for ECEC workforce development.

Chapter 7 — Discussion

The previous chapters used data from three large-scale surveys to explore various attributes of educators at different qualification levels in the Australian ECEC workforce, through which the effects of differences in their levels of social advantage might be seen. This included objective attributes (being), subjective attributes (belonging), and longitudinal attributes (becoming). The data sets selected for analysis provided a rich array of indicators to measure the effects of capital in its cultural, social, and economic forms; as well as factors that may mediate (either by intensifying or disrupting) the relationship between educators' capital and their *habitus* and practice.

The analysis lends greater empirical precision to the class-based analysis of the ECEC workforce presented in Osgood's (2012) and Andrew's (2015a) qualitative research. That is, it shows that while the ECEC workforce in Australia—as in other OECD nations— spans the socio-economic status spectrum, it draws much more heavily from the lower part. This includes many educators whose levels of economic, social and cultural capital position them not as members of the "dominant class", but from less advantaged backgrounds, both in their current social position, and in their past social, economic and educational experiences. Other educators' socio-economic standing more closely approaches Australia's middle class, especially those with higher-level qualifications.

Guided by the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 2, this chapter discusses implications for educators' *habitus* and practice arising from the data analysis. As *habitus* is both a class and individual phenomenon (see Reay, 2004b), the discussion is organised in three levels, moving from the *macro* level of the entire ECEC workforce, to specific groups of educators, to the *micro* level of individual educators themselves:

- The first level of discussion considers the overall levels of cultural, social, economic capital of the ECEC workforce as a single class or group, based on commonalities between educators in all qualification groups. This discussion considers how this study may be used to guide future directions for whole-of-workforce development.
- 2. The next section considers each of the four qualification groups examined in this study in turn: educators who are degree-qualified, diploma-qualified, certificate-qualified, and unqualified. It summarises notable findings from the data analysis for each qualification group, and considers how these differences may compound or counterbalance variations in educators' practice associated with their qualifications.

3. The last section turns to implications from the study at the level of individual educators. It recognises that *habitus* and practice are influenced not only by the structural factors that position educators as members of a class or group, but also by individual reflection and action. This section focuses on how findings from the study may be used to guide educators' critical reflection and professional growth.

This three-part discussion recognises that—just as *habitus* is formed by both structural forces and individual agency (Schatzki, 2017)—quality ECEC practice requires both competent educators, and a "competent system" in which the conditions for quality are in place (Peeters, Sharmahd, & Budginaitė, 2016, p. 5). Opportunities for shaping practice therefore lie not only with educators themselves, but with the system in which they work. This chapter aims to identify some ways in which these opportunities might be better utilised, to achieve the quality to which the National Quality Agenda aspires.

Developing the ECEC workforce

The data analysis has shown that some aspects of social advantage are common to educators in all qualification groups. The findings provide a base for the subsequent discussion of differences between educators in different qualification groups, by identifying attributes that arise from the social position of the ECEC workforce as a whole. This discussion is also valuable in identifying aspects of social advantage that may require attention in whole-of-workforce development initiatives, given that their influence on educators' *habitus* and practice may be felt throughout the sector. It therefore considers the implications of these findings for developing the ECEC workforce as a profession, and suggests issues that may need to be addressed, if educators' levels of capital—and, by extension, their *habitus* and the quality of their practice—are to grow.

Cultural capital: balancing high aspirations and diversity

One of the most striking findings in this study is that many educators have had limited opportunities to accumulate cultural capital through their early socialisation, with consequent effects on their schooling. This is most evident in the LSAY case study data⁶³, in the school achievement and attainment of young people entering ECEC study and work, especially compared to those pursuing primary school teaching (Chapter 6). Even young people pursuing ECEC degrees are more likely to be drawn from lower quintiles of achievement than those entering primary teaching, with young people pursuing VET ECEC qualifications coming from an even lower school achievement base

⁶³ As noted in Chapter 3, findings from the LSAY data should be treated as case studies, and would require further research with a larger ECEC sample to confirm their generalisability.

(Figure 6.5). The ABS Census data also show that educators at all qualification levels are more likely than similarly-qualified Australians to have left school early (Figure 4.17). Given the importance of cultural capital to practice quality (see Chapter 2), these findings warrant particular attention, in their implications for educators' development.

Bourdieu's theory explains that success in schooling depends upon the "head start" provided by the acquisition of cultural capital in the home and family (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Based on the LSAY data, young people entering ECEC study may have less cultural capital in their home environments relative to their peers, in parental education and cultural possessions (Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3). In addition, their attitudes to school suggest lower levels of confidence in their academic ability (Figure 6.7)—which may reflect the internalisation of the school system's estimation of their ability.

Although policy-makers and other members of the dominant class may be inclined towards a deficit view of these findings, they are presented here in order to highlight an opportunity. The heightened expectations for ECEC practice under the National Quality Agenda provide a powerful impetus to change educators' learning trajectories. The data show that the proportion of the ECEC workforce enrolled in further study (university or VET) is considerably higher than the Australian workforce as a whole (Figure 4.16), especially for educators with certificates or no qualification. While the baseline level of cultural capital in the ECEC workforce may be lower than for other segments of the Australian workforce, the recent progress across the sector in the pursuit of cultural capital in its institutionalised form has been remarkable.

This recent growth in educators' pursuit of higher qualifications reflects a point-in-time response to a specific policy stimulus. As educators' engagement in formal study above entry-level qualifications appears to be levelling off (Figure 5.21), it begs the question of how this surge in educators' learning can be translated into sustainable continuous improvement. The data, literature and theoretical framework for this study suggest some possible responses, which are outlined below.

The first possible response is to embrace the value of the ECEC sector, as shown in the data, as an avenue for second-chance education. While rising post-school participation may be expected to push up the educational calibre of new entrants to ECEC over time (Moss, 2006, p. 34), it is likely that there will continue to be a need for the sector to draw on a wide social spectrum of educators to meet demand for provision (Vandenbroeck, Peeters, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2013). Many entering the sector will be young women—a group for whom post-school career prospects for low academic achievers are especially limited (Curtis & McMillan, 2008; Teese & Polesel, 2003; Lamb & Rumberger, 1999).

If implemented well, efforts to develop the ECEC workforce could transform the lives and learning of vulnerable young women. Just as education credentials have the potential to reinforce inequality, they may also offer a valuable means of social mobility (Sullivan, 2002). The same educators who may struggle most in engaging with formal learning environments may also have the most to gain in doing so, in overcoming educational disadvantage and improving their socio-economic position. This involves setting high expectations for what all educators can achieve, regardless of their educational backgrounds—just as the ELYF requires educators to do for children.

This points to the need for courses leading to ECEC qualifications to be delivered in a way that responds to the diversity of the workforce. The data suggest that ECEC course providers absorb a disproportionate share of students with lower school achievement (Figure 6.6), and a greater proportion of older workers in the ECEC sector are studying than in other Australian occupations (Figure 4.16). These findings—along with the other dimensions of diversity shown throughout this study—suggest that responsiveness to diversity is especially important in courses in the ECEC field. In their major Victorian study, CRES (2011) found that gaining an awareness of students' learning needs was considered very important by over half the ECEC course providers surveyed, in both university and VET—almost twice the proportion who placed a high priority on student selection (CRES, 2011, pp. 151–152). This suggests that ECEC course providers are embracing diversity in supporting educators' learning, rather than seeking to exclude it.

Second-chance education must not be second-rate. Chapter 1 noted current concerns about the quality of ECEC courses, especially in the VET sector, which have intensified as demand for these courses expands. The importance of the VET sector is widely-recognised in Australia, in providing second-chance education to those who have not succeeded at school (Lamb & Rumberger, 1999; Black, Polidano, Tabasso & Tseng, 2011; Karmel & Woods, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2005); and the data in this study supports its particular importance to ECEC educators from backgrounds of educational disadvantage. Of some concern is the finding that educators who engage in further study may be driven more by the need to gain a "piece of paper" than intrinsic motivation, or belief that a higher qualification will improve their effectiveness in their role (Table 5.3). To realise the potential of second-chance education, all ECEC courses must offer a meaningful foundation for effective practice and ongoing professional growth.

One way to improve the meaningfulness of ongoing learning for all ECEC educators may be to better recognise all forms of cultural capital valued by the ECEC workforce, not only those associated with academic achievement. Andrew (2015a) identifies recognition of emotional capital as a way to challenge the "deficit thinking" (p. 306) that is often applied to educators' knowledge and skills. Colley (2006) notes that little attention has been given to how emotional skills may be developed or recognised through credentialed training. Through its emphasis on relationships with children (see Tayler et al., 2013), the National Quality Agenda provides an opportunity for emotional capital to gain more explicit recognition as institutionalised—not only embodied—cultural capital. Greater attention to care work as a valued body of knowledge may help educators with lowerlevel qualifications—who often engage more in the care aspects of ECEC practice, rather than educative tasks (Van Laere et al., 2012; Curby et al., 2012)—feel that formal learning environments are relevant to what they know and value. Importantly, these are qualities that educators themselves "hold dear" (Macfarlane & Lewis, 2012, p. 69), with numerous studies recognising emotional competence as highly prized among ECEC practitioners (for example, Dalli, 2008; Andrew, 2015b; Osgood, 2006b).

This requires ongoing work in the articulation of emotional capital and its relevance for ECEC work, especially the challenging balance between children's wellbeing and support for their learning (see Chapter 2). Educators' early socialisation is again significant here, as educators who have experienced less success at school may also have had less exposure to emotional capital as support for learning. At the same time, these educators may have rich knowledge of emotional capital to support child wellbeing, which may offer a strong base for their professional growth in other areas of practice.

Even so, the pursuit of higher qualifications is not for everyone. Qualifications are a resource-intensive mechanism for learning (Early et al., 2008), and the data indicate that many educators regard credentialed learning as a significant imposition of time and cost, which is not adequately rewarded by increases in remuneration (Table 5.4). For some educators—especially in family day care, where time and money are especially scarce (Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12)—the expectation to pursue a qualification is sufficient to cause them to consider leaving their employer (Figure 5.20), presumably to leave ECEC altogether. As career pathways become less linear in Australia (see Ross & Gray, 2005), the ECEC workforce is also likely to continue to include educators who drift in and out of the sector, who may be less willing to invest resources in a higher qualification.

This provides a further argument for taking a holistic approach to building educators' cultural capital, beyond the pursuit of qualifications. Qualifications are too resourceintensive to provide a solution to the professional growth needs of all educators in the sector—and may not, in themselves, be sufficient to address the broader dimensions of cultural capital in which educators may require support. Critical reflection on practice is a high-potential, low-cost learning strategy that may open up opportunities for these broader dimensions to be considered, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

At a system level, the possibilities of critical reflection for professional growth require that the structural conditions are in place for such reflection to occur. Critical reflection must be offered through a range of approaches, including oral as well as written methods (DEEWR, 2010b), so that it is accessible to all educators, regardless of their education levels and language proficiency. The translation of practice to language is itself challenging, and many educators struggle to articulate their professional practice in written text (Irvine et al., 2016), and to use the specific language and concepts of the National Quality Agenda (Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2017). These challenges are likely to be intensified for the many educators who have struggled in their schooling; as well as educators with lower levels of confidence in English, which this study has shown form a sizeable minority (Figure 4.5). Mixed modes of critical reflection can help draw out what educators know, not only what they can articulate, and move beyond the barrier that language can present. At the same time, the varied levels of cultural capital in the ECEC workforce-including educators with high academic achievement-suggests that educators may have opportunities to learn to articulate their practice from one another: provided this is built on the principle of respect for diversity, and encouragement for all educators to take a strengths-based view of each other's knowledge and practice.

Collaborative, reflective learning does not mean that educators should "puddle around in their own ignorance", and practitioners will still benefit from external perspectives to challenge and extend their reflections (Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee, 2009, p. 75). All educators require access to "evidence-informed, ongoing and embedded professional learning" (Torii et al., 2017, p. 6), which responds to their diversity and needs. The nature of professional learning for the ECEC workforce is a worthy topic of research in itself, as the agreement about the need for quality professional learning has not yet been matched by clarity about what such quality may entail (Hyson, Tomlinson, & Morris, 2009). This study suggests that attention to *who* accesses professional development, not only *what* it involves, may be an important element of its effectiveness. Learning opportunities must foster high expectations for all educators' practice, while respecting the different kinds of challenges that educators may face.

