

Structures, understandings and discourses: Possibilities for re-envisioning the early childhood worker ^[1]

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Excerpted from abstract

As early childhood services move up the policy agenda, so too does the early childhood workforce. Its members are recognised as the main resource for such services, and there is an increasing recognition that the work is complex and requires enhanced education. But despite this recognition, the situation in many countries – where the early childhood workforce remains split between a minority of teachers and a growing majority of childcare workers with lower qualifications and poorer work conditions – is highly problematic. The article considers what forms change might take, both structurally and in terms of how the worker and her work is understood, arguing for the need to connect restructuring with rethinking to re-envision the workforce. It also examines how understandings of the workforce are produced from different discourses and how different understandings relate to concepts of professionalism, proposing a politics of occupational identity and values that moves beyond the dualistic ‘non-professional/professional’ divide. It concludes by arguing that although strong forces are involved, there is scope for contestation and change.

Region: International ^[3]

Tags: workforce ^[4]

professionalization ^[5]

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