

# Mentoring early childhood beginning teachers through Facebook™: does it strengthen or disempower?

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BE CAREFUL, THEY MIGHT HEAR YOU



## THE PHENOMENON OF FACEBOOK

Communication as we now know it, has taken a significant leap forward and somewhat sideways in the context of social media and its continuous influence on society in general.

Social media has recently risen to high levels of popularity and in the last 10 years the interactive culture of today, including socialisation is conducted online more than ever before.

van Dijck, 2013

Facebook is now one of the most widely used social networking site estimating “845 million active users, 50% of whom log onto FB at least once a day.”

Hall, Pennington, & Lueders, 2014

So what happens when the rise in the use of Facebook coincides with the lack of effective leadership and mentoring for early childhood beginning teachers?



# THE FACEBOOK CULTURE

If you don't want to be critiqued, then don't post stuff that is bound to be.

*“I just need to have a rant!”*

*i (sic) also love that whenever you want to pepper a point you bring up your yrs of experience like no body elses matter*

**beware of your comments as you too may be publicly targeted to mind your manners online.**

*...this was a direct stab at my comment, hence it was you not respecting my opinion, not the other way around.*

*Have made the decision to leave this group as well as other educator forums. It saddens me so deeply the judgement and criticism I read on here.*

When you have to throw the whole child out!

*Statement of the problem – Facebook as a tool for networking and mentoring*

Of particular concern are comments and posts that compromise the rights of children through:

- Posting inappropriate photographs of children
- Posting inappropriate comments about children and their families
- Initiating conversations questioning the equal access to education for children with additional needs