Economic capital: addressing systemic inequality

The data analysis clearly shows that educators are at an economic disadvantage relative to similarly-qualified workers (both male and female) in the general Australian population. This economic disparity may constrain the achievement of the National Quality Agenda's goals, both by affecting educator attraction and retention, and through the dampening effects on capability and commitment that may be associated with low-wage work. The data in this study confirm the observations reported in Chapter 2, that a substantial proportion of educators are dissatisfied with their pay and conditions (Figure 5.9)—while also supporting other recent research findings, that Australian educators have mixed views about the adequacy of their pay (Irvine et al., 2016).

Educators in long day care appear the least satisfied with their pay and conditions, and most likely to want to leave the ECEC sector (Figure 5.15). Dissatisfaction with pay and conditions also features strongly among their reasons for seeking an alternative employer (Figure 5.20). Retention of educators is a recognised issue across the Australian ECEC sector (Irvine et al., 2016), and Masterman-Smith and Pocock (2008) report that even educators who love their work may move in and out of the ECEC sector, to access periods of higher-paid work to meet their living expenses. This mobility not only increases the costs of ECEC by creating inefficiencies, but also disrupts the secure relationships between educators and children required by the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009).

This means that educators are also likely to be at an economic disadvantage relative to the families whose children come into their care. This is consistent with class-based critiques of ECEC provision, that ECEC services constitute a class of (mostly) women relegated to economic disadvantage, to enable the economic advantage of others (Osgood, 2005; hooks, 2014; Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008). In relation to educators' practice, major differences in economic capital may present an obstacle to educators engaging in partnerships with families, as the EYLF principles dictate (DEEWR, 2009), based on mutual respect and understanding. In recent Australian studies, educators have remarked that families seem largely unaware of their economic disadvantage (Andrew, 2015a; Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008). Increasing government subsidisation has arguably masked the true costs of ECEC provision, leading parents to expect an ever-higher quality service at a cost that does not "unduly burden the family budget" (Productivity Commission, 2014, p. 10).

Irvine and colleagues (2016) recognise that families may be "an important group to mobilise" in efforts to improve educators' economic position (p. 17). At the same time, the nexus between families' ability to pay and educators' income has constrained educators' ability to bargain for higher wages throughout the history of the ECEC sector (Brennan, 1994). The effects of this nexus can be seen in the data in this study, in the distribution of educators across ECEC services in high-SES and low-SES communities (Figure 4.19 and Figure 4.20). These data suggest that dependency on families' ability

to pay is causing systemic inequality in children's access to educators with the highest education levels, who are far more likely to be found in affluent communities. This directly contravenes the principle of equity that the EYLF promotes (DEEWR, 2009).

The flow of economic capital within the ECEC sector contributes to other systemic inequalities, through two apparent instances of involuntary cross-subsidisation. The first occurs between educators themselves, as the data demonstrate the size of the income discrepancies between educators with different qualifications (Figure 4.6). These differences are compounded when ECEC service type is also taken into account (Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12), with the data in this study supporting Brennan's (1994) observation that educators in preschools are "the most privileged group of workers in children's services" (p. 124). Pocock and Hill (2007) argue that "if childcare workers are exercising levels of skill and effort that are close to those of preschool teachers, they are currently subsidising child care costs to the tune of at least 15 per cent" (p. 31).

A second cross-subsidisation is provided by other members of educators' households, who involuntarily contribute to the labour costs involved in educating and caring for other people's children. The data in this study show that educators are far less likely than other similarly-qualified Australian women to contribute a substantial share of their household income, and more likely to be living in circumstances of apparent economic dependency (Figure 4.15). This shows that gender, as well as class, plays a role in shaping educators' economic capital, and perpetuates the status of child-rearing as "women's work" to be economically supported by men (Waring, 1990, p. 2)—but through new configurations, involving involuntary cross-subsidisation across households.

These inequalities suggest that educators' economic capital is not only a private good, but a legitimate cause for public concern. The Productivity Commission (2014) reports widespread support for government subsidisation of educators' wages, arising from a similar logic to the justification for government investment in school education—that ECEC can deliver significant public value, and therefore warrants investment in measures to improve its quality and equity. Governments have various tools at their disposal to do so, if there is the will; including direct income subsidies, or wage-related judgements that influence the labour market (Bita, 2016). However, the presence of for-profit providers in the Australian ECEC sector (which are not permitted in the school education sector) continues to raise difficult questions about the appropriate level of government support, which to date remain unresolved.

While these inequalities warrant attention, it is also worthwhile to acknowledge the intrinsic worth and non-economistic orientation of ECEC work. The philanthropic spirit

that drove early ECEC services in Australia (see Chapter 1) still permeates the sector suggested in this study by relatively high rates of volunteering among young people bound for ECEC careers (Figure 6.4). Even low-paid educators may prioritise the quality of the service they provide to children and families above their own financial gain (Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008). This study also shows that a high proportion of educators are engaged in unpaid work, including childcare and volunteering (Figure 4.8), suggesting that they are well-placed to see the value in work, beyond the economic capital it attracts. While money does matter, the caring, relationship-oriented ethos of the ECEC sector must not be eclipsed by economic concerns (see Vandenbroeck, 2014).

Time also has a relationship to economic capital, which may be as important as money in creating opportunities for educators' professional growth. The high proportion of educators working long hours in some services (Figure 5.10) suggests a need to ensure that reforms increase the quality, rather than quantity, of educators' work.⁶⁴ Educators' views on undertaking further study suggest that time is currently a barrier to formal professional learning (Table 5.4)—a barrier that is likely to apply similarly to less formal opportunities for development. In ECEC services, as in schools, it is common that "daily demands crowd out serious sustained improvements" (Fullan, 2016, p. 98), and robust structural support is necessary to ensure that all educators' working lives include time and space to reflect and learn. As Irvine et al. (2016) found, "good" ECEC services are those in which educators at all qualification levels are given "adequate time to think, analyse and document"; including by providing parity of access to paid time away from the busy-ness of direct contact with children, in which reflection may occur (p. 14).

Social capital: improving status by consolidating identity

Although the data sets examined for this study provided limited insight into social capital and its effects, some observations may be made about educators' relationships within their professional networks. The quality of educators' collegial relationships appears high (Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7), and may be a valuable asset for the quality of their practice, in providing the emotional capital necessary to sustain relationships with children and families; as well as facilitating engagement in collaborative critical reflection (see Nolan & Molla, 2017a). However, the data also indicate that the type of ECEC service in which educators work may have bearing on the quality of these relationships, and that educators in family day care and long day care services may benefit from more opportunities for collegial support.

⁶⁴ See Hoyle (2008) for a discussion of this tension in the professionalisation of school teachers.

Despite the strength of collegial relationships within the ECEC sector, educators' views on how their work is perceived in the community suggests that they may have limited access to the kinds of status-affirming networks through which social capital is built. The data suggest that a substantial proportion of educators do not feel their work is valued (Figure 5.8), especially—and ironically—those with higher-level qualifications. The other indicators of social advantage shown throughout the study support the assumption that educators' levels of cultural, economic and social capital are unlikely to be sufficient to convert into higher levels of symbolic capital or status—notwithstanding some notable differences between groups of educators, as will be discussed below.

Educators' low social status may also relate to the levels of social and symbolic capital they inherit. The LSAY case study data suggest that young people entering ECEC degree and diploma courses may come from families in which their parents' occupational status is lower than their peers (Table 6.6), while also showing that high academic achievers are unlikely to regard ECEC as a desirable career choice (Figure 6.8). This recalls Osgood's (2005) wry observation that "childcare remains the domain of working class women precisely because nobody else wants to do it" (p. 296).

The status of the ECEC profession matters for practice, as a factor in its ability to attract and retain capable educators, as well as to attract government investment and public support. It may also matter in educators' day-to-day interactions with families and other professionals, and their ability to form mutually respectful, collaborative partnerships. As shown throughout this study, large socio-economic gaps may exist between educators and the general population. Given the myriad ways in which differences in social advantage may create distance and distinction, it seems unlikely that collaborative, respectful partnerships will be able to flourish in conditions of profound social inequality.

As noted in Chapter 2, improving the professional status and recognition of the ECEC workforce is an aim of the National Quality Agenda (SCSEEC, 2012). To do this, governments must maintain a policy narrative that values all educators' work, and positions the ECEC sector as a robust, professional social institution. The National Quality Agenda has already made progress, in the "naming and framing" work necessary to build a positive professional identity for the ECEC sector (Sims, 2007, p. 240). A further step in this direction—as suggested in Chapter 3—may be for the ECEC profession to be publicly recognised as a unified occupational group in the ANZSCO classifications. Seddon and Bohren (2012) argue that the "occupational boundary work" involved in delineating the classificatory parameters of occupations is an important way in which

professional groups earn recognition for their labour and skill, and has flow-on effects for their "visibility, recognition and reward" (p. 406).

Even so, the diversity within the ECEC workforce continues to pose a challenge to its professional and institutional identity—clearly shown in the wide diversity apparent in this study. Notably, the relative social advantage of degree-qualified educators in preschools has been achieved historically by deliberately distancing their educative work from other ECEC services engaged in "minding" (Brennan, 1994, p. 8)—a distinction that may be undesirable to sustain, if the sector is to move forward as a unified profession. In some Australian states, ECEC teachers must now register with the professional body for the teaching profession, which—while arguably beneficial for these educators' professional status (O'Connell et al., 2016)—may drive a deeper wedge between ECEC qualification groups. Meanwhile, the historically fragmented industrial context for child care services⁶⁵ has only recently begun to take a more coherent shape. While policy rhetoric adopts the terminology of a unified profession, ECEC professional identity remains, as it was at the onset of the reform process, "very much a 'work-in-progress'" (Sims, 2007, p. 240).

This study may be valuable in supporting constructive engagement with the diversity in the ECEC workforce—including educators' different qualifications levels, service types and roles—to achieve greater coherence and public recognition for the ECEC profession. The EYLF principle of respect for diversity that educators apply in their work with children suggests that the development of professional identity should be undertaken in a way that confronts, rather than entrenches, existing inequalities; recognising that increases in status for one group of educators can act in exclusionary ways towards others (see Howson, 2015, n.p.). This is consistent with the "egalitarian and cooperative" (Thomas, 2012, p. 91) or "collegial and collaborative" (Osgood, 2012, p. 144) ethos that has been recognised as characterising ECEC work. Educators' interactions already promote "flattened hierarchies" over superiority based on higher qualifications (Osgood, 2012, p. 144); as well as recognition of differently-qualified colleagues' knowledge and skills (Thomas, 2012; O'Connor, McGunnigle, Treasure, & Davie, 2015).

The differential status of educators' qualifications requires particular consideration, as VET qualifications are widely regarded in Australia as lower in status than university

⁶⁵ Brennan (1994) reports that, in 1983, at the time the teachers' union was gaining momentum, there were "twenty-two unions covering child care workers and at least thirty-eight awards" (p. 128). This meant that awards, conditions and entitlements could vary dramatically between staff members in a single service. As a result, educators in long day care "became hostile to unions and industrial activity generally because they [saw] them as undermining the friendly and informal character of their workplace" (p. 128). Family day care educators were even less likely to engage in industrial activity, due to the isolated nature of their work (Brennan, 1994).

degrees (Simmons, 2010); despite public recognition that they are just as valuable, for different types of learners (DEEWR, 2008, p. 179). A professional identity based on "academicisation" of ECEC practice (Wingrave & McMahon, 2016, p. 710) risks entrenching this view. This illustrates the connection between cultural and social capital, and challenges the ECEC sector to more clearly articulate what kinds of knowledge should be attributed status, and how they may be obtained. In this, it is essential to maintain a distinction between arguments for higher qualifications based on the desire to pursue higher professional status; and arguments based on improving quality of practice (Early et al., 2008). While status-based arguments suggest an approach to professionalism based on high academic standards and exclusion, the EYLF's incitement to respect different "ways of knowing" appears to support a more inclusive approach to how quality ECEC practice may be learned (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13).

Also worthy of consideration are the different kinds of professional engagement that may exist within this diverse workforce. This study has demonstrated that the ECEC workforce includes a large proportion of educators who work part-time, relative to other occupations (Figure 4.7), often because of other commitments. Professionalism for the ECEC workforce must therefore offer flexibility and work-life balance—both in working arrangements, and study options—and value what educators learn from their unpaid work. "Masculinist" models of professionalism may be damaging to female-dominated professions, if they imply prioritisation of paid work over other aspects of identity (Allen, 1986, p. 14). Due to its feminisation, the ECEC workforce is well-placed to demonstrate approaches to professionalism that give equal status to paid and unpaid work (see hooks, 2014); which may also provide valuable models for other occupations.

