Documenting the transition experiences of children, families and staff through the relocation and integration of two Australian early childhood services

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THIS EXPLORATORY STUDY EXAMINES the transition experiences of children, families, and staff at two early childhood services in regional Australia, as they merge into an integrated early childhood service. A qualitative methodology was used and data were collected from open-ended surveys distributed to early childhood staff (5) and families (13) three months after the transition. Families indicated that early preparation, via social stories and orientation activities, helped facilitate smooth transitions for their children and themselves. Early childhood staff indicated challenges with a new location and a lack of infrastructure to support integration. Directors expressed positive attitudes about the integration process, but indicated that the lack of leadership and policy to guide the integration process was an impediment. Results point to the need for stronger support of early childhood staff during transition, and the importance of strong leadership, infrastructure and policy to facilitate integration of early childhood services.

Introduction

Children’s transition experiences have been examined extensively in previous research, with much emphasis on the transition from prior-to-school settings to school (Dockett & Perry, 2004, 2010; Pianta & Rimm-Kaufman, 2006). However, less is known about the transition experiences for children, families and early childhood staff when they move within and across prior-to-school early childhood settings. Although there is some research on transition experiences within early childhood settings (Cryer et al., 2005; Garpelin, Kalberg, Ekstrom & Sandberg, 2010) and between different prior-to-school settings, such as long day care to preschool (Barblett, Barratt-Pugh, Kilagon & Maloney, 2011), there is little research documenting the transition to an integrated early childhood service. However, there is now a strong trend in Australia, and around the world, towards integrating early childhood services (Press, Sumision & Wong, 2010). Considering that such transitions involve changes in location, routines, environment, and often early childhood staff, it is important to develop and implement strategies that will support children, families and staff through these changes.

The purpose of this research was to document the transition experiences of children, families and early childhood staff as two early childhood services (a long day care centre and an early intervention service) relocated to a new site, and merged into one integrated children’s service. The aim was to identify strategies to support other children, families and staff experiencing similar transition situations, and identify areas where additional support was needed.

Background

This research documents the transition and integration of two separate children’s services in a regional area of Australia, one of which is a university-based long day care centre and the other an early childhood intervention service for children with disabilities and developmental delays, and their families. These services were previously located separately and were not affiliated in any way with each other. Both services are now co-located on a university campus, and have begun the integration process. Transition planning has occurred over the course of several years, and the physical occupation of the new building took place while the children enrolled in these services were on a six-week break from mid-December to late January. This research commenced when the new integrated service had been open and services available for families and children for three months.
Transition in childhood

A useful way to examine transition experiences is with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, which emphasises the various contexts that influence and are influenced by the child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The experiences of young children who undergo transitions between early childhood settings will likely be affected by the ways in which their family and the early childhood staff experience the transition and support them. Additionally, the ways in which families and staff experience transition may be impacted by the child's experience. In order to develop support strategies for children, families and staff, it is important that all stakeholders work collaboratively and understand the perspectives and experiences of all involved in the transition process (Dockett & Perry, 2004).

For children, families and early childhood staff, the relocation to a new building could involve significant disruptions in routine, as well as losses in some cases. Fostering continuity is important and can be accomplished in a number of ways, such as visiting the new location, keeping staff and routines as similar as possible in the new location, and regular communication between staff and families (Early Head Start National Resource Center, 2004).

While adult transition and change are not at the centre of this study, the impacts of change and transitions of adults impact the experiences of both the children and adults in any changing early childhood environment. Adult transition experiences with change impact upon identity in public spheres of development. Schlossberg's (2011) important study of adult development identified the unique experiences of adults in changing environments and transitional stages. This work provides a fuller conceptualisation of how the child nested in the ecological context and the adult developmental change trajectory interplay in this study. The adult staff and family stakeholders are deeply impacted by changes in work roles, environment, and culture (Schlossberg, 2011). Some change creates profoundly difficult loss experiences for adults that require ongoing support (Silin, 2011). These theoretical implications should be considered and explored in future studies targeting the adult experiences and outcomes in transitional early childhood work environments.