*Statement of the problem – Facebook as a tool for networking and mentoring*

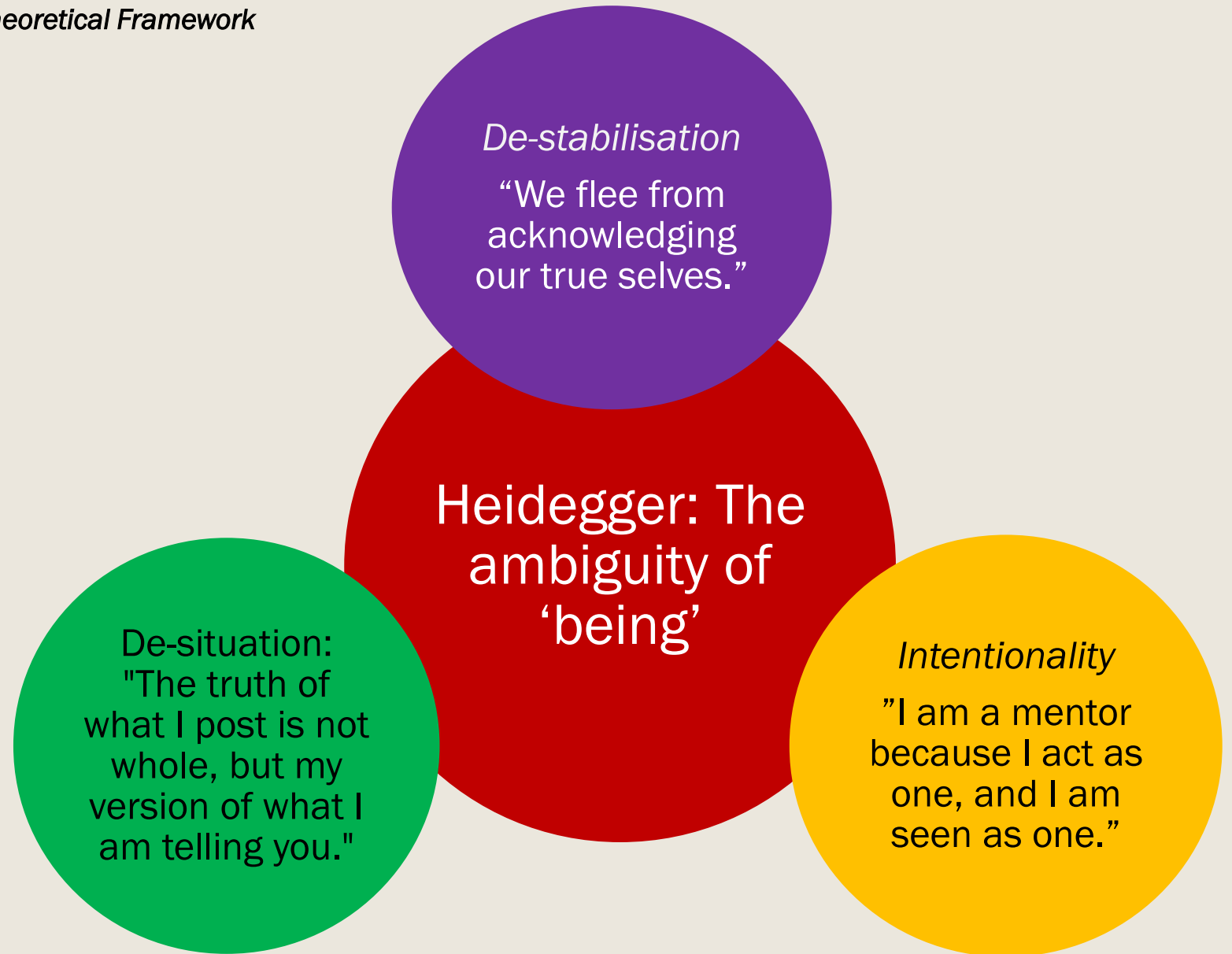
## Research focus

This research explores the perceptions Australian early childhood beginning teachers have concerning the mentoring they receive through Facebook and how this affects them in their teaching practices and workforce retention.

**Would a systematic approach to mentoring through Facebook for beginning teachers be effective?**

*Statement of the problem: Theoretical Framework*

Applying concepts to understanding the posts, threads and conversations on Facebook.





# The Project

## *Phenomenology*

Using a **phenomenological approach** as the methodology, allowed me to collect data in an unstructured manner and record subjective perspectives from participants from the Facebook sites.

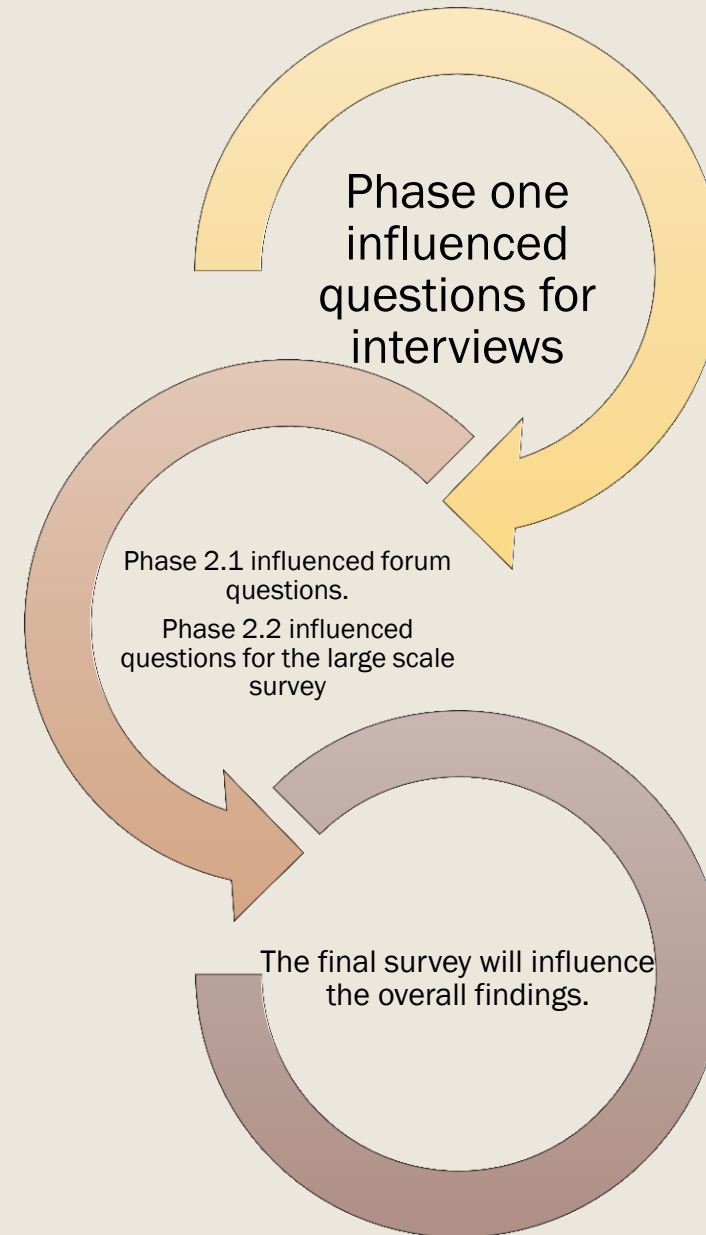
The freedom of phenomenology also provided an avenue to explore and discover additional findings that were outside the research question.

