

Academy of Social Sciences 2023 Workshop Program

Teachers in Early Education – Final report

The *Teachers in Early Education* Academy of Social Sciences in Australia workshop was held at the University of Sydney February 13 and 14, 2023. Convened by myself, Professor Sandie Wong, and Academy fellow and Laureate Professor Marilyn Flear, the workshop brought together 32 sector stakeholders (see attached participant list) from education, education psychology, and social policy disciplines, as well as policy makers, unions, and industry groups, to advance an innovative response to the chronic undersupply of a *quality* early childhood teaching (ECT) workforce in Australia (see attached program).

Specifically, the workshop aimed to initiate the development of the Teachers in Early Education (TEE) Tool, which once developed, will support the supply of a quality ECT workforce in Australia. Designed to address the limitations of currently available measures of teaching quality that are not specific to early childhood education, the Tool will be an original, rigorous, accessible, and validated tool designed to assess early childhood teacher quality in context. These innovations are significant and timely, as they will inform the ongoing development and implementation of the recently-released Australian Government endorsed ten-year (2022-2031) national early childhood workforce strategy, and other planned teacher preparation and registration policy reviews, the latter including the development of revised Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- (i) establish a collaboration of early, mid and professorial academics from early childhood, education psychology, implementation science, and social policy disciplines, with policy makers, unions, private and community EC providers, and other industry groups to progress a co-designed, novel, multi-perspectival approach to assessing quality teaching practice in early education (birth-five) contexts;
- (ii) develop shared understandings about what quality ECTs do, how they go about doing it, and how it can be assessed; and
- (iii) support the completion of the first of four stages of development of the TEE tool.

Immediate outcomes from the workshop were overwhelming sector-wide support for the development of the TEE tool; the generation of data used to progress stage 1 of the Tool's development; and agreement from 25 participants to be involved in and contribute to the Tool's ongoing co-design.

Other outcomes and outputs that the workshop enabled were:

Competitively Awarded External Grants – Category 1

2024-2027. ARC Discovery DP240100249 *Teachers in early education (TEE): Attracting, preparing, retaining, and sustaining quality early childhood teachers in Australia*. Fenech, M., Wong, S., Gibson, M., Garvis, S., Boyd, W., Durksen, T. & Janus, M. \$664,259. (Overall success rate: 16.3%; USYD success rate: 14.7%).

International Conference Presentation

Wong, S. & Fenech, M. (2023, August). An innovative approach to assessing teacher quality in the early years. Paper presented at the 31st European Early Childhood Education Research Association Annual Conference, Lisbon.

National Conference presentation

Fenech, M., Wong, S. & Durksen, T. (2024, February). A co-design approach to assessing teacher quality in the early years. Paper presented at the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood Research Symposium, Online.

Invited Keynote Presentations

1. Australian Government National Children's Education and care Workforce Strategy forum. *Building and sustaining a quality early childhood teacher workforce*. November 28-29, 2023, Sydney. Attended by 60 leading sector stakeholder to progress work on workforce priority areas.
2. NSW Department of Education Early Childhood Research Series. *Teachers in Early Education: Attracting, preparing, retaining, and sustaining a quality early childhood teacher workforce in Australia*. Attended by 180 DET employees from the Centre for Excellence in Early Childhood Quality and Transitions and the Early Childhood Outcomes Division. August 1, 2023.

Submissions


Submission to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report: A Pathway to Universal ECEC (attached). February 14, 2024.

All ASSA funds were spent in accordance with the project budget (see attached).

Collectively, these achievements and outputs have put the supply of a *quality* ECT workforce in Australia upfront and centre in workforce policy directions.

I am extremely grateful for the ASSA workshop funding which has served to kickstart substantive research that will progress development of the TEE tool and will enable an evidence base to inform these future directions.

Kind regards,



Associate Professor Marianne Fenech
February 14, 2024.