Importantly, the goal of increasing social capital requires that any further articulation of ECEC professional identity must emanate from the sector itself. Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social capital demands that groups generate it from within, as a means of gaining recognition—it cannot be bestowed from outside. While the attribution of status by governments may be welcome, it carries risks, including increased regulatory scrutiny (Duhn, 2010; Irvine et al., 2016; Andrew, 2015a; Osgood, 2006a); and over-emphasis on the educative components of ECEC work (Kampmann, 2013; Ortlipp, Arthur, & Woodrow, 2011), at the expense of care (Sims, 2014). Ortlipp and colleagues (2011, drawing on Osgood, 2006a) caution educators against being "seduced" by the prospect of increased status, without heeding the risks of accepting the image of a "good" educator privileged in educationally-focused policy discourse (pp. 66–67).

The strong collegial relationships evidenced in the data may provide a foundation for such a task. It may be hoped that all educators can be given "voice and value" in the development of this professional identity (Jackson, 2017, p. 803), not only those whose professional status is currently strongest. The data in this study show the sheer size of the certificate-qualified and unqualified groups within the ECEC workforce, whose professional identity and status is also at stake. Urban (2008) observes that a stratification exists between "those who talk and those who are talked about" in discourses of ECEC professionalism; not only between those within and outside the sector, but also between those within the sector at different levels of privilege (p. 141). This study supports Urban's arguments for a more inclusive conceptualisation of ECEC professionalism, in which diverse "ways of knowing" are valued (p. 147).

This is not intended to imply a "loose" professional identity in which higher qualifications are relegated to "merely an expense that drives up the cost of care" (Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd, 2010, pp. 90–91); as an inclusive professional identity need not be homogeneous. Cultivation of career pathways and leadership opportunities may provide a way to reward educators' demonstrated capability, not only their credentials. The short career paths that exist within ECEC services—with many educators reaching management positions before age 40 (Chapter 4)—could be extended by opportunities for leadership across multiple services, to strengthen communities of practice.

Such opportunities must be accompanied by training and support. Chapter 4 shows that ECEC managers are often relatively young, relative to leaders in other sectors; and that many leaders (especially male ECEC managers) do not have qualifications in ECEC themselves. Although leadership is addressed in ECEC degree and diploma courses (ACECQA, 2016; Australian Government, 2015b), there is also ample evidence that even qualified ECEC leaders often feel underprepared for the complexities of their role (Rouse & Spradbury, 2014; Irvine et al., 2016; Nolan & Molla, 2017b). Developing ECEC leaders may have flow-on effects, not only for their own status, but for the status of the profession, as champions and exemplars of desirable practice are powerful assets for building social and symbolic capital within any social group (Bourdieu, 1986).

In raising the status of the ECEC profession, it is also essential to retain a focus on the cultural, economic and social capital from which symbolic capital is formed. Osgood (2005) argues that unless educators' socio-economic position can be improved, recognition of the status of ECEC work will amount to it becoming a "symbolically valuable vocation" rather than a "normatively respected career" (p. 297). Hoyle (2008) cautions that policy rhetoric about enhancing status may even divert attention away from

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more tangible social advancement—a situation that is arguably currently evident in Australian ECEC workforce reform. This study concurs with Andrew (2015a), that the "optimistic predictions of changing occupational value" (p. 306) in the National Quality Agenda are insufficient unless the "schemes of value that operate to classify some sorts of people as less valuable than others" are addressed (p. 307). The effects of economic, social and cultural capital shown in this study may all be seen as part of these "schemes", and must all be addressed if educators' symbolic capital is to increase.

Developing educators with different qualifications

The discussion now moves from development of the whole ECEC workforce, to development of educators in each of the four qualification groups examined in this study: degree-qualified, diploma-qualified and certificate-qualified educators, and educators with no qualification. The discussion considers how the findings shown in the data analysis might affect educators' *habitus* and practice within each group, again using the study's theoretical framework as a foundation. Although it would be possible to group educators in other ways for this discussion—for example, educators in different types of ECEC services—the division of educators' qualifications constitute the main form of demarcation between different levels of quality in their practice. If higher qualifications and higher-quality practice are correlated, then this discussion helps to clarify what other attributes—besides the qualification itself—might contribute to the correlation. It also identifies indicators of capital that may disrupt the quality-and-qualifications relationship, and help to explain its instability (see Chapter 1).

This section summarises key findings for each of the four qualification groups in the Australian ECEC workforce, in terms of their being, belonging and becoming. It identifies the strengths of each qualification group, including attributes that might not necessarily be recognised by their qualifications. In keeping with the focus on practice improvement, it also identifies issues for each qualification group that might need to be addressed in future efforts to support their professional learning. Of course, the heterogeneity within each qualification group means that commentary at the group level will vary in the extent to which it applies to individual educators; and comments made about one group may apply equally to educators in another. The discussion nevertheless helps to explore how each qualification group may be best supported to achieve high-quality practice; recognising that a diversely-qualified workforce is likely to require diverse strategies for professional learning and growth (Molla & Nolan, 2018).

Degree-qualified educators: re-orienting aspirations

A distinguishing feature of the degree-qualified group of educators is their relatively high level of success at school, compared to educators in other qualification groups. Educators in the degree-qualified group are the most likely to have completed school (Figure 4.17), and young people who undertake ECEC courses at degree level appear most likely to have been higher scholastic achievers (Figure 6.5), and to have engaged in leisure activities outside of school associated with higher cultural capital (Figure 6.4). They also appear most likely to have degree-qualified parents (Figure 6.2) in higher-status occupations (Table 6.6), and to have had the most objectified cultural capital (educational resources) in their homes growing up (Figure 6.3). In addition, they appear to be most likely to demonstrate positive attitudes to school, and confidence in their ability as learners (Figure 6.7), confirming the well-established mutually-reinforcing relationship between academic achievement and academic self-efficacy (Masters, 2013).

This supports the hypothesis generated from Bourdieu's theory, that higher-level qualifications represent the culmination of academic advantage over time, beginning with the cultural capital acquired in the home and family. It suggests that the greatest strength of the degree-qualified group of educators may lie in their ability to embody—and therefore transmit—the kind of cultural capital most highly-valued in school and other formal learning institutions. This is consistent with findings that the presence of degree-qualified educators is associated with higher quality in the instructional aspects of quality ECEC practice; more so than aspects of practice associated with relationships or structural factors (Tayler et al., 2013). As ECEC is increasingly positioned as part of the education system, this aspect of ECEC practice is increasingly highly valued.

The advantages that degree-qualified educators enjoy in the effects of cultural capital are matched by advantages in economic capital. Degree-qualified educators are by far the most highly-paid of all educator groups (Figure 4.6), including when hours of work are taken into consideration (Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12). Degree-qualified educators are most likely to live in homes without dependent children (Figure 4.10), and also most likely to contribute a larger share of their household budget than educators in other qualification groups (Figure 4.15). Overall, they are the most powerful educators economic and cultural capital lead to advantages in social capital, for example in being the most likely of all educators to live in higher-SES communities (Figure 4.18).

While they may have many advantages in relation to their colleagues in the ECEC workforce, degree-qualified educators remain limited in their social advantages relative

to similarly-qualified workers in the wider Australian community. The gap in income (objectified economic capital) between educators and similarly-qualified workers in the whole Australian workforce is largest for the degree-qualified group (Figure 4.6). The gap in school achievement (an effect of cultural capital) is also widest between all young women who go on to pursue degrees, and those pursuing degrees in the ECEC field (Figure 6.5). There is also a wide gap between the proportion of degree-qualified educators living in high-SES communities, and all degree-qualified Australians although slightly narrower than for the diploma-qualified group (Figure 4.18). Furthermore, the degree-qualified group of educators has the highest proportion born outside Australia (Figure 4.4), including many recent arrivals. While offering benefits in intercultural capital, this suggests that these educators' social capital and networks may be limited within Australian society, as they undergo the transition to a new country.

By simultaneously occupying a position of advantage (relative to their colleagues) and disadvantage (relative to similarly-qualified Australians), degree-qualified educators may be seen as a transitional social group. Based on the LSAY case study data, ECEC degree courses appear to take in a comparatively large share of all low-achieving students who go on to obtain degrees (Figure 6.6), suggesting that ECEC degrees provide a pathway to mobility (at least, in the acquisition of a qualification) for young people who start from a low academic base. This is supported by findings that students in ECEC degree courses tend to start studying later than their peers (Figure 6.1), often having studied something else prior to ECEC (Table 6.4). Many appear to have articulated into degree courses from prior VET qualifications in the ECEC field—a pathway that is well-accepted in Australian tertiary education (Keating, 2006), and supported by government incentives for ECEC course providers (CRES, 2011).

While this demonstrates the value of ECEC degrees as a pathway to social mobility, ECEC degree graduates are less likely to convert the value of their qualification into economic and social capital, compared to graduates in other fields. This echoes Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) observation, that degrees in low-status occupational fields may offer opportunities for disadvantaged students to gain objectified cultural capital, but do not necessarily deliver gains in capital of other kinds. Despite their position of relative social advantage, degree-qualified educators are least likely to state that their job is important to them because of the public recognition it receives (Figure 5.8). This suggests that this group may be sensitive to their overall social position being below what may be expected for the level of cultural capital suggested by their academic success.

The NWC data show that there are also differences in how degree-qualified educators fare across different types of ECEC services, in their income (Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12), as well as in other indicators. This suggests that the advantages enjoyed by degree-qualified educators arise not only from characteristics intrinsic to educators, but from structural and historical differences between the preschool services in which they are most likely to work, and the other types of ECEC services in which they are now becoming more common (Figure 5.1). These structural factors may impede the ability for the benefits of degree-level qualifications to be shared across all types of ECEC services, and highly-qualified educators may continue to be attracted away from other types of ECEC services by more appealing pay and conditions in preschools.

This is related to another important characteristic of the degree-qualified educator group—their relatively high levels of mobility. Although the degree-qualified group includes many educators with many years of experience in the sector (Figure 5.17), it also has the highest proportion of high-mobility educators (excluding preschools) (Figure 5.18), and smallest proportion of educators expecting to be with the same employer in a year's time (Figure 5.19). In long day care, degree-qualified educators are the most likely to want to leave the sector entirely (Figure 5.15). The "primary school drain" on the supply of degree-qualified educators remains a particular challenge for the ECEC sector (Irvine et al., 2016, p. 12; see also Productivity Commission, 2014). Their cultural and social capital makes it possible for them to pursue better-remunerated roles working with slightly older children, in the higher-status institution of schooling.

The high mobility of the degree-qualified educator group may also relate to their initial career aspirations. A substantial proportion of the young people pursuing ECEC degrees in LSAY had aspirations in adolescence to enter primary school teaching (Table 6.7). Degree-qualified educators are most likely to have entered the sector because of a desire to work with children (Figure 5.13), reflecting that highly-skilled educators often choose ECEC work because of "intrinsic" rewards (Boyd, 2012, p. 206); but the realities of ECEC work often do not match graduates' expectations (Irvine et al., 2016). Structural factors may also play a role, with degree-qualified educators in preschools being by far the most likely to intend to leave their current workplace because of the cessation of a temporary contract (Figure 5.20). The short-term renewals of National Partnership funding for Australian preschool programs (see Chapter 1) make it difficult for ECEC services to employ degree-qualified educators on an ongoing basis (Mikakos, 2017).

All of these factors point to the need for support for the degree-qualified group, in orienting their aspirations towards rewarding, ongoing careers in the ECEC sector. The

data reviewed in this section suggest that many degree-qualified educators have their gaze oriented upwards, and that this group includes many educators who have strived to exceed the educational trajectories anticipated by their backgrounds. These educators may benefit from further opportunities to grow and thrive in leadership roles, as recommended above, so that they can feel recognised for their achievements without leaving the ECEC sector. At the same time, this group may benefit from support balancing the responsibilities of leadership with sustaining the emotional capital needed for ECEC practice. The high stress levels of degree-qualified educators shown in the data (Figure 5.5) suggest that this balance has not yet been effectively achieved.

Leadership need not only entail positional authority, but may also involve contributions to the growing knowledge base for ECEC practice. The data suggest that degree-qualified educators are the least likely to engage in further study (Figure 4.16 and Figure 5.21). This constitutes a lost opportunity for the development of the evidence base in the ECEC field, and suggests that opportunities for practitioner post-graduate research may be needed to stimulate demand. Funded periods of leave for professional, project-based study have proven to be highly attractive to motivated, experienced members of the school teaching profession (Parliament of Victoria Educators' confidence in taking the next step to post-graduate study, as those pursuing ECEC degrees may have lower academic self-efficacy than their other university-bound peers (Figure 6.7).

