

Professional Recognition – beyond recognition – it needs structure – and we need to discuss this sooner rather than later ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

To date in this blog series, we have discussed the definition of a profession (see earlier posts), the conclusion – the Early Childhood Educator role has all of the characteristics as a profession – but it has none of the structure.

Famously fractionate, early childhood in Australia is spilt by the characteristics of ownership type, service type, location, federal and state funding policy and a range of funding models. Children (and their families) in the 0-8 years age group that are subject to these services, face what can only be described as a complex system access profile that does not support parents to ask the question “What is best for my child?”, instead parents can only ask “What can we afford?”

An Educator seeking to work in this system chooses from ownership type, service type, salary level and role – with wild variations in role, salary and accountability. Why would this be the case? If the role of Educator fits the agreed definition of professional, why is there no complementary salary and recognition profile that meets that definition?

There are many inputs into this situation, most are historical, but all act as a brake on systemic and individual role development and all hold back the individuals in that role.

If we look at it from a structural perspective (it is after all structural solutions that we need), professional recognition is usually systemic and reaches across a profession – see nursing for one example – but within this there is individual recognition – which comes on the back of a professional structure including a qualifications framework, individual ongoing professional requirements, and individual accountability.

Early childhood has a relatively new qualification framework¹ that has its own structural issues, it has limited ongoing professional requirements, and it has a differentiated individual accountability (see the difference between those placed on registered Teachers as opposed to those placed on unregistered Educators) all filtered through a heavy organisational accountability framework.

Nurses, who work across a range of employment types and roles have professional recognition across the community, are regulated as professionals, and are paid as such. The expectations on each individual Nurse, to meet practice standards, are high.

The structure of nursing warrants consideration. I use the example of nursing as a predominantly female, care labeled profession that has, in relatively recent times, won a career structure. It is also useful to step back from the Teacher – Educator scenario and look to other professions for a hint of what is possible:

“There are two levels of regulated nurses in Australia – Registered Nurses (RNs) and Enrolled Nurses (ENs). **Enrolled Nurses** have completed a Certificate IV or a Diploma in Nursing from a registered Vocational Education and Training Provider (VET). EN’s are then registered with the Nursing & Midwifery Board (NMBA) to practice.

An EN usually works with a RN to provide patients with basic nursing care but do less complex procedures than RNs.

Registered Nurses are nurses who have completed a minimum three-year bachelor degree in nursing and have passed a national licensing exam to obtain a nursing license and is registered with the Nursing & Midwifery Board (NMBA).

RNs work independently and in inter-dependent teams. RNs are accountable and responsible for their own actions and the delegation of care to ENs and other healthcare workers.

To maintain registration, both RNs and ENs are subject to a ‘practice’ standard and continued professional development standards, as set by the NMBA.

Advanced Practice Nurses or Nurse Practitioners – Nurse practitioners are the most senior clinical nurses involved in diagnosing and treating patient illnesses. Registered nurse educated to a master’s degree level or post graduate qualifications. Both are able to work autonomously and collaboratively in an advanced and extended clinical role.

You will find them working independently, while alongside other doctors and health care professionals, to assess, diagnose, treat and manage patient illnesses.”

The role of Nurses and the professional claims of Nurses did not progress until the career structure was put in place in 1986-67.

Educators need a professional structure independent of the diaspora of ownership type. **We need a career structure.**

More on a potential professional career structure, and what is needed to build it, next week.

Region: International ^[3]

Tags: workforce ^[4]

professionalization ^[5]

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Links

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