



Early Childhood Educators' Well-being Project (ECEWP)

ISSUE 6 – JUNE 2021

Introduction

Welcome to the sixth edition of the ECEWP newsletter. Our research team has been working with Partner Organisations for an extended time to finalise and submit an application for funding through the Australian Research Council Linkage Program. Our proposed study aims to build on and expand the knowledge and learnings from ECEWP – the only study to date that has examined the holistic well-being of Australian early childhood educators. We will have further news about our application towards the end of 2021.

Meanwhile, we continue to progress a number of sub-projects related to early childhood educator well-being (see diagram on page 3). Hearing from educators reinforces the importance of our research. For example, one educator contacted us to say: *“Thank you for highlighting the pressures and risk factors early childhood teachers face. I can relate to the concerns ... and I wonder what action the government may take to try and retain early childhood staff in the face of post-COVID exhaustion”. In addition, the educator noted that “the pandemic has highlighted that while we are deemed as ‘essential’, there has been little actual recognition of that factor from larger authorities and from society”.*

Workplace well-being online survey

To explore the impact of COVID-19 on early childhood educators, we have worked with international colleagues (see below) to conduct a survey on the experience and well-being of educators from Finland, Hong Kong and Canada, associated with COVID-19. We know anecdotally that the crisis has been associated with psychological distress and financial

hardship, and we wanted to investigate these issues further across international contexts.

A BIG THANK YOU to the many educators who participated; we really appreciate your time and input. We have had over 900 responses from Australian educators – which is amazing! The feedback has highlighted some strong feelings amongst educators, including:

“COVID-19 has had a huge impact on my own as well as many other colleagues’ overall health and well-being. The government has failed to look out for those of us working in early childhood services.”

“We are exhausted and feel undervalued by the people who should be thanking us for continuing to work and care for our next generation, much of the time unprotected from this virus.”

The survey results will help us understand the influences on educators’ workplace well-being, which will enable us to advocate for educators across the sector and government. We’ll let you know as our findings are published.

NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK REVIEW

The ECEWP team has made a submission to the latest review of the National Quality Framework (NQF) to ensure it explicitly supports continuous improvement in educators’ work environments and well-being, as a means of sustaining a high-quality workforce.

Meet our international collaborators

In this issue we are pleased to introduce the international members of our research team, working across Finland, Canada, Hong Kong, The Netherlands and Singapore.

Our international team meets online once a month to discuss issues, and plan research related to early childhood educators' well-being. Recent work has included grant applications and our workplace well-being online survey.



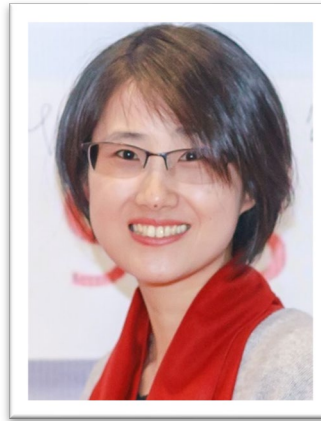
Dr Mari Saha is an Assistant Professor in early childhood education at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University (**Finland**). Her main research interests are diverse needs, children's stress regulation and well-

being, as well as early childhood professionals' occupational well-being in early childhood education and care settings. Mari will contribute to the educator well-being aspect of the project.



Dr Brooke Richardson is an Adjunct in the Department of Sociology at Brock University (**Canada**), contract Lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Studies at Ryerson University (Canada) and President of the

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario. She has published and presented on social policy and Canadian children/families through both a feminist political economy and feminist ethics of care framework. Brooke is assisting with the use of our educator well-being and COVID-19 survey in Ontario.



Dr Jin Sun is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education at The Education University of **Hong Kong**. Her research focuses on early child development and education, early maths education, and

how family and school contexts influence children's developmental outcomes in the early years. She also investigates Chinese early childhood educators' occupational wellbeing.



Dr Katrien Helmerhorst is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Erasmus University Rotterdam (**The Netherlands**). Her research focuses on quality of caregiver-child interactions in early child care centres. She will contribute to the

implementation of the observational measure "Caregiver Interaction Profile Scales" to help us examine the relationship between educator well-being and their interactions with children.



Dr Ng Ee Lynn is a Research Scientist at the Centre for Research in Child Development, National Institute of Education (**Singapore**). Her research focuses on the influence of early childhood professionals' well-being on learning and

development in early childhood. Ee Lynn will contribute to the implementation of the project in early childhood education and care settings in Singapore.

Federal budget funding for childcare, but educators still being paid pennies

The government has committed an additional \$1.7 billion over five years to reduce the cost of childcare for around 250,000 families with more than one child. Another \$1.6 billion is going into ensuring each four-year-old child gets 15 hours of preschool a week. But these budget announcements, framed in part as being a boost for women's participation in the workforce, hold no good news for the early childhood workforce – 95% of whom are women.

The increase in families using early childhood education and care relies on the stability of the workforce. At the moment, however, an increasing number of educators are leaving the profession due to low pay, feeling undervalued and too much time spent on paperwork.

“If we really care about investing in the quality of early childhood education, we also need to invest in those who do the educating and caring.”

Read more in an article by Tamara Cumming, Laura McFarland, Rebecca Bull and Sandie Wong, published in [The Conversation](#) on 12 May after the budget announcement.

Current areas of research within ECEWP



Thank you to our **1,550+** Facebook followers.

Follow us to receive project updates and well-being related information:

[f ECEWP](#)

[t ECEWP Aus](#)