Another method for adjusting educators' aspirations may be to help the degree-qualified group recognise what they bring to the ECEC sector, as a distinctive group within a diverse workforce. This may require educators to reorient their gaze, from their degree-qualified colleagues in other parts of the education system, to their diversely-qualified colleagues in ECEC, and to recognise the benefits of sharing their practices with educators, children and families from less advantaged backgrounds. The prevalence of voluntarism, both in the data (Figure 4.8 and Figure 6.4) and in the history of ECEC in Australia (see Chapter 1), augurs well for a "giving" orientation to professionalism, which values collectivism and social justice alongside social mobility. Structurally, this also requires uncoupling of the association between educators' wages and families' ability to pay, so that degree-qualified educators can make a greater contribution to improving outcomes for children and families in disadvantaged communities (see Figure 4.19).

This does not imply a need for condescension on the part of the degree-qualified group towards families or colleagues with less advantaged backgrounds.⁶⁶ Rather, it calls for

⁶⁶ See Berry (1995) for a critique of this stance in another diversely-qualified profession.
respect for diversity, and acknowledgement that degree-qualified educators may have much to learn from colleagues, families and children with diverse social backgrounds, while also sharing the valuable social and cultural capital that they possess. This may require degree-qualified educators to review how the industrial strategies that have improved their social position in the past may have worked to exclude their colleagues, and pursue strategies based on a more unified ECEC professional identity—as well as to recognise that a diverse professional identity may have benefits for all educators' ability to offer inclusive, responsive environments to families and children.

Diploma-qualified educators: capitalising on commitment

The group of diploma-qualified educators is almost twice as large as the degree-qualified group, and the second-largest of the four qualification groups examined in this study (Table 5.1). Consistent with the study's hypothesis, the diploma-qualified group of educators has lower levels of academic success than the degree-qualified group, including school completion (Figure 4.17) and scholastic achievement (Figure 6.5). This group was nevertheless shown to have some particular strengths, in relation to their level of engagement with the ECEC sector. Notably, diploma-qualified educators are the group with the longest experience in the ECEC sector (excluding preschool services), including many educators with lengthy experience in school age care (Figure 5.17)—a rarity in a type of ECEC service with high staff turnover overall.

This commitment to the ECEC sector can also be seen in the LSAY case study data for young people pursuing ECEC diplomas. Of all the LSAY participants pursuing ECEC work or study, they are by far the most likely to have aspired to an ECEC career (Table 6.7), and least likely to have studied something else prior to commencing their ECEC qualification (Table 6.4). Young people pursuing ECEC diplomas are also the most likely to have worked in ECEC either before or during their course of study (Table 6.4), suggesting that the workplace-embedded nature of VET courses is well-suited to the preferred post-school pathways of this group.

Diploma-qualified educators occupy a distinctive position in the structure of the ECEC workforce. They are most likely to work full-time (Figure 4.7), to occupy leadership roles (Table 4.3), and to be found in types of ECEC services formerly known as child care (Figure 5.1). This means that they are likely to have responsibility for leading other educators in the certificate-qualified and unqualified groups, who are also most likely to be found in these service types. Professional growth for diploma-qualified educators is therefore of particular importance for whole-of-workforce development, as it is likely to have flow-on effects in the practice and professional growth of the educators they lead.

This suggests a tension in how ECEC leadership is conceptualised in Australia. The newly-created role of educational leader (National Regulations 2011), who is responsible for leading the program and practice in an ECEC service, distinguishes between leadership of practice, and the administrative leadership commonly associated with management roles in long day care (Irvine et al., 2016). With their lower levels of academic success, the diploma-qualified group appears less well-equipped than degreequalified educators to assume leadership of this kind. Yet the diploma-qualified group offers other sources of strength that may be valuable for leadership, which differ from the academic knowledge of the degree-qualified educator group. Their experience in leadership, as shown in the data, suggests that they have expertise that may be lacking among newer, more highly-gualified educators who are called upon to lead. Their longevity in the ECEC sector also suggests that they may demonstrate a strong professional connection to ECEC work, and well-established partnerships with families and other professionals. Furthermore, there may be greater similarities between diploma-qualified leaders' backgrounds and those of the educators they lead, which may equip them well to understand the professional growth trajectories of their colleagues.

The priority for professional growth of diploma-qualified educators may therefore be to harness strengths, while building the skills and dispositions required to lead a renewed emphasis on children's learning and development. The question of whether a diploma qualification is a sufficient mechanism for building such skills is a major challenge facing the ECEC sector in Australia. The positioning of diplomas as stepping-stones to degrees side-steps the issue of the quality of the diploma itself, and whether VET has the potential to cultivate high-quality practice and capacity for critical reflection. It also overlooks the importance of VET as a meaningful learning pathway for young people without strong academic backgrounds—a role to which ECEC diplomas make a particularly important contribution, especially for young women (Figure 6.6). As well as forcing educators to navigate the "flaky borderlands" between university and VET—which may be challenging in itself (Bathmaker, 2015, p. 72)—the positioning of diplomas as a stepping-stone risks reinforcing the impression that failure to achieve a degree signals "lack of either effort or talent, or both" (Osgood, 2005, p. 291).

The data in this study suggest that this tension may be felt by diploma-qualified educators within the ECEC sector. Especially in long day care, they are most likely to want to leave the sector if they could (Figure 5.15), and least likely to recommend a career in the sector to others (Figure 5.16); a stark contrast to their aspirations to enter the sector in the first place (Table 6.7). This concerning association between those who most wanted to enter the sector being the ones who most want to leave also applies to the degree-qualified

group, and has been noted in other recent Australian research (Irvine et al., 2016). As noted above, it suggests that the current realities of ECEC work are misaligned with the expectations of those most eager to enter it, and that their passion for, and commitment to, work with young children are inadequately recognised and rewarded.

If the experience and commitment of the diploma-qualified group can be harnessed, and if they can be actively supported to develop skills as leaders and facilitators of children's and educators' learning and development, then they may be a powerful resource for achieving the kind of change to which the National Quality Agenda aspires. However, if diploma-qualified educators are marginalised by reforms that prioritise the institutionalised cultural capital of a degree, this may compound the perception that their work is under-valued, and intensify their desire to leave the sector. Any such erosion of the diploma-qualified tier of educators would not only constitute the loss of a substantial resource within the ECEC workforce, in their depth of experience and commitment. It would also constitute the erosion of an important pathway into meaningful work and professional growth for young women who have not realised their full educational potential at school; who may have unique capabilities in supporting the learning and development of others from similar backgrounds, among children and educators alike.

Certificate-qualified educators: sustaining momentum

Certificate-qualified educators are most notable for being the largest group within the Australian ECEC workforce (Table 5.1). Through weight of numbers alone, they therefore have tremendous potential to influence outcomes for the children in their services. The prevalence of certificate-qualified educators is most pronounced in family day care services (Figure 5.1), in which they are likely to be the only educator in direct contact with children and families most of the time. This makes it especially important to consider the unique professional learning needs of this diverse qualification group.

In indicators related to learning for this group, an interesting contrast emerges. In the LSAY data, young women pursuing ECEC qualifications at certificate level had the lowest levels of prior enjoyment of school, perception of its value, and relationships with teachers (Figure 6.7). Relatedly, more than half the young women pursuing ECEC qualifications at certificate level came from the lowest two quintiles of scholastic achievement (Figure 6.5). The certificate-qualified group also has the lowest proportion of school completers in the youngest age bracket (Figure 4.17), confirming that this group includes many young people with low levels of engagement in formal education. Another challenge for this group appears in English proficiency among educators who speak

another language, with the certificate-qualified group having the lowest proportion of educators speaking English "very well" (Figure 4.5).

Yet in all age groups, the proportion of certificate-qualified educators pursuing further study far exceeds the proportion for similarly-qualified Australian workers overall, and the certificate-qualified group has the highest proportion of educators studying in the oldest (55+) age group (Figure 4.16). This suggests that work in the ECEC sector provides an opportunity or stimulus for second-chance education that these educators may not have accessed, had they pursued careers in other fields. The remarkable growth in the size of the certificate-qualified group from 2010 to 2013 is further evidence of the impact that the ECEC reforms have had (Table 5.1), in engaging workers with limited educational engagement in pathways towards achieving their first qualification.

The data in this study raise questions about whether the growth in qualifications for this group has led to commensurate increases in educators' economic and social capital. Several indicators suggest a particularly high level of social vulnerability among the certificate-qualified educator group. They are the qualification group most likely to be experiencing apparent under-employment, especially for the youngest age bracket (Figure 4.8). Like the unqualified group of educators, they are more likely than their more highly-qualified colleagues to earn low incomes (Figure 4.6), have economic dependents (Figure 4.10), and rely on cross-subsidisation of living costs from other members of their households (Figure 4.15). In family day care services, in which certificate-qualified educators constitute a large majority, over three-quarters work above normal full-time hours (Figure 5.10), suggesting that their low hourly wages necessitate heavy workloads. Certificate-qualified educators in family day care are also by far the most likely of this group to indicate that they have no time to pursue a higher qualification (Table 5.4).

Broadly, these findings suggest that workforce development strategies for certificatequalified educators may be best targeted at two main groups. Certificate-qualified educators in long day care (the largest group) and school age care tend to be young (Figure 5.2) and relatively new to the sector (Figure 5.17). As the data suggest that many certificate-qualified educators continue their learning journey to diploma level (Figure 5.21), support for these pathways is important to sustain the momentum that the push to attain minimum certificate-level qualifications has set in motion. Certificate-qualified educators in family day care and preschool tend to be older, with many certificatequalified family day care educators being experienced in the ECEC sector (data unavailable for preschool). These educators may benefit from non-credentialed professional learning that consolidates and deepens their knowledge and experience, including opportunities for collaborative collegial reflection discussed later in this chapter.

Both groups require support to address the structural issues that may inhibit their professional engagement and growth. The data suggest that the effort involved in achieving a certificate-level qualification yields little reward, beyond eligibility to continue working in the ECEC sector. Low wages and underemployment are poor motivations for certificate-qualified educators to build on the skills gained through their initial qualification, and pursue meaningful careers and high-quality practice. In family day care, long hours for certificate-qualified educators are a particular inhibitor to engagement in further learning, likely to be driven by the low wages for this group.

For this group of educators, the most important outcome of the National Quality Agenda may therefore not lie in gains in professional status, but in simply gaining sufficient improvement in their working conditions to make professionalism a possibility. Peeters and colleagues' (2016) major European study recognises that assistant educators—a role typically occupied in Australia by the certificate-qualified group—are often "invisible" in policy, and have far fewer opportunities for professional learning than their more highly-qualified colleagues (p. 5). Time to plan, reflect and engage in collaborative professional learning may be highly valuable to this group, not only in building their practice, but orienting their aspirations towards rewarding professional careers.

Unqualified educators: embracing diversity

Of the four qualification groups examined in this study, unqualified educators are the most heterogeneous in terms of some key demographic attributes. Compared to other qualification groups, the unqualified educator group has relatively high proportions of educators who are male (Table 4.2), Indigenous (Figure 4.3), or who come from Australia's most vulnerable migrant populations (Chapter 4). This suggests that the unqualified pathway into ECEC is especially valuable for attracting minority groups, and increasing the overall demographic diversity in the ECEC workforce.

Unqualified educators are also by far the youngest qualification group (Figure 4.1 and Figure 5.2). This flows through to other distinctive properties of this group, notably their high level of engagement in further study (Figure 4.16). While many of these educators are studying towards qualifications in the ECEC field (Figure 5.21), the LSAY data suggest that young people may also work in ECEC while studying in another field (Table 6.5). The number of cases in LSAY was too small to explore this group in greater detail,

but these educators may be a valuable subject of future research, to investigate what young people can offer who engage in ECEC temporarily on their way to another career.

The youth of the unqualified group is also reflected in the high proportion of educators who appear to be largely economically dependent on other members of their households (Figure 4.15). This may contribute to the relatively high levels of satisfaction with pay and conditions among this group (Figure 5.9), despite their actual individual income being the lowest (Figure 4.6)—matching Irvine and colleagues' (2016) observation that the educators most likely to be satisfied with their remuneration are those who receive financial support from others. Household income data suggests that the proportion of educators in the unqualified group who come from high-income households is in fact similar to the proportion of educators with degrees (Figure 4.13).

At the same time, the unqualified educator group also contains the largest proportion of single parents (Figure 4.10), and educators who have more children (

Figure 4.12), at younger ages (Figure 4.11). This signals that the unqualified educator group is not only composed of young dependents, but also includes many educators who have economic responsibilities that may stretch their low incomes to the limit. It calls to mind another possible explanation for wage satisfaction, in that low-paid workers under financial pressure may accept and internalise responsibility for their economic circumstances, as a way to re-claim some sense of control (Masterman-Smith & Pocock, 2008).

