

Survey 2014

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Teachers of Infants and Toddlers

This survey is an independent research project. It is not influenced or funded by a university, or any other business interest.

The research method

My participants were contacted through social media and snowball sampling. 16 teachers responded.

Respondents completed an anonymous online survey asking 7 open ended questions and 3 demographic questions (including questions related to years teaching, qualifications gained, professional development.)

I analysed the open ended questions by looking for key ideas/concepts and experiences to emerge; I looked for both the range of these as well as any emergent themes.

In developing the method I sought peer review/consultation from;
Dr Simeon Cairns, Head of Research, Sport and Recreation AUT
Dr Sue Stover, Programme Leader, Education, AUT
Dr Andrew Gibbons, Associate Professor, Education, AUT

The Experts Have Spoken

“The regulatory regime has minimum standards that are too low; the infant and toddler content in teacher education programmes is too meagre; and this report confirms the more extensive ERO report that quality standards are too low in too many services.”

(Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011 p11)

“...while adult child ratios of 1:4 are ‘good enough’ 1:3 is high quality and that a group size of three times adult child ratio is appropriate. *(Sector Advisory Group 2012 p3)*

Infant and Toddler Mental and Physical Health

“Children may find themselves in childcare for more than 10,000 hours (the bulk of their waking hours) before they are five years old. That is more than all their primary and intermediate school years combined.” (Bedford and Sutherland, 2008 p39)

More children in small spaces are more likely to suffer from;

upper respiratory infections

eye infections

bronchitis

diarrhoea

acute tonsillitis

ear infections

Infant and Toddler Mental and Physical Health

What paediatric training do you have? Do you feel sufficiently trained in medical/mental health aspects of infant and toddler care?

13 out of 16 teachers responded that they did not have enough training in these areas and that First Aid certificate is not sufficient

“I don't feel like I have enough knowledge of medical or mental health for infants and toddlers. This is something which is critical but not given in training or covered enough in the workplace.” (PS 3)

Infant and Toddler Mental and Physical Health

exercise outdoors
overcrowding
infant immunity
paediatric physiology
medications

dental caries
rheumatic fever

nutrition
epidemiology
virus/bacteria life
vaccinations
attachment disruption

allergies
obesity

Infant and Toddler Mental and Physical Health

Attachment is the single most important factor in the cognitive development of infants and toddlers, social development (Laranjo et al, 2010) empathy (Music, 2011), individual efficacy (Whipple, 2009), and has implications for physical and mental health throughout life (Connors, 2011).

The key component is the quality of the relationship
(Rutter, 2008)

What does 'attachment' mean to you?

How are your centre's practices conducive to your beliefs about attachment?

Infant and Toddler Mental and Physical Health

Every respondent used words like 'bonding', 'caring', 'belonging', 'trusting relationship and 'secure base' from which to explore.

Three teachers are in primary or 'key' carer roles.

Awareness that children need consistent, trusted adults.

Three observed that children will attach differently to different adults.

One centre does not encourage 'too much attachment'.

Teacher's Well-being

What are the stresses on your mental health caring for under two's, if any?

How has your job impacted your home/family life, if at all?

If you have been faced with compromising best practice for infant and toddler care, what did you do?

Have you considered leaving your centre? Why?

Teacher's Well-being

Retention 11 of the 16 have seriously considered leaving
".... too many pressures and does not feel like enough support" (PS3)

Compromise 10 teachers compromised, 4 told no-one
"Smile, stay calm and carry on, even though my heart beats fast whenever I am in the babies room" (PS4)

Home Life Exhaustion, emotionally drained.
"... doing work in the weekends to keep up" (PS 3)
....non contact time insufficient" (S 1)

Teacher's Well-being

Environment physical space, management policy.

Relationships working, personal.

Emotions 'professional love', (Page, 2011) individuality, the unconscious.

Professionalism philosophy, pedagogy, agency.

Teacher's Well-being

Environment

Ratios, group sizes

Physical space per child

Distressed children and noise

Staffing

Planning

Assessments

Non-contact time

Business Practice

“Too busy... not enough pairs of hands...not being able to attend to children”

“... the centre's policies mostly emphasise business good (which) contradicts my own teaching belief” (PS 7)

Teacher's Well-being

Relationships

Children - quality attachment

Parents - expectations

Colleagues - collaboration

Management - trust, value

Personal - feelings 'spilling'

“Parenting style can be a cause of mental health stress “(PS 7)

“Qualified staff getting relievers to do most of the work” (PS 1)

“My partner has said when I am frustrated ... I tend to talk to him like a child” (PS 6)

Teacher's Well-being

Emotions

Love, joy, sadness, guilt, frustration, tiredness, powerlessness, feeling down.

Emotions used for profit.

Individual being and children's choice.

Hidden curriculum of detachment, control, containment
(Colley, 2006)

Emotional discomfort and reflection.

Teacher's Well-being

Professionalism

Philosophy
Autonomy
Activism

Knowledge
Agency
Advocacy

Ethics
Conduct
Compliance

Teacher's Well-being

Professionalism

“Be what you would seem to be - or, if you'd like it put more simply - never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.”

(Lewis Carroll, 1965 p84)

Teacher's Well-being

Who is getting it right?

“Happy teachers”

... there are days that are hectic ... I am a pretty patient and easy-going person. (S4)

We follow primary care and develop close relationships... (S6)

...good communications with whanau (S8)

I have a supportive team of teachers and management (S1)

Qualifications

What qualifications/experience do you have?

Bachelor of Education (11) Graduate Diploma in Teaching (2)
Certificate Level 5 (1) Unqualified (2)

More than half of these respondents are mothers, none counted this as experience.

Two who did not state qualification or were unqualified. What does 'qualified' mean?

At least one degree holder, with little experience, expressed the most confidence.

Qualifications

“Teaching is not just a performance of trained competences to a recognized standard, but a profound expression of ourselves, our ways of knowing, our cultures and our contexts. Not everyone can teach (even among those accredited to do so), but there are many from whom others learn” (Loveless & Williamson, 2013, p. 139).

Professional Development

What opportunities do you have for professional development or advancement in your career?

A lot of PD offered (5)

Not much or none (4)

2-3 times per year (3)

In house, self reviews, shared observations (3)

Allocated a \$ amount (1)

What is professional development?

Who delivers it?

Who is it for?

What Teachers Want

What do you think is the best way to improve your centre with regard to the care of under two's?

Reduced numbers, ratios.

Designated areas, splitting ages.

PD and planning.

Teamwork, consistent staff.

Passionate 'quality' staff.

No children under 6 months.

Under two's should not be in care.

More time, relaxed routines, mental health days, access to research.

Clean environment, good resources, homelike environment.

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