This is where the unexpected discovery of attitudes towards children's rights, inclusion and exclusion emerged.

### 3 Data Sets

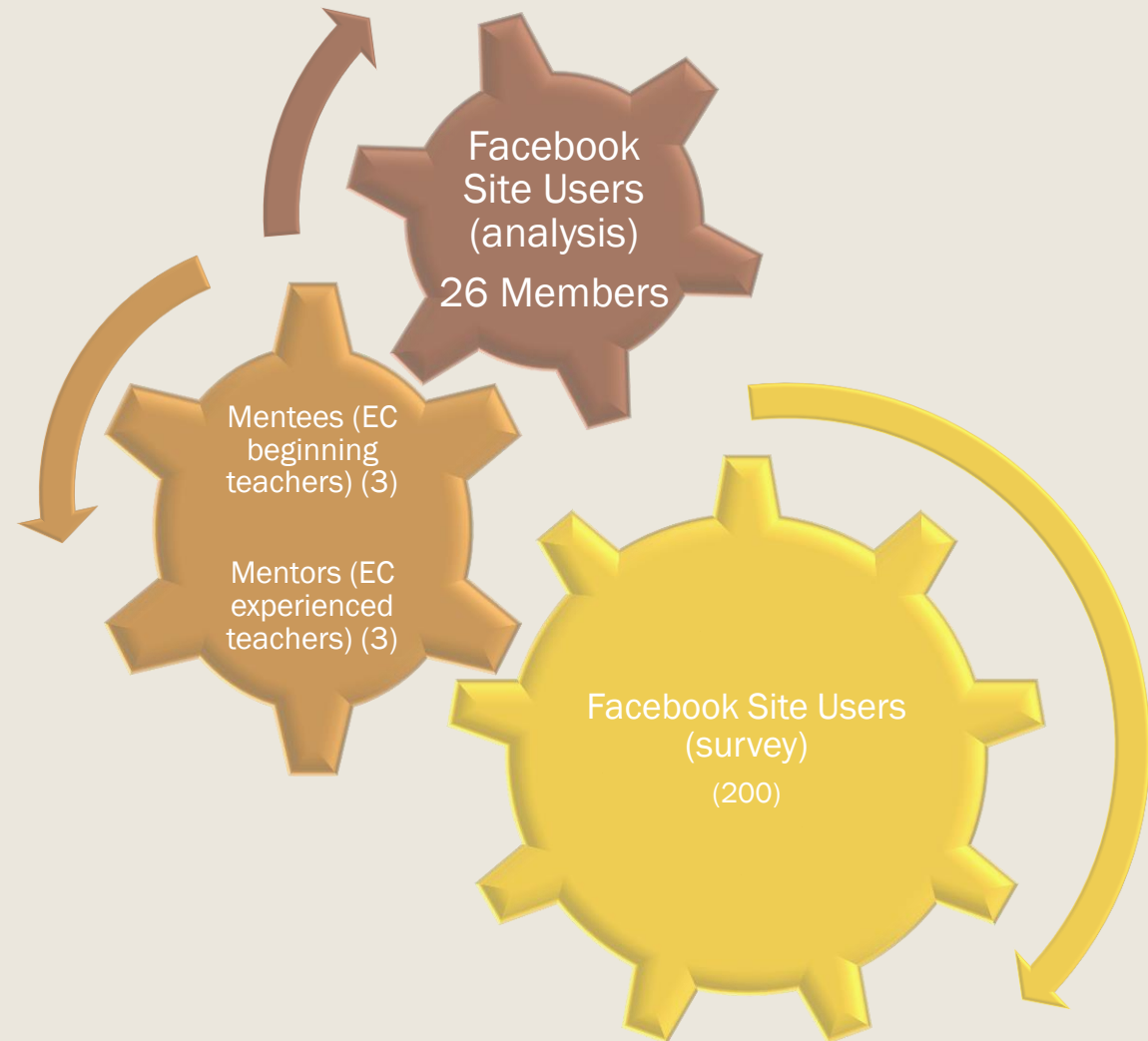
Each phase of data collection influences the next. Themes emerge and constructs become known with each phase.

Phenomenology has paved a way for discovery of the unknown.



## The Participants

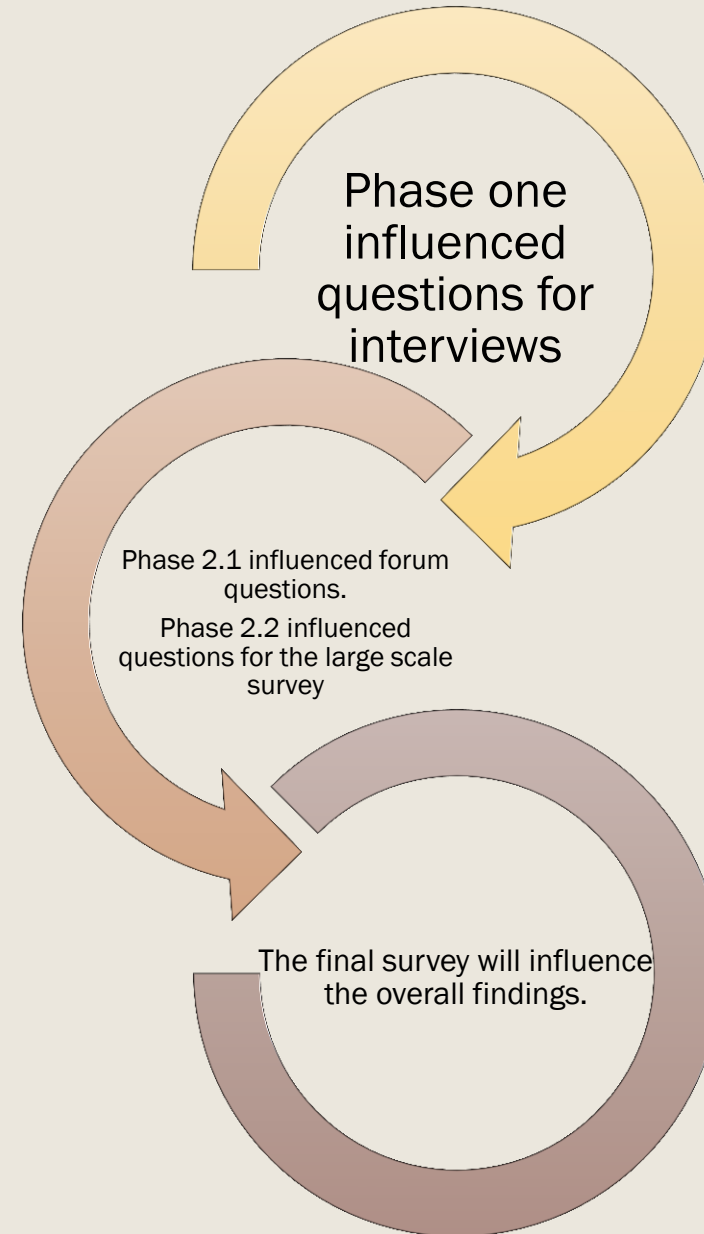
All participants were regular users of Facebook and were members of sites that focused upon early childhood practices aimed to support Beginning early childhood teachers.



*Methodology*

**The findings so far...**

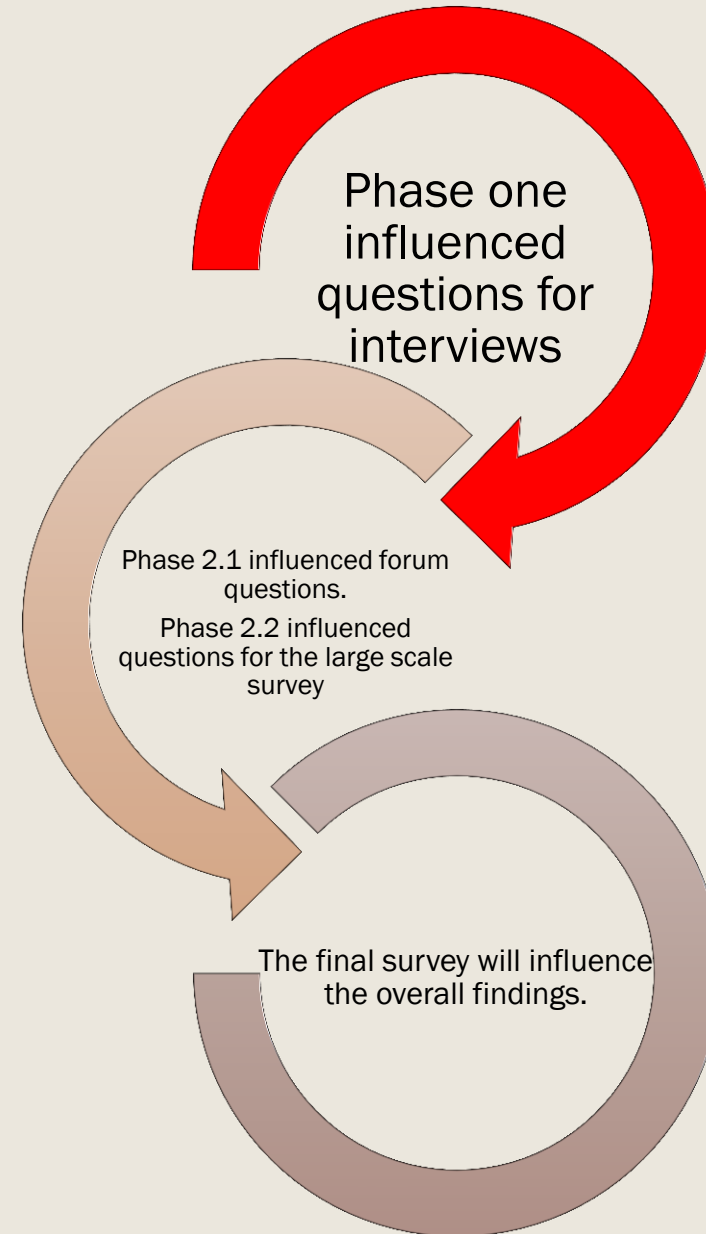
Relate to phase 1 and 2 of  
the data collection



*Methodology*

**The findings so far...**

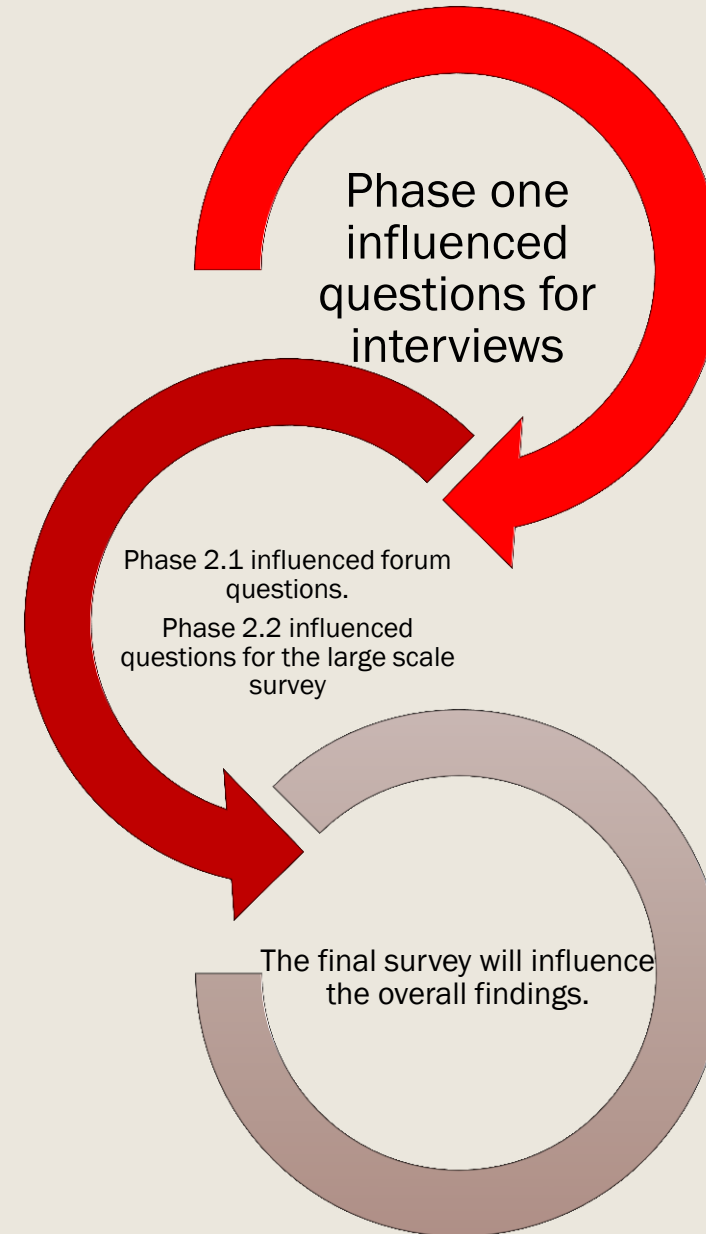
Relate to phase 1 and 2 of  
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*Methodology*

**The findings so far...**

Relate to phase 1 and 2 of  
the data collection



## *Specific Discussion from the Findings*

*What have I discovered so far?*

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis**

#### **PURPOSE:**

- to gather how frequently beginning teachers contributed or responded to discussions
- the manner in which they responded
- to explore the topics of discussion that seemed to cause deeper reflection of the teachers
- any emerging themes and responses both negative and positive.

## *Specific Discussion from the Findings*

*What have I found out so far? (cont.)*

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis**

#### **OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS**

- Self promotion
- Mentors seeking mentoring
- Hot topics
- Emotional capital
- Venting
- Advertising expertise/consulting



## *Findings*

*What have I found out so far? (cont.)*

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis**

## *Sample posts*

One of the key aspects of analysing the Facebook posts included understanding how to interpret dialogue and what this could mean in terms of the emerging themes.

“If I owned a service I would declare proudly to society that I meet the legislative requirements - but beyond that I dance to the beat of my own drum - I define my own high quality and stand by it. If the powers that be don't like it ... They know where the door is.”

*Member 19*

## Findings

*What have I found out so far? (cont.)*

### Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis

Sample threads: POST & RESPONSE - *Conflicting Mentoring*

“I have a child in my three year old group who has recently started to hold paint brushes or textas while drawing in both hands simultaneously and drawing/painting and is able to manage them really good I find it quite interesting but am eager to know if I should guide the child and encourage them to use one hand only?”

*Member 27*

#### **Reponses:**

- 1. Let them develop their handedness naturally*
- 2. Children now are struggling to develop pencil groups due to the amount of time they spend using devices. They need more help.*

## *Findings*

*What have I found out so far? (cont.)*

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis**

Sample threads: **POST & RESPONSE - *Helpful Mentoring***

“I will be starting my first year as a 4 yr old kinder teacher soon. I am really excited but want to be as prepared as I can. What types of things do you do to prepare for the New Year, what helps your relationships with families? What are you most useful resources or reference books? Thanks, I appreciate your time.”

*Member 28*

*A plethora of helpful advice was given with little conflict.*

## *Findings*

*What have I found out so far? (cont.)*

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis**

Sample threads: **POST & RESPONSE - *Condescending Mentoring***

“Scrutiny is part of that .... It is often seen as a negative and I have viewed it that way often myself, but I think if we are to truly reflect we need the scrutiny of others and ourselves so that we can effectively reflect.”

*Member 26*

## *Specific Discussion from the Findings*

### *Specific to Inclusion (or exclusion)*

#### Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response

##### **POST: DOES INCLUSION EXCLUDE OTHERS?**

I think the 'inclusion' policy needs to be looked at in a very refined & specific way. I too, am all for inclusion but not at the exclusion of others. I think the pros & cons for all parties need to be considered. It is a very contentious issues for many but I feel that it needs to be open & transparent for the concerns to be discussed..

## *Specific to Inclusion (or exclusion)*

### Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response

#### RESPONSE: WHAT ABOUT ATTENTION FOR MY CHILD?

It's a tricky question I remember when one of my sons was in 3 year old preschool there was a child that took all the attention away from the other children and as a parent I was not pleased. For a few reasons I didn't feel he was getting the best of what he could have been and I was not getting what I was paying for. I believe in inclusion but not at the expense of other children, it's just not fair on them.

## *Specific to Inclusion (or exclusion)*

### Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response

#### RESPONSE: ONE CHILD'S NEEDS SHOULD NOT BE ABOVE ALL OF THE OTHER CHILDREN

I understand completely and think this is a situation that many services have to deal with, ours included. I too value inclusion, but agree that one child's needs can not out way the needs of the rest of the group. If 100% KIS funding was not given, and your service did not have the funds for the physical changes needed, I believe you could appeal to the department stating that the health and safety of the child is your greatest concern. Weather (sic) or not u would get anywhere is unsure but I believe you should try. I know one of our local primary schools had a case similar and they were successful.

## *Specific to Inclusion (or exclusion)*

### Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response

**RESPONSE: MY PHILOSOPHY IS COMPROMISED DUE TO THE ADDITIONAL NEEDS CHILD**

While I agree with most of the above statements, we have the added burden of each and every parent of the group wanting the best for their child, as it should be. But meeting those expectations in this situation is sometimes impossible. Making sure every child is safe and secure while in our care is my first priority. On many occasions the program has been and will continue to be comprised (sic) because of the workload and the specialized care the children require. It is a fact of life that we can only do the best we can.



## ***Children's Rights to Equitable Access***

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response**

Initial post: WHO HAS PRIORITY OF ACCESS TO FUNDED PRESCHOOL?

I am after some feedback and links to any research about the importance of continuity for children in relation to attending 3 and 4 year old Preschool at the same kinder. With the Framework outlining the importance of 'belonging' and the value of relationships between children, educators and families, what do you think about a policy that could see children attending 3 year old Preschool at one centre then being allocated a spot at a completely different centre for 4 year old Preschool, despite the desire of families to stay where they feel comfortable and part of the community?

## ***Children's Rights to Equitable Access***

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response**

**RESPONSE: NO EQUITY IF 3YO GET PRIORITY AS IT COSTS \$\$\$\$**

Our cluster has changed policy on this because 3 yr old kinder is a choice and parents pay for the service if they show preference to these families, the families that can't afford to attend are at a disadvantage in regards to how many places are left after 3 yr olds have taken places

## ***Children's Rights to Equitable Access***

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response**

#### **RESPONSE: WHAT ABOUT THE HEARTACHE?**

We have the same policy as [name deleted], council has told us to be very careful about discriminating based on affordability (being able to afford to attend 3yo) and also siblings. Our policy is now only based on proximity. Sounds ok in theory but in reality it is very harsh and has caused some heartache this year. Many 3yo families have missed out.

## *Children's Rights to Equitable Access*

### Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response

#### RESPONSE: WHAT ABOUT THE HEARTACHE?

We have the same policy as (identity protected), council has told us to be very careful about discriminating based on affordability (being able to afford to attend 3yo) and also siblings. Our policy is now only based on proximity. Sounds ok in theory but in reality it is very harsh and has caused some heartache this year. Many 3yo families have missed out.

#### *BUT CHALLENGED BY THIS:*

Where is the choice if a family cannot afford to attend 3 year old with u but wants to attend 4 year old?

## ***Children's Rights to Equitable Access***

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response**

#### **RESPONSE: EQUITY? BELONGING AND COMMUNITY IS MORE IMPORTANT**

I believe 3s should get priority access to the same kinder. Belonging and relationships are clearly central to the NQF. There is a no way a policy that overrides family preference on this can be construed as compliant with the NQF.

## ***Children's Rights to Privacy and why they are on Facebook Posts***

### **Data Set 1: Facebook Page Analysis – Post and Response**

Typical posts:

Learning environments (preparation)

Children's artwork

Children engaged in play

Children engaged in play with specific details of the centre (open and public)

### **Concerning Posts**

Children in compromising positions (child with overfilled nappy with comment "When you have to throw the whole child out!")

Pictures of "quiet spray"

Negative descriptions of children

## Findings

*What have I found out so far? (cont.)*

### Data Set 2.1: Interviews

What sort of hot topics cause debate and have you experienced or seen any personal attacks?

Mentees	Mentors
There's quite a few conversations about structure verses unstructured	People with disability, inclusion for children with special needs
Those that have been working in childcare a long time and maybe done a certificate three or four just don't have the same, I don't know, world view their not coming from the same kind of paradigm of thinking about teacher and learning as a teacher necessarily	Conflict between people working in sessional Kinders and long day programs.  Very big tensions around qualifications
I just got sick of you know constant, yes that's a beautiful image of a setup in early childhood setting	Kindergarten teachers complaining about the work that their assistants do and their expectations of the assistant
	View of what Australia Day really means
	A bit of clashing around indigenous perspectives ..tokenism

## Findings

*What have I found out so far? (cont.)*

### Data Set 2.1: Interviews

What sort of hot topics cause debate and have you experienced or seen any personal attacks?

Mentees	Mentors
It seemed like every day was just another structured art activity someone would have posted raving about and then somebody had replied getting really aggressive of how that's so wrong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a lot of debate around the whole question of open ended activities for children and craft and stuff like that</li><li>• something that always makes people argue is say art.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sleep routines and arrangements</li></ul>
There was one particular person who was always getting very passionate about her beliefs...I felt it was just putting other educators off side	They were commenting, making negative comments and then being very unfriendly
	Very heated conversations about vaccination



*Specific Discussion from the Findings*

Data Set 2:2: Forum

***Children's Rights to Privacy and why they are on Facebook Posts***

*Concepts and Quotes:*

It can feel quite private, when it is you and your laptop late at night - but 10,000 people might be able to read it the next day,"

Member 16

But there are also families who feel very comfortable with using photos, and educators are posting with permission - and others keep telling them off as if they are not allowed to have that opinion

Member 16

Its also a concern for companies using programs like story park which includes photographs. Parents receive these photos and may have pictures of other children from within the group. There is nothing to stop the photos being cut and pasted into other digital forums.

Member 17

## ***Children's Rights to Privacy and why they are on Facebook Posts***

**Data Set 2:2: Forum**

Concepts and Quotes:

I am not sure how meaningful a child's permission could be - do we think it is developmentally appropriate to expect children to understand the reach of the internet?

Member 16

not so much in the now - but in the future - we might be taking that choice away from them, growing up with their image already all over the internet.

Member 29

*So what can we take from this...*

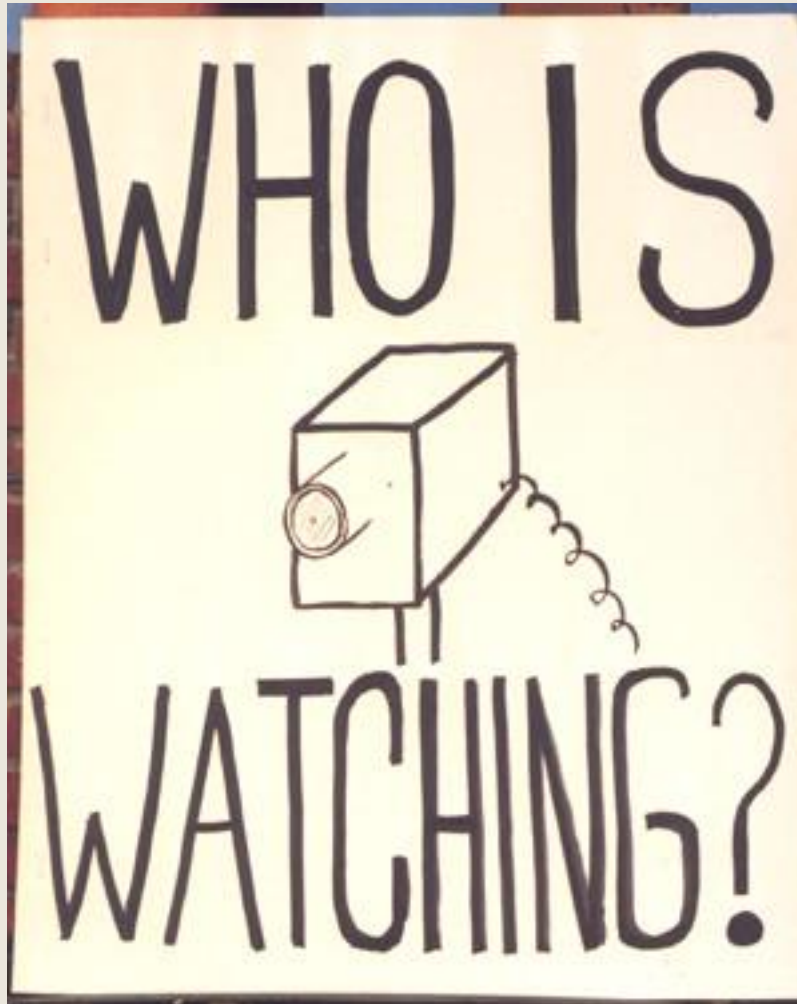
*Facebook Networking can be **negative***

- Text can be misinterpreted
- Advice can be misinformed
- Exclusion of children with additional needs can be promoted
- Posts can be reckless in terms of children's rights to privacy
- Posts can assume the voice of the child but also take it away
- Posts can disempower others
- Posts can inadvertently self-promote (which may be inappropriate in the context of the post)

*Discussions and Conclusions....so far*

*Facebook Mentoring can be positive*

- Exclusion of children with additional needs can be challenged and rights promoted
- Reckless posts of children (photographs, descriptions, etc) can be addressed by others in relation to social justice and children's rights
- Posts can give children a voice through advocacy and role-modelling
- Strategies for working with children can be shared and modelled
- Advice regarding funding applications can be shared
- Teachers can feel supported and not alone



Graduates

Students

Children

Parents

Potential bosses

Potential study teachers

Government

Colleagues

Friends



Whilst we cannot 'control' the use of Facebook, we can be effective role-models.

We can apply more moderated systematic approaches to how Facebook is used without compromising freedom of speech.

We could include our use of social media in our professional teaching standards guidelines.

Tertiary institutes can include teachings of social justice in terms of social media.

Systematic approach to social media upon graduation linked to teacher registration.

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