An asset of the unqualified group of educators is their high levels of job satisfaction (slightly higher than for other qualification groups) (Figure 5.4), and substantially lower levels of stress (Figure 5.5). There are several possible explanations for this. The first relates to service context, in that unqualified educators are strongly represented in school age care services (Figure 5.1), and educators in school age care appear to be the least-stressed group overall. The second relates to the social and economic circumstances of educators, as described above, with engagement in further study and economic subsidisation from other household members contributing to lower job-related stress. A third relates to the roles these educators may play in ECEC services, which—while not examined in the data for this study—may involve less burdensome programming and leadership roles. Further research into the reasons for lower stress among this group may be instructive in understanding workplace stress across the ECEC sector.

A final possible reason for the apparent contentment of this group may relate to their aspirations. The LSAY case study data (excluding unqualified educators studying in another field) show that young people who work as unqualified educators have the lowest

levels of academic achievement (Figure 6.5) and engagement at school (Figure 6.7), which is likely to affect their expectations for their future career. Some indicators of home and family background (parental occupational status, and home educational resources) are also lowest for the unqualified group (Table 6.6 and Figure 6.3). The ABS Census data show the lowest levels of school completion for the unqualified educator group, for all age groups except the youngest (who are most likely to be temporary entrants to the ECEC sector on the way to other careers) (Figure 4.17). Educators with such backgrounds may orient their aspirations away from highly-remunerated professional careers, and may settle for lower-status work that is perceived as more attainable.

The apparently weaker aspirations of unqualified educators are also reflected in their attitude towards their ECEC careers. The unqualified group are by far the least likely to have entered the ECEC sector because of a longstanding desire to work with children (Figure 5.13), and the most likely to have drifted into the sector as the only available job (Figure 5.14). This echoes other Australian findings that many educators drift into ECEC work unintentionally, and stay "because they have no choice to leave" (Irvine et al., 2016, p. 20), as they have limited skills and resources to pursue other options. A similar weakening of aspirations may also be seen in educators' efforts to further their professional careers, and the marked difference in engagement in further study between unqualified educators who have, and have not, completed school (Table 4.5). This suggests that educational marginalisation may have lasting effects on educators' career aspirations, as well as their engagement in professional learning.

The unqualified group (many of whom have by now moved into the certificate-qualified group) therefore presents perhaps the greatest challenge in developing the ECEC workforce. Educators from minority or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds may require substantial support to build their aspirations towards high-quality practice, and recognise themselves as ECEC professionals. On the other hand, this same diversity may be leveraged as an asset, both in the representation among this group of gender and cultural minorities (Peeters et al., 2016), and in the representation of those from backgrounds of socio-economic and educational disadvantage. A range of professional learning strategies are likely to be necessary to assist educators with potential to orient their goals towards quality practice; and must not be limited to formal study, which may further disadvantage educators whose *habitus* is least aligned with its demands.

Chapter 8 — Habitus and critical reflection

The previous chapter focused on social advantage and professional growth of educators at group level; including the four qualification groups examined throughout this study, as well as trends across all qualification groups that affect the ECEC workforce as a whole. However, while membership of a class or group may go some way towards predicting *habitus*, each individual's *habitus* is still uniquely their own. This chapter turns to possibilities for professional growth at the level of the individual, and how educators may use this study to guide their critical reflection and personal professional growth.

Changing habitus

The first task in this discussion is to return to the study's theoretical framework, and establish a model for how change in practice through individual action might occur. At first glance, Bourdieu's theory of practice offers little help. A major criticism of Bourdieu's theory is that it "tends towards pessimism" by describing structural constraints on individual action, without necessarily suggesting how to escape them (James, 2015, p. 108). Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* appears to leave little space for individuals to act outside their socially ascribed (and subjectively internalised) positions, as both their alternatives for action, and ability to consider these alternatives, are proscribed (Bathmaker, 2015). Bourdieu himself (1986) identifies this constraint as part of his theory's power, that it confounds the naïve belief that "every soldier has a marshal's baton in his knapsack" and that "at each moment anyone can become anything" (p. 241).

For this reason, Verdès-Leroux (2001) goes so far as to conclude that Bourdieu's sociology is "of no use" to those who are dominated or excluded (p. 11). *Habitus* "keeps people in their places, no matter how desperate these places...by giving the impression that the world 'couldn't be otherwise', and that inequalities are a matter of course" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 58). Even when Bourdieu (1999) offers a sympathetic account of the struggles of individuals in positions of social disadvantage, he offers little help in suggesting how these struggles might be mitigated (Skeggs, 2004a). This potential deadend can be seen in the theoretical logic guiding this study: if quality ECEC practices are associated with the dominant class, and if many educators do not possess the kinds of capital associated with this class, how can they hope to achieve this practice?

The portrait of educators' social advantage provided in this study highlights a major challenge of the National Quality Agenda, which is seldom acknowledged in policy discourse: how can the most vulnerable educators respond to the demands of quality practice, given the disadvantages they may face? One answer is provided in the rate of

participation in formal study among educators, which reflects a tremendous effort by educators—driven by policy—to step up to the challenge. Yet this effort may not achieve the desired effect, unless the more complex interaction between capital, *habitus* and practice is addressed. Some effects of capital and *habitus* on practice may be beyond what the acquisition of a qualification can address, calling for other strategies to be available to educators to engage with these complexities.

The intricacies of Bourdieu's theories do not lead directly to "recipes for action" (James, 2015, p. 108), either at the group or individual level. At the same time, Bourdieu recognises that "everything is negotiable" (O'Connor, 2011, p. 117), and—returning to his metaphor of the sports field—the outcome of games played on any given *field* is never assured. As the influence of Bourdieu's ideas has increasingly extended into research oriented towards social action, various researchers have identified ways in which the apparent determinism of the *habitus* might be overcome.

Reflection

For many readers of Bourdieu, a space for optimism is created in the possibility that consciousness of the very constraints that Bourdieu's theory reveals can help to overcome them. Nicolini (2012) claims that Bourdieu "fails to spot" the potential for "changes in practices derived from conscious monitoring", as well as the possibilities for changes arising from modification of the language and accountability frameworks through which practices are defined (p. 86). Adkins (2004) agrees that "critical reflexivity" is the key to moving beyond the "theoretical dead end" of *habitus*, but finds the kernel of this optimism in Bourdieu's own writing, in "what Bourdieu sometimes refers to as an 'awakening of consciousness" (Adkins, 2004, p. 194).

Yet awakening of consciousness requires effort to transform into change. After all, Bourdieu sees social agents not only victims as of the *symbolic violence* that prevents them from seeing alternatives to the *status quo*, but also complicit in its perpetration (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu (2000) therefore asserts that "it is quite illusory to think that symbolic violence can be overcome solely with the weapons of consciousness and will" (p. 180). Instead, changes to *habitus* that resist symbolic violence require "a thoroughgoing process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises…like an athlete's training", through which practice can be transformed (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 172). This puts into perspective the sheer effort and discipline involved in lifting *habitus* and practice that originates from a socially disadvantaged base.

Bottero (2010) lightens this daunting task by recognising the role of relationships with others in awakening ideas beyond one's own *habitus*, and disrupting the links between knowledge, social position and practice. For Bottero (2010), interpersonal relationships and interactions determine the extent to which actors are constrained by their *habitus*, or afforded opportunities for independent action. Relationships may give rise to the disruptive potential of "surprise, creativity, and irony"; ingredients of change that Nicolini (2012) finds lacking in "Bourdieu's maybe too serious and intellectual world" (p. 69).

Contemporary ECEC practice offers rich possibilities for this collaborative awakening of consciousness to occur. Critical reflection, including awareness of the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin practice, is a hallmark of professionalism in the contemporary ECEC *field* (see DEEWR, 2009). Similarly, the renewed emphasis on collaborative practice—both with colleagues, and with families and other professionals—creates opportunities for this reflection to be stimulated by ideas and possibilities from a wide range of social groups. Reflecting on the relationship between capital and *habitus*, and between *habitus* and practice, may form a valuable part of such reflection.

The National Quality Agenda itself provides a powerful stimulus for critical reflection. While Adkins (2004) argues that there is always sufficient friction between the *habitus* of actors and the *doxa* of the field to create space for change to be possible, the tremendous upheaval caused by the current ECEC reforms has heightened this friction intensely. The disruption created by an ambitious reform program to lift quality and consistency across the entire Australian ECEC sector mean that established practices and positions are being constantly challenged, stretched and reconfigured. This plasticity creates unprecedented opportunities for both *doxa* and *habitus* to be questioned, and for change to occur the individual and system level.

Being stretched and reconfigured is not a comfortable process. For individual educators, the changes being wrought by the National Quality Agenda may be seen as creating a painful rift between *habitus* and *field*, as old identities and ways of practice are colliding with new expectations and orthodoxy. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1989) metaphor of *habitus* and *field* being like a "fish in water" (p. 43), educators may currently feel like fish *out of* water, as they struggle to conform to new expectations. Nolan and Molla (2016) describe such struggles as *dilemmas*, or expressions of a "lack of synchronicity between subjective expectations and objective conditions of the field of practice" (p. 8).

Bourdieu (2000) uses the term *hysteresis* for explaining how individuals may experience a disconnection between their *habitus* and a given *field*. A state of hysteresis does not arise simply through the everyday adjustments that occur between *habitus* and *field*, but in "critical moments when [the habitus] misfires or is out of phase" (p. 162). These moments are likely to occur when a field undergoes a major shift to its *doxa* or rules, which means that the practices to which an individual is accustomed are suddenly mismatched to their context (McDonough & Polzer, 2012). Disastrously, the efforts that an individual makes to sustain their practice in the face of new challenges may lead them further from the *doxa*, and help to "plunge them deeper into failure" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 161). The only cure for *hysteresis* is adaptation—or else withdrawal from the field.

The adaptations required to cure the *hysteresis* of Australia's early childhood workforce may occur in two directions. Firstly, as is currently implied in the policy discourse, educators must be "improved" (VDEECD, 2009a, p. 1), and develop the stores of capital (social, cultural, economic and symbolic) demanded by professionalisation⁶⁷. Secondly, and less obviously within the current policy discourse, the *doxa* itself may adapt, as it is exchanged, reflected upon, and re-interpreted between the multiple players on the field. This exchange re-affirms that educators are not "dupes" of *doxa* or *habitus*, but individuals with agency to chart their own course (Simpson, 2010, p. 7).

This theorisation suggests that quality and diversity of ECEC practice (and of educators) may co-exist successfully. Schatzki (2017) illustrates this point:

Consider the practices of doctors...there are different ways of being a doctor, for instance, a more science-oriented way of being in which the doctor maintains a distance from the patient and a more humanistic-oriented way that puts greater emphasis on caring and talking...a [doctor's] way of being encompasses acting, knowledge, and being (identity, who someone is). (Schatzki, 2017, p. 36).

He adds that "no definable limits exist as to how many ways of carrying on given practices and being a particular professional in them can be admitted by the practices" (p. 36). While ECEC practice may be guided by a new unitary understanding of quality, there are as many ways of embodying this practice as there are individuals in the ECEC workforce.

This idea is visible within some current ECEC research, which acknowledges the heterogeneity of roles and professional identities within the ECEC profession (for example, Dalli, 2008; Duhn, 2011; Ollhoff & Ollhoff, 1996; Simpson, 2010; Skattebol, Adamson & Woodrow, 2016). Other ECEC researchers have recognised educators' individual agency in shaping practice, in terms of resistance against the structural forces that seek to define and constrain it (Andrew, 2015b; Osgood, 2006a; Moss, 2006; Dalli

⁶⁷ See Schinkel and Noordegraaf (2011) for a discussion of professionalisation in terms of symbolic capital, which counters Bourdieu's (1979) own suspicion of the term "profession".

2008; Moyles, 2001). However, such studies are typically silent on how this adaptation might respond to the backgrounds and identities of educators themselves, to make the relationship between *who* and *how* more visible and constructive.

Transformation

The value of this study for individual educators lies in its use of the concept of *habitus* to challenge the taken-for-granted, and pose new questions about the relationship between self, systems, and practice. Questioning "taken-for-granted practices and assumptions" (DEEWR 2010b, p. 75) is itself an aspect of contemporary ECEC practice, in the critical reflection in which all educators are expected to engage (DEEWR, 2009). Effective critical reflection can bring about durable change in practice, as it enables educators to "not only change the way they act, but transform their *habitus* that functions as a reference point for future action" (Nolan & Molla, 2017a, p. 6). Becoming critically aware of taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions—including their "source, nature and consequences"—is therefore part of the process of *transformation* (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18); a deep and enduring form of professional learning in which fundamental beliefs, as well as practices, are challenged and changed.

Transformation is essential if the principles of the EYLF—as well as the practices—are to become embedded in ECEC practice in Australia. The EYLF lays out a challenge to educators to critically examine not only what they do, but how they think about their practice, and the children and families with whom they work. The five principles in the EYLF serve as touch-points against which educators' assumptions can be tested, to determine whether they are likely to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children; or whether blind-spots and unacknowledged prejudices may exist, which may limit their ability to do so. Through critical reflection against the principles, educators can identify and mitigate unintentional bias in their practice, to ensure that ECEC services provide the most inclusive possible opportunities for children's learning and development. This study aims to support educators in this process, by adding awareness of *habitus*—and the forms of capital from which it is constituted—to their suite of tools for critical reflection.

Critical reflection on *habitus* is not only about educators changing themselves. Just as the *doxa* of the *field*, and the structures that support it, may bring about changes in educators' *habitus*, critical reflection may also be a powerful way in which educators may challenge and re-invent the *doxa* in return. Critical reflection can move educators beyond the misrecognition of adverse circumstances as just "the way things are", making them more likely to take action to improve their position (Nolan & Molla, 2017a, p. 5). In this way, critical reflection becomes one of "the weapons of consciousness and will"

(Bourdieu, 2000, p. 180) that may be used for overcoming the *symbolic violence* through which social inequalities are sustained (see Chapter 2); with Bourdieu's caveat that such weapons are only effective with training and repeated practice. By providing new avenues for critical reflection to challenge existing assumptions and beliefs, this study aims to help educators see themselves as both *transforming* (capable of changing themselves) and *transformative* (capable of changing the system in which they work).

Being, belonging, becoming: recognising the self in practice

Collaborative critical reflection may occur wherever communities of practice (see Lave & Wenger, 1991) may be found in the ECEC sector, whether these involve teams within ECEC services, networks across multiple services, or other professional communities. These communities of practice may often involve educators from across the qualifications spectrum, especially if efforts are made to ensure all educators receive opportunities for professional learning. The "dilemmas" that educators face within a community of practice may therefore take many different forms, arising from differences not only in their qualifications and roles, but broader dimensions of their *habitus*. This section uses the themes of being, belonging and becoming to highlight some dilemmas that may emerge for educators, related to their levels of social advantage, and how they and their colleagues might use these dilemmas as openings for professional growth.

Being

The indicators in this study related to educators' *being* (Chapter 4) may assist educators to critically reflect on their identity, in relation to others in the ECEC workforce, and in relation to Australian society as a whole. This may involve recognising differences between themselves and others, in the effects of the different levels of cultural, economic and social capital that they command, and becoming more aware of positions of relative advantage and disadvantage. It may also involve identifying commonalities with other educators whose capital and *habitus* may be similar, and strengthening the cohesion of the ECEC workforce as a unified professional group.

Reflection on their identity may help educators to recognise what they can contribute to their service, beyond the level of skill that their qualification may suggest. Educators are often "distrustful of and underestimate the value of their insights", despite drawing on their own experience frequently in their practice (Cameron & Boddy, 2006, p. 58). Existing research points to various ways in which the diversity within the ECEC workforce may itself be used as a resource for responding to diversity among children and families (Cherrington & Shuker, 2012). Educators from culturally and linguistically diverse groups

may help to challenge stereotypes, provide role models and support intercultural understanding (Howard, 2010; Sims et al., 2017), while the presence of male educators has also been shown to have benefits for ECEC services (Sullivan et al., 2016).

Importantly, reflecting on social advantage may also help all educators become better attuned to the diverse learning needs of children and families. Reflection is the tool through which educators interrogate and evaluate their curriculum and pedagogical decisions, and adapt them to accommodate children and families from diverse backgrounds (see DEEWR, 2010b). While educators may be responsive to visible differences associated with cultural and linguistic diversity, they are far less inclined to engage constructively with differences associated with poverty (Simpson et al., 2017); even in ECEC services in relatively disadvantaged communities (Molla & Nolan, 2018). Reflecting on their own learning experiences, and those of their colleagues, can help educators to engage explicitly with the effects of disadvantage, reflecting the EYLF principle of high aspirations and equity (DEEWR, 2009). This awareness may be especially important to develop among educational leaders, whose own social position and learning experiences may differ vastly from their colleagues.

This does not only involve reflecting on learning opportunities that occur in formal educational environments, but also in the home. Chapter 6 of this study showed that educators are less likely to have grown up in middle-class home environments (such as homes with high levels of parental education, or cultural possessions) than the general population. Similarly, many educators—especially at lower qualification levels—have not attained middle-class status in adulthood. Recognising this differential position may help educators to reflect on the support for learning that has occurred in their own households, and how this might impact on their practice; as well as how similar home environments might affect children's opportunities for learning. Instead of rejecting their experience as incompatible with middle-class ideals of childhood—as working-class educators have been found to do in UK research (Osgood, 2012; Colley, 2006)—this perspective may help educators recognise the learning that they have gained from all aspects of their identity, and embrace this as the starting point for further professional growth.

Belonging

The need for educators to feel a sense of belonging in ECEC services has received scant attention in previous research. Tillett and Wong's (2018) recent qualitative study is rare in that the participating educators addressed this issue directly, and noted that the absence of a sense of belonging can impact adversely on educators' practice. Differences between educators' qualifications were identified, alongside age differences,

as one of the ways fault-lines along which a sense of belonging might fracture. Educators agreed that opportunities for supportive interaction with colleagues are important for building the social capital through which a sense of belonging can be sustained.

A sense of belonging may be especially important for facilitating transformation through critical reflection. Changing *habitus* through critical reflection can be uncomfortable, especially if it reveals conflict between educators' *habitus* and the expectations of the *field* (see Chapter 2). If critical reflection generates "feelings of insecurity and discomfort", educators may pursue "avoidance" strategies rather than confronting issues constructively (Knaus, 2017, p. 11); resulting in critical reflection occurring at superficial levels, rather than the deep levels that enable "transformative learning" (p. 7). Critical reflection is therefore best undertaken collaboratively, in a "safe" space in which educators can "freely and reflectively express and confront their *dilemmas*" (Nolan & Molla, 2017b, p. 15, original emphasis). These dilemmas form a "pedagogy of discomfort" (Boler, 1999; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012, as cited in Nolan & Molla, 2017a, p. 15), as educators move from certainty to uncertainty, and then to a new state of equilibrium in which both *habitus* and practice have evolved.

The need for emotional safety in the critical reflection process reinforces the importance of educators' sense of *belonging* or wellbeing in their professional environment. The data in this study suggest several ways in which this sense of belonging may be compromised, mostly related to the level of congruence (or incongruence) between where educators would like to be, and where they are. Safe environments for critical reflection must enable educators to be honest about their motivations and beliefs about ECEC work, and to feel that their aspirations and values are respected.

This may include acknowledging the pathways that brought educators into ECEC, and what they like or dislike about their work—including acknowledging educators who may not have had a strong desire to work with children—and encouraging them to engage critically with the effects this may have on their professionalism and practice. Some educators may feel frustrated if their aspirations were oriented to higher-status careers, while others may "choose not to take 'professional' as an identity" at all (Moss, 2006, p. 38)—but all educators must still have the opportunity to critically reflect on, and develop, their practice. As one educator in Tillett and Wong's (2018) study opined, a sense of belonging can only be fostered if you: "Have opportunities to discuss why you feel you don't belong. What bothers you. What upsets you. What insecurities you may have. And identify what you need to do to work towards changing that" (p. 11).

If a safe space is created in which they can be voiced, then these same incongruities may also provide the most valuable opportunities for learning. Nolan and Molla (2017a) note that educators' "sense of belongingness" is especially vulnerable at points of transition, such as starting work in a new environment, or moving from being an educator to a leadership role (p. 11). As noted above, the National Quality Agenda itself constitutes a period of transition for the ECEC sector, in which many educators are experiencing challenges to their practices and professional identity. Through collaborative reflection, educators can support each other to negotiate these dilemmas, and enhance the sense of belonging that results from better alignment between *habitus* and *field*. The rich collegial relationships that already appear to be present throughout ECEC services are a valuable resource to activate for this purpose.

A sense of belonging in the ECEC *field* may also be cultivated by recognising what educators have in common, and the aspects of ECEC practice that remain stable in the face of change. Critical reflection does not always lead to upheaval, but may involve acknowledgement and re-affirmation of the "non-negotiables" that characterise ECEC practice, such as "confidence, resilience, passion, kindness, patience, dedication, being caring, having empathy, commitment, and a positive attitude" (Molla & Nolan, 2018, p. 5). Osgood (2006b) agrees that educators share "a common set of values", "despite the myriad differences and distinctions…within the early education and childcare workforce itself in terms of social class and 'race'" (p. 196). As the ECEC reform agenda continues, these values may provide a sense of belonging to help bind the diverse ECEC workforce together more strongly, as a unified, collaborative professional community.

Becoming

A final way in which this study may support educators' critical reflection is in helping them reflect on their process of *becoming*, and on the learning journey that has brought them to their current role, and which will continue throughout their lifetimes. In particular, reflection on their past learning experience may help educators recognise the kinds of learning opportunities that will best suit them, to facilitate their future professional growth. Bourdieu's theory perceives that past experiences shape individuals' expectations about what is possible for them to achieve; supported by research that shows individuals adjust their learning aspirations to their past levels of achievement (see Ross & Gray, 2005). The data in this study suggest that confidence in their ability as learners may be relatively low for all young women entering ECEC careers, even at higher qualification levels—but if this can be acknowledged, then perhaps it can be confronted and overcome.

Lack of confidence in learning should not be confused with lack of will. While recognising the stress experienced by learners "attempting to re-connect with learning after earlier experiences of failure and exclusion" (p. 121), Ross and Gray (2005) note that early school leavers often enter second chance education deeply motivated to prove their ability (p. 114). Similarly, Bullen and Kenway's (2005) Australian study of young women disengaged from school revealed that completion of secondary education was an "almost universal goal" among participants (p. 55), who were well aware of the importance of education to their future prospects. This suggests a wellspring of potential among the ECEC workforce, for even low-achievers and early school leavers to rediscover their confidence as learners, if opportunities are made available for them to do so.

At the same time, professional growth does not necessarily require formal learning. Transformation of practice through critical reflection may constitute a gradual evolution, occurring through the myriad opportunities for learning that exist in day-to-day practice (Schatzki, 2017). It is, after all, day-to-day routines that are most "saturated with taken for grantedness" (Giddens, 1983, as cited in Nicolini, 2012, p. 48), making them especially valuable sites in which *habitus* and practice may be challenged. If *habitus* itself is the product of "participation in daily activities largely without raising it to the level of discourse" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 56), then creating critical discourse around these activities, and reflecting on how they might be otherwise, creates a space in which *habitus* may change. The way an educator talks to a child, plans a meal routine, or sets up a paint table, may all provide opportunities to think about why certain practices occur, and whether they are delivering the best possible outcomes for all children.

Self-awareness in the pursuit of their own professional growth may also help educators to support each child's individual journey of *becoming*. Educators at all qualification levels need to be engaged in critical reflection about what learning looks like for different children, and how they can facilitate it—building from each individual educators' starting point, *habitus*, and practice. If educators can build their own confidence as learners, they can join children as "co-learners" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13), and be role models for learning while also learning themselves. Receptiveness to learning may therefore be as important as—if not more important than—the levels of capital that educators bring with them. The EYLF principle of "ongoing learning and reflective practice" (p. 10) does not require educators to start from a high base, but to actively find ways to build their knowledge and practice, regardless of the point from which their professional journey commenced.

Conclusion — Towards inclusive workforce development

The ECEC sector in Australia has travelled a remarkable distance in recent years, and the journey is not over. The ongoing drive towards greater quality and consistency in ECEC service provision continues to place pressure on educators and ECEC services to lift their aspirations towards higher-quality practice, and strive for better outcomes for the children and families with whom they work. While many educators are struggling under the weight of reform, the desire to do their best for children—as well as the opportunity to improve public recognition of the value of their work—provides a powerful impetus for efforts to improve quality in the sector to continue. This concluding chapter begins by acknowledging the enormous efforts demanded by reform of this scale, and the personal and professional costs incurred by the educators involved.

A strong motivation for this study is to help chart a course for the future development of the Australian ECEC workforce, in which the professional growth of every educator may be maximised. One way to do this is to acknowledge some of the tensions between the expectations placed on educators, and the *habitus* of those who currently occupy this role. This requires a deep understanding of the nature of these tensions, and how they arise not only from educators' capability, but from the classed dimensions of the "ideal" educator imagined by policy, and the classed identities of the flesh-and-blood educators on whose shoulders implementation of the National Quality Agenda has been placed. Examination of these tensions helps reinforce that the ECEC *field* is not *terra nullius* to be re-imagined by policy-makers at will, but a vibrant landscape inhabited by a diverse, dynamic workforce, in which potential and challenge may be found in equal measure. It also has simple pragmatic value, in that the National Quality Agenda seems unlikely to succeed in its aims unless these tensions are acknowledged and addressed.

This study has provided some insight into these tensions, by describing social advantage in the ECEC workforce in Australia, and its effects. Its key message is summed up in Hyson's (2009) observation that "not all early childhood professionals start in the same place or arrive at the same destination" (p. 1). This study lends greater precision to this observation, in its description of educators' circumstances (being), attitudes (belonging), and trajectories (becoming), and in its detailed exposure of the diversity in social advantage within the ECEC workforce that the unitary label of "early childhood educator" may conceal. The precision of this description itself constitutes a valuable addition to the evidence base for future Australian ECEC policy, as the workforce has not previously been examined in its entirety in such detail. Peeters and colleagues (2016) note that education systems tend not to collect "statistics about the socio-economic or cultural background of [educators] in their respective ECEC sectors", limiting their ability to understand, or to capitalise on, the ECEC workforce's diversity (p. 6). This study helps address this gap for Australia, by offering a retrospective baseline view of social advantage in the ECEC workforce at the start of the current wave of ECEC reforms.

The study has also moved beyond empirical description, and utilised its theoretical framework to consider the implications of educators' levels of social advantage for the quality of their practice. The principles of the EYLF provide a useful extension to the theoretical framework, for theorising how educators' different stores of capital might affect their *habitus* and practice, and their ability to meet the specific expectations for quality practice set out in the National Quality Agenda. This model serves to re-frame the data analysis not only as providing *descriptors* of the social advantage that educators possess, but as providing possible *predictors* of their ability to embody the EYLF principles in their practice—beyond the predictive power of qualifications alone. The disaggregation of the data, to compare groups of educators with different-level qualifications, makes an innovative contribution to research regarding the relationship between qualifications and quality of practice, by considering what other factors may contribute to this relationship. The comparisons of each qualification group with similarly-qualified Australian workers also helps to describe the social position shared by the ECEC workforce as a whole.

The study's hypothesis predicted an association between the level of educators' qualifications, and the effects of other kinds of capital that educators possess. The data analysis supports this hypothesis for some indicators of capital examined in the study. As Bourdieu's theories predict (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979), educators with higher-level qualifications appear to have had more opportunities to acquire the kinds of capital that support success in formal learning, through their home and family background, and experience of school. At the same time, educators at all qualification levels were found to have both challenges and strengths, such as the higher levels of stress among educators with higher-level qualifications, and the rich demographic diversity among the lower-qualified educator groups.

These findings demonstrate that the effects of a qualification on practice should not be considered in isolation. Instead, educators' qualifications should be viewed alongside other aspects of their learning and life experience—which may also have implications for the quality of their practice, and their opportunities for professional growth. Taking this broader view may help educators and ECEC leaders to better recognise what they and their colleagues can offer, and to provide each other with the collegial support that they

need to make the most of their potential. Reflecting on all aspects of social advantage including the effects of cultural, economic and social capital—may help identify opportunities and barriers in educators' professional journeys, and ways in which their professional growth may best be supported.

Considerations for future research

A major limitation of this study is that its implications for practice are formulated at the theoretical, rather than empirical, level. This limitation points to valuable future directions for further research on the relationship between educators' social, cultural and economic capital and their practice. One possible avenue is for the data used in this study to be subject to further analysis, using complete unit record files (if available) to expand analytic possibilities. For example, further research could investigate covariance in the various indicators considered in this study, leading to the development of statistical models to assess their combined relationship to educators' qualifications, ECEC service types, or local communities. These analyses could be combined with observational data on the quality of educators' practice, to further test the theoretical proposition that capital and quality practice are related. There is also scope for further research on the effects of workforce diversity at the service and system level (Irvine et al., 2016), to explore whether differences within the workforce may have intrinsic benefits for practice quality.

Any such exploration would need to proceed carefully, given that the relationship between higher qualifications and higher-quality practice is well-supported by many prior studies—as well as by "widely held personal beliefs" (Early et al., 2008, p. 8). Nevertheless, as Early and colleagues (2008) argue, there is sufficient evidence of instability in this relationship to justify research that plays the "hard but important role of moving us all beyond simple explanations", through "analyses of the available data and frank discussions of their implications" (p. 8). It is hoped that this study may be counted as providing a contribution towards such interrogative research.

The study also leaves many substantial issues unresolved, as to how the social position of educators might be improved. What it does do, however, is open up some new avenues for inquiry into these issues, by presenting a broad array of indicators related to aspects of educators' social advantage and their effects. These lines of inquiry may prove valuable for researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, in identifying future strategies for ECEC workforce development that respond to the diversity in educators' levels of social advantage, in inclusive, strengths-based ways. As educators outside of the degree-qualified group appear least visible in ECEC research, it also highlights the need for research on the ECEC workforce to reflect the fullness of educators' diversity, and provide an evidence base that supports inclusive professional learning and growth.

A final limitation of this study is that the use of large-scale survey data necessarily positions the researcher at some distance from the day-to-day realities of educators themselves. While large-scale data offer a valuable "helicopter view" of the ECEC workforce (Jackson, 2016, p. 72), there is high potential for "losing the plot" in converting complex social realities into numerical representations (Blaikie, 2003, p. 21). As with any objective account of a social phenomenon in which participants are subjectively invested, there is also a risk that the findings of this study may "strike participants as both trivial and sacrilegious" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 189)—that is, either self-evident or unpalatable.

Another important direction for future research is therefore to explore educators' own perceptions of the theoretical propositions in this study. Bourdieu's view of social research reflects a belief that quantitative studies that provide a "view from above" must be complemented by smaller-scale "view from below" research, which explores "the importance and value of what people know...and the undefined human capacity for making life up, from moment to moment" (in Jenkins, 2002, p. 49). This study joins Lingard (2011) in rejecting the "false and very unhelpful binary" between quantitative and qualitative research (p. 378), and itself represents a quantitative response to qualitative studies that have used educators' insights to explore issues of social advantage in ECEC workforce development⁶⁸. The broader research project in which this study is situated will also offer insights through qualitative case studies, which will complement and extend on the quantitative analysis, to further illuminate educators' *habitus* and practice.

Considerations for policy

The discussion of the findings of this study (Chapter 7) proposes various suggestions for how the overall development of the ECEC workforce might best be supported. It also makes suggestions for supporting the professional growth of groups of educators with different qualifications, who may each have particular strengths and challenges, beyond the knowledge that their qualification reflects. Many of these suggestions reflect policy priorities for workforce development that are already well-known, including professional recognition and status; career pathways and leadership opportunities; improvements to the quality of ECEC courses; and ongoing professional learning for all educators (see Pascoe & Brennan, 2017). The contribution of this study does not lie in identifying these

⁶⁸ Nash (2003) observes that Bourdieu's theory is especially amenable to accommodating "numbers and narratives", which he argues is "imperative if the sterile methodological opposition between qualitative and quantitative approaches is ever to be overcome" (p. 60).

as worthwhile policy concerns—which has already been done—but in changing the nuance of the reform agenda, to increase attention to social advantage and its effects. This shift in nuance may seem inconsequential; but paradigm shifts may be among the most durable and effective methods for systemic reform (Meadows, 2008).

This paradigm shift is supported by the child-centred view of learning and development promulgated in the National Quality Agenda, which recognises that each child requires learning opportunities that are suited to their strengths and aspirations. The same logic is applied here, to argue for more inclusive approaches to workforce development for educators themselves, which respond similarly to their rich diversity. Positioning ECEC workforce development as responding positively and intentionally to educators' diverse levels of social advantage has tremendous potential to help shape a unique institutional culture for the ECEC sector; and may even have flow-on effects to other areas of the education system, in which more exclusionary workforce development policies are currently holding sway. While higher entry requirements may satisfy political imperatives to improve perceptions of workforce capability, workforce development strategies that *exclude* at the point of entry may be less effective in the longer-term than those that *empower* and *develop* practitioners over the course of their careers.

In summary, this study points to the need for future ECEC workforce development policy in Australia to explicitly address the specific challenges that different segments of the ECEC workforce may face, in implementing high-quality ECEC practice. There are clear parallels between this imperative, and the two corresponding principles of the EYLF: *high expectations and equity*, and *respect for diversity* (DEEWR, 2009). Both demand a delicate balance to be struck, between cultivating aspirations towards the highest possible achievement for all, and recognising that educators (like children) are unlikely to all seek the same goals, or pursue them in the same way. This dilemma is central to any education system, and cannot be solved through simple technical solutions—but only through awareness of diversity, and critical reflection on how best to respond.

For this reason, this study does not conclude with the list of specific recommendations for policy that is almost "obligatory" in contemporary educational research (Morrison & van der Werf, 2016, p. 351). Although it is intended as a study *for* policy (Lingard, 2013), in that its findings may be useful in informing policy directions, it also recognises that the influence of research on policy may be subtle and gradual—"percolated" rather than "espresso" (Watson 2007, p. 1)—and that nudges and nuances that influence policy-makers' thinking may therefore be as valuable as direct recommendations for action. Like educators, policy-makers are capable of critical reflection on their practice, and on

its impact on others from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds. It is hoped that this study may prompt reflection among policy-makers on the possibilities for future ECEC workforce development policies to address equity considerations more explicitly.

There is a need for research and policy to continue in dialogue, as the National Quality Agenda progresses. While a "robust and compelling" evidence base (Cahir, 2010, p. 4) has sustained the policy agenda to date, there is a need for continued questioning and reflection as new challenges arise. Tayler (2016) calls for "collective courage" in sustaining an evidence base that demonstrates which parts of the system matter most to child and family outcomes, as well as "which parts may be important for other reasons" (p. 30). The analysis in this study may help policy-makers and practitioners alike to recognise the importance of the socio-economic diversity in the ECEC workforce, to embrace its complexity, and engage with it constructively and inclusively—just as educators must do, for the diverse children and families with whom they work.

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Appendix 1 – Description of EYLF principles



The following are five Principles that reflect contemporary theories and research evidence concerning children's learning and early childhood pedagogy. The Principles underpin practice that is focused on assisting all children to make progress in relation to the Learning Outcomes.

I. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships

Educators who are attuned to children's thoughts and feelings, support the development of a strong sense of wellbeing. They positively interact with the young child in their learning.

Research has shown that babies are both vulnerable and competent. Babies' first attachments within their families and within other trusting relationships provide them with a secure base for exploration and learning.

Through a widening network of secure relationships, children develop confidence and feel respected and valued. They become increasingly able to recognise and respect the feelings of others and to interact positively with them.

Educators who give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support 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.

2. Partnerships

Learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with families. Educators recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers. They create a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate with educators about curriculum decisions in order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful.

Partnerships are based on the foundations of understanding each other's expectations and attitudes, and build on the strength of each others' knowledge.

In genuine partnerships, families and early childhood educators:

- value each other's knowledge of each child
- value each other's contributions to and roles in each child's life
- trust each other
- communicate freely and respectfully with each other
- · share insights and perspectives about each child
- engage in shared decision-making.

Partnerships also involve educators, families and support professionals working together to explore the learning potential in every day events, routines and play so that children with additional needs are provided with daily opportunities to learn from active participation and engagement in these experiences in the home and in early childhood or

specialist settings.

3. High expectations and equity

Early childhood educators who are committed to equity believe in all children's capacities to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their parents and educators hold high expectations for their achievement in learning.

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Educators recognise and respond to barriers to children achieving educational success. In response they challenge practices that contribute to inequities and make curriculum decisions that promote inclusion and participation of all children. By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in partnership with children, families, communities, other services and agencies, they continually strive to find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve learning outcomes.

4. Respect for diversity

There are many ways of living, being and of knowing. Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities. Respecting diversity means within the curriculum valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing

practices and lifestyle choices of families. They value children's different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families' home lives.

Educators recognise that diversity contributes to the richness of our society and provides a valid evidence base about ways of knowing. For Australia it also includes promoting greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and *being*.

When early childhood educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners. They make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued, and respond to the complexity of children's and families' lives.

Educators think critically about opportunities and dilemmas that can arise from diversity and take action to redress unfairness. They provide opportunities to learn about similarities and difference and about interdependence and how we can learn to live together.

5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice

Educators continually seek ways to build their professional knowledge and develop learning communities. They become co-learners with children, families and community, and value the continuity and richness of local knowledge shared by community members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders.

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning. As professionals, early childhood educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change.

Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Educators often frame their reflective practice within a set of overarching questions,

developing more specific questions for particular areas of enquiry.

Overarching questions to guide reflection include:

- What are my understandings of each child?
- What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist my work?
- Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?
- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- What aspects of my work are not helped by the theories and guidance that I usually draw on to make sense of what I do?
- Are there other theories or knowledge that could help me to understand better what I have observed or experienced? What are they? How might those theories and that knowledge affect my practice?

A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when early childhood educators and those with whom they work are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review through which current practices are examined, outcomes reviewed and new ideas generated. In such a climate, issues relating to curriculum quality, equity and children's wellbeing can be raised and debated.

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Appendix 2 – Other data sets considered for the study

The data sets selected for use in this study are not the only major data sets that may be of value for quantitative research on the Australian ECEC sector. Several other data sets were also considered for this study, and may be of value for future related research:

- The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey is another data set available to Australian researchers, by request to the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research. HILDA is a household-based panel study, which has collected information about respondents' economic and subjective wellbeing, labour market dynamics and family dynamics since 2001. The first wave consisted of 7,682 households and 19,914 individuals, topped up in Wave 11 with a further 2,153 households and 5,477 individuals (Melbourne Institute, n.d.). The composition of the sample changes from wave to wave, as every member of each household is surveyed. At the time of data analysis for this study, 14 waves of data were available for analysis. As the number of early childhood educators that could be identified within the HILDA sample was substantially lower than the number in LSAY, this survey has not been used in this study. Many of the variables in HILDA that are relevant to this study were also available in other data sets, at larger scale. This high-quality data set may nevertheless be a valuable resource for future research on the early childhood workforce, especially longitudinal studies.
- The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) is a major longitudinal study tracking the development of 10,000 Australian children and their families, which commenced in 2004 (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016). It includes information about the early childhood educators who work with study children who attend ECEC services. Educators answer survey questions about themselves and their educational program, as well as about the study child in their care.

Unfortunately, the usability of LSAC data for the purposes of this study was limited, as its focus is on the child, not the adults who work with them. Correspondence with the LSAC team confirmed the LSAC data set may contain duplicate educators (that is, educators who work with more than one study child), and no information was captured in the study that can identify them. For this reason, while LSAC is an invaluable data resource for studying children in the early years, it was not considered suitable for use in a study of the characteristics of educators themselves.

• The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a major Australian Government-funded data collection, which captures child outcomes across five

developmental domains in the year they first attend school. AEDC data is valuable for situating ECEC services in the context of child outcomes within their communities (for example, Lamb et al., 2015a). However, it is not currently possible to link AEDC data to ECEC services or individual educators, so it was not considered suitable for use in this study.

- The Student Experience Survey (SES) is a major national survey of a random sample of Australian university students, conducted by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Australian Government (SRC, n.d.). While the experiences of early childhood educators in their tertiary studies may be relevant to this research, the SES is limited to higher education courses only, and does not currently cover courses in the VET sector. Such surveys are undertaken at state level in some jurisdictions (for example, VDET, 2016c), but are not currently available at a level of national coverage that fits the national scope of this study. Given this study's interest in educators at all qualification levels, this data set was also excluded.
- The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) was established at the Australian National University in 2003, and is now managed by the Australian Consortium for Social and Political Research Incorporated (ACSPRI). It gathers opinions from around 4,000 Australians aged 18 and over every two years, with each sample selected randomly from the Australian Electoral Roll. It provides authoritative data on the social attitudes and behaviour of Australians, and is the official source of the International Social Survey Program's data for Australia (Australian National University, 2016). As with HILDA, only a small number of early childhood educators could be identified in the AuSSA sample. This data set was therefore from excluded from this study, although includes valuable measures of social perceptions that may be valuable in comparative studies between occupational groups.

Appendix 3 – ANZSCO descriptions

ANZSCO Unit Group 2411 Early Childhood (Pre-Primary School) Teachers

MAJOR GROUP 2 PROFESSIONALS

SUB-MAJOR GROUP 24 EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

MINOR GROUP 241 SCHOOL TEACHERS

SCHOOL TEACHERS educate students in early childhood (pre-primary), primary, middle or intermediate, secondary and special institutions by teaching a range of subjects within a prescribed curriculum, and promote students' social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

UNIT GROUP 2411 EARLY CHILDHOOD (PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL) TEACHERS

EARLY CHILDHOOD (PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL) TEACHERS teach the basics of numeracy, literacy, music, art and literature to early childhood (preprimary) students and promote students' social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

Indicative Skill Level [in Australia]:

Most occupations in this unit group have a level of skill commensurate with a bachelor degree or higher qualification. In some instances, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification (ANZSCO Skill Level 1). Registration or licensing may be required.

Tasks Include:

- planning and structuring learning in both indoor and outdoor environments using a variety of materials and equipment to facilitate students' development
- providing a variety of experiences and activities to develop motor skills, cooperative social skills, confidence and understanding
- promoting language development through storytelling, role play, songs, rhymes and informal discussions held individually and within groups
- observing students to evaluate progress and to detect signs of ill health, emotional disturbance and other disabilities
- observing nutritional health, welfare and safety needs of students and identifying factors which may impede students' progress
- discussing students' progress with parents
- attending parent interviews, and staff and committee meetings
- participating in community and family support programs as appropriate
- supervising student teachers on placement

Source: ABS, 2006, p. 247

ANZSCO Unit Group 4211 Child Carers⁶⁹

MAJOR GROUP 4 COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL SERVICE WORKERS	
SUB -MAJOR GROUP 42 CARERS AND AIDES	
CARERS AND AIDES provide basic care, supervision and other support services to	
individuals for the enhancement of their education, health, welfare and comfort.	
MINOR GROUP 421 CHILD CARERS	
[Description as for Unit Group below]	
UNIT GROUP 4211 CHILD CARERS	
CHILD CARERS provide care and supervision for children in residential	
homes and non-residential childcare centres.	
Indicative Skill Level [in Australia]:	
Most occupations in this unit group have a level of skill commensurate with	
AQF Certificate II or III. At least one year of relevant experience may	
substitute for the formal qualifications listed above. In some instances,	
relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition	
to the formal qualification. Registration or licensing may be required.	
Tasks Include:	
assisting in the preparation of materials and equipment for children's education and recreational activities	
 managing children's behaviour and guiding children's social development 	
 preparing and conducting activities for children 	
entertaining children by reading and playing games	
supervising children in recreational activities	
supervising the daily routine of children	
supervising the hygiene of children	
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⁶⁹ Minor Group 421 ("Child Carers") also includes another Unit Group, "Education Aides", which was also considered for inclusion within the "educator" definition for this study. However, the role description suggests that this Unit Group is intended primarily for integration aides working with specific children or cohorts, so this group was ultimately excluded.

ANZSCO Unit Group 1341 Child Care Centre Managers

UNIT GROUP 1341 CHILD CARE CENTRE MANAGERS

CHILD CARE CENTRE MANAGERS plan, organise, direct, control and coordinate the activities of childcare centres and services including physical and human resources. *Indicative Skill Level:*

Most occupations in this unit group have a level of skill commensurate with a bachelor degree or higher qualification. At least five years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some instances, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification (ANZSCO Skill Level 1). *Tasks Include:*

- developing and implementing programs to enhance the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of young children
- providing care for children in before-school, after-school, day, and vacation care centres
- directing and supervising Child Carers in providing care and supervision for young children
- ensuring the centre is a safe area for children, staff and visitors
- complying with relevant government requirements and standards
- liaising with parents
- maintaining records and accounts for the centre
- recruiting staff and coordinating professional development

Source: ABS, 2006, p. 107

Appendix 4 – LSAY field-of-study variables used

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GC2A004 C2A4 Type of qualification
GC2C005 C2C5 Type of qualification studying for
GC3A004 C3A4 Type of qualification working towards
GC3C005 C3C5 Type of qualification studying towards
GC3C005C3C5 Type of qualification studying towardsGC3D002C3D2 Certificate level
GC3C005C3C5 Type of qualification studying towardsGC3D002C3D2 Certificate levelGC2D002C2D2 Certificate level
GC3C005C3C5 Type of qualification studying towardsGC3D002C3D2 Certificate levelGC2D002C2D2 Certificate levelCC024C24 Type of qualification received

DC013	C13 Full name of course
EC015A	C15a Name of course of study A
FC018	C18 Type of qualification

1998 cohort

cc003	C3 Type of qualification
cc021	C21 Level of course
dc005	C5 Type of qualification
dc017	C17 Type of qualification
ec084	C84 Type of qual working towards
ec2a004	C2A4 Type of qual working towards
ec2d002	C2D2 Certificate level when started
ecc005	CC5 Qualification studying for
ecd002	CD2 Certificate level when started
fc084	C84 Type of qualification
fca010	CA10 Qualification type
fcd002	CD2 Certificate level
gc084	C84 Type of qualification
gca010	CA10 Qualification type
gcd002	CD2 Certificate level
hc084	C84 Type of qualification
hca010	CA10 Qualification type
hcd002	CD2 Certificate level
ic084	C84 Type of qualification
ica010	CA10 Qualification type
icd002	CD2 Certificate level
jc084	C84 Type of qualification
jca010	CA10 Qualification type
jcd002	CD2 Certificate level
kc084	C84 Type of qualification
kca010	CA10 Qualification type
kcc005	CC5 Qualification type (Qual2)
kcd002	CD2 Certificate level
lc084	C84 Type of qualification
lca010	CA10 Qualification type
lcc005	CC5 Qualification type (Qual2)
lcd002	CD2 Certificate level

lbcd02	Certificate level
lccd02	Certificate level
ldcd02	Certificate level
lecd002	Certificate level
lfcd002	Certificate level

lgcd002	Certificate level
lhcd002	Certificate level
licd002	Certificate level
ljcd002	Certificate level
lkcd002	Certificate level
lbca04	Qualification type
lcca10	Qualification type
ldca10	Qualification type
leca010	Qualification type
lfca010	Qualification type
lgca010	Qualification type
lhca010	Qualification type
lica010	Qualification type
ljca010	Qualification type
lkca010	Qualification type
lccc05	Qualification type (Qual2)
ldcc05	Qualification type (Qual2)
lecc005	Qualification type (Qual2)
lfcc005	Qualification type (Qual2)
lgcc005	Qualification type (Qual2)
lhcc005	Qualification type (Qual2)
licc005	Qualification type (Qual2)
ljcc006	Qualification type (Qual2)
lkcc006	Qualification type (Qual2)
lbcz084	Type of qualification
lccz084	Type of qualification
ldcz084	Type of qualification
lec084	Type of qualification
lfc084	Type of qualification
lgc084	Type of qualification
lhc084	Type of qualification
lic084	Type of qualification
ljc084	Type of qualification
lkc084	Type of qualification

lbca004	CA4 Qualification type
lbcc005	CC5 Qualification type (Qual2)
lbcd002	CD2 Certificate level

- lbc084 C84 Type of qualification
- lcca010 CA10 Qualification type
- lccc005 CC5 Qualification type (Qual2)
- lccd002 CD2 Certificate level
- lcc084 C84 Type of qualification
- ldca010 CA10 Qualification type

ldcc005	CC5 Qualification type (Qual2)
ldcd002	CD2 Certificate level
ldc084	C84 Type of qualification
leca010	CA10 Qualification type
lecc005	CC5 Qualification type (Qual2)
lecd002	CD2 Certificate level
lec084	C84 Type of qualification
lfca010	CA10 Qualification type
lfcc005	CC5 Qualification type (Qual2)
lfcd002	CD2 Certificate level
lfc084	C84 Type of qualification
lgca010	CA10 Qualification type
lgcc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
lgcd002	CD2 Certificate level
lgc084	C84 Type of qualification
lhca010	CA10 Qualification type
lhcc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
lhcd002	CD2 Certificate level
lhc084	C84 Type of qualification
lica010	CA10 Qualification type
licc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
licd002	CD2 Certificate level
lic084	C84 Type of qualification

lbc085	C85 Type of qualification
lcc084	C84 Type of qualification
ldc084	C84 Type of qualification
lec084	C84 Type of qualification
lfc084	C84 Type of qualification
lbca004	CA4 Qualification type
lcca010	CA10 Qualification type
ldca010	CA10 Qualification type
leca010	CA10 Qualification type
lfca010	CA10 Qualification type
lbcc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
lccc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
ldcc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
lecc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
lfcc006	CC6 Qualification type (Qual2)
lbcd002	CD2 Certificate level
lccd002	CD2 Certificate level
ldcd002	CD2 Certificate level
lecd002	CD2 Certificate level
lfcd002	CD2 Certificate level