

# Investigating how early childhood educators in Australia negotiate complexity in professional practice

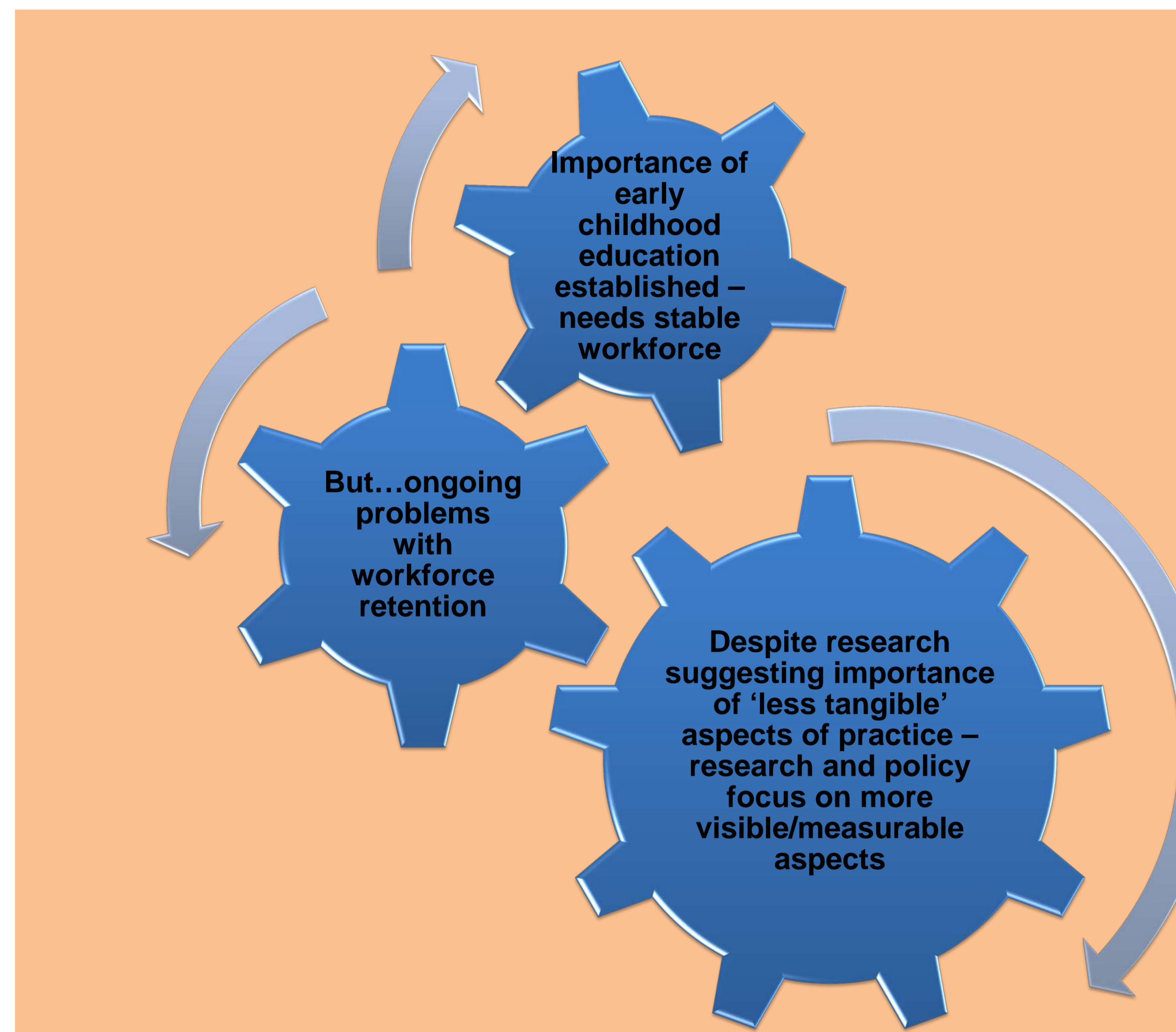
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## Background to the study

- Early childhood professional practice is shaped by many factors, some more tangible - e.g. regulatory regimes, theoretical influences, workplace and professional cultures, broader socio-political contexts, and some less so – e.g. practice wisdom, emotion, beliefs and values)
- Numerous discourses operate within and through these more and less tangible (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2005) factors of practice, regulating, organising and producing professional practice, and shaping educators' subjectivities. (Cumming, Sumsion & Wong, 2013)

How do educators negotiate this complexity?

## Why does this matter?



What new possibilities for addressing workforce retention might come from more focus on 'less tangible' aspects of early childhood practice?

## Research question

- How do educators in Australia negotiate discourses and subjectivities informing early childhood professional practice?

## Significance

- To contribute to understandings of the complexities of early childhood practice
- To contribute to efforts to address workforce retention issues

## Theoretical perspectives

- This study builds on the work of other early childhood education researchers who have used approaches based on thinking from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), to focus on complex interrelations of features in early childhood education assemblages (eg Olsson, 2009; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Sellers, 2013)
- Deleuze and Guattari think about assemblages as:
- Arrangements of elements (such as humans, materials, other-than-human beings, places, sensations, discourses or time) that come together for particular functions
- Assemblages are always open to de- and re-stabilisations, as elements combine and recombine in endlessly unique and productive ways.
- Through their collective capacity, assemblages can produce change beyond what any one element could produce alone.

## Research design

Qualitative study, involving:

- Initial and follow-up focus group discussions with educators (2 groups); and
- Individual research conversations and visual enquiry (10 educators)

## References

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"If we all stuck down our little, the right path, didn't take any of these alternate routes or whatever, we wouldn't learn. You wouldn't see anything new. And I guess that's that whole way of thinking – being open to possibilities" (Vanessa – participant)

## Participation in CRN collaborative activities

Taking part in the following activities has enabled me to deepen my understandings of my PhD project:

- CRN Program 3 Symposium on Social Justice, Albury, December 2011
- Working with Deleuze, workshop with Diana Masny (UOttawa), QUT, March 2012
- The Visual, symposium, Deakin University, Melbourne, October 2012
- CSU RIPPLE Research Group - Pedagogy, Education and Praxis, Doctoral School, QLD, December 2012
- Manchester Metropolitan University, Summer School in Qualitative Research, Putting theory to work, Manchester UK, July 2013
- CRN Policy Symposium: Provocations and Interrogation, Sydney, December 2013

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