Although a transition to a new and improved physical setting may be exciting, transition plans and support strategies need to be put in place before the transition begins (Merrill & Britt, 2008). Young children learn best when they have secure attachments to the important adults in their lives, such as parents and caregivers (Bowlby, 1982). During transitions, parents and caregivers can minimise children's distress by responding sensitively. Supportive and respectful relationships are key elements in supporting young children through transitions (Perry et al., 2006). Planning ahead is also important in easing transitions for young children (Adams & Parlakian, 2010). There are many ways in which early childhood staff can assist children and families in the transition to a new classroom and centre location. For example, visiting the new centre and classroom, and, if possible, meeting any new staff, can help families and children become more comfortable with changes (Cryer, Hurwitz & Wolery, 2001). Also, obtaining feedback from families, either written or verbal can assist staff in identifying areas of concern for children and families. Additionally, talking with children about transitions, highlighting the positive aspects, is helpful in preparing children for changes. Even children who are not yet verbal can observe adults' body language, facial expression, and tone of voice. Talking to children about upcoming changes can help children feel more comfortable (Adams & Parlakian, 2010).

Children who have delayed or impaired development, and families with complex support needs require more strategic preparation for transitions to new learning environments (see Dockett et al., 2011). A system of continuous planning and evaluation cycles in conjunction with a predictable routine and open communication best supports the unique needs of children with exceptional learning requirements (Brandes, Ormsbee & Haring, 2007). Early childhood educators need to be afforded professional development opportunities in order to understand the most effective strategies for supporting these diverse young learners. Collaboration is the key to designing and implementing effective transitions for young children from early intervention to early education settings. All stakeholders—parents, educators, and children—need to be included in the development of the transition planning (Branson & Bingham, 2009; Brandes et al., 2007).

Much attention has been given to the experiences of children and families in the transition research; however, early childhood staff also need to be supported in their own experiences of the transition. There has been little empirical attention given to staff transitions in early childhood settings. Children, families, and staff require adequate resources to successfully plan and carry out transitions to new learning environments (NECTI, 2008). Services should allow for careful strategic planning in order to design, implement, and evaluate the scheduled plans. In particular, resource provision should be made available for time, formal training, and informal preparation involving frequent opportunities for children to engage with educators and families (NECTI, 2008).

Transition to integrated early childhood services

The integration of early childhood services is becoming increasingly common and desirable in Australia and around the world (Dockett et al., 2011). According...
to Press et al. (2010) the Australian Government has recently advocated for the provision of 'integrated early childhood education and care' (DEEWR, 2010). Although defined in numerous ways, integrated services are generally thought of as 'services that are connected in ways that create a comprehensive and cohesive system of support' (Dockett et al., 2011, p. 7). Research has found numerous benefits of integrated services to families and children (Moore, 2007).

Press et al. (2010) discuss several key characteristics of effective integrated early childhood services. First, services must have an effective and committed governance. Second, they must have strong leadership effective in managing change. A strong organisational culture and ethos is also important, including shared visions, a sense of collective ownership, and trust. Finally, ‘frontline’ interdisciplinary professional practice in team building is an essential feature of an effective integrated children’s service.

In 2011, a cohort of Australian early childhood practitioners brought together years of their work on early childhood service integration. The Bestchance organisation led by Tytler (2011) yielded a comprehensive report delineating the phases of development required to design infrastructure, to develop staff, and implement routine program evaluation strategies. Tytler and colleagues developed an integrated service framework for early childhood services over several years as the cohort continually refined their service delivery strategies to accommodate new data, which supported innovations in organisational structure and service operations. Although policies about service integration exist, more research is needed to document the transition to integrated early childhood services, as these services become more widespread.

**Summary**

Previous research suggests that support through transitions is important for young children and families, particularly those with diverse support needs. There is a lack of research focused on transition across prior-to-school settings, and on the experiences of transitions within early childhood settings. Additionally, the extant literature fails to adequately illuminate the shortcomings of integration transitions as they relate to the need for continued collaboration between senior organisational leaders and the practitioners who work with the families and children who are set to benefit from the enhanced services. The present study identifies how active involvement of all stakeholders during the visionary planning phase and commitment to the iterative process during implementation are related to more favourable outcomes. In addition, this study offers the unique opportunity to document the merging of two children’s services into one integrated service.

The aims of this exploratory study were:
- to document the transition experiences of children, families and staff as two early childhood centres relocated and merged into one integrated service
- to identify strategies to support children, families and staff as they experience similar transitions
- to identify areas where further support was needed.

**Method**

To address the aims of the research, an interpretive approach was used (Denzin, 1992). The focus was on gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of those involved in the transition. All questions posed to participants were open ended and responses were analysed qualitatively. This research was approved by the institution ethics committee. Surveys from family and staff members were anonymous and consent was obtained.

**Participants**

Staff and families were located in a regional city in New South Wales, Australia, which has a population of approximately 88,000 people. Forty-five parents (mothers and fathers) and five early childhood staff from the long day care centre were approached (a total of 23 families). Twenty-five parents and nine staff members from the Early Childhood Intervention Service were approached to participate in the study. Overall, 13 families and five staff members across both of the services consented to participate in this study.

**Data gathering**

Surveys were distributed three months after the transition to the new location occurred. Hard copies of the parent surveys and information sheets were distributed through the children’s information pockets. Parents were instructed to return their surveys in a return box in the lobby of the building. Staff surveys were distributed via staff mailboxes and staff were instructed to return completed surveys in a return box in the staffroom.

Survey questions for families asked about how families prepared themselves and their children for the transition, what worked well and what did not, the main successes and challenges, and how they and their children coped with the transition. Survey questions for staff focused on describing their experiences of the transition, how the children coped, what strategies they used to prepare themselves, children and families, and any successes or challenges they met. To gather more information about the process of combining two children’s services into one integrated service, the Directors of both services...
shared their experiences by completing an open-ended written survey. Questions focused on describing their experiences with and preparation for the integration process, goals of integration, successes and challenges.

Data from the staff and families related to the general process of this unique transition were analysed based on the idea of phenomenology, which states that knowledge can be gained through understanding the experiences of others (McMillan & Wergin, 2006). Analytic induction, which is the ‘systematic examination of similarities between cases to develop concepts or ideas’, was used to develop the themes that emerged from the open-ended survey responses from staff and families (Punch 2005, p. 196). The survey responses were coded using the principles of the Constant Comparative Method (see Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1999).

Coding was done by two of the lead researchers. A process of ‘open coding’ was used, which is ‘the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data’ (Strauss & Corbin 1999, p. 61). First, each researcher separately read the survey responses and took notes about themes that commonly emerged, both for the families and the staff. The two researchers then met to discuss their initial notes and look for commonalities in these themes.

Results

Data analysis

The researchers identified four categories of data: ‘successful support strategies initiated by staff’, ‘successful support strategies initiated by families’, ‘challenges faced by families’, and ‘challenges faced by staff’.

Successful support strategies initiated by staff

In their survey responses, staff and families identified the support strategies they viewed as helping to ease the transition process. These strategies included social stories, orientation events, photo books, continuity and support of staff, and communication. A social story is designed to share accurate social information with someone in a reassuring and patient way, and aims to help a person more clearly understand potentially confusing situations (Gray, 2000). Social stories were originally designed to be used with people who have Autism Spectrum Disorder, but have more recently been used successfully for people (both adults and children) with other communication differences, and people without such differences. Clear visuals, such as the use of photos, are helpful in creating successful social stories. Staff at the early intervention centre used several social stories to help prepare children and families for the transition. Although the research on the effectiveness of social stories is mixed (Sansosti, Powell-Smith & Kincaid, 2004), it is clear from many of the parent responses that these were seen to be useful.

I read through the learning story the staff at [the early intervention service] ... had sent us with my child so he knew that we would be at a different location this year. I believe it helped that he could recognise the new building from the photos when we first came (Parent 1).

Orientation visit/site visits were also seen by some families to be a successful transition support strategy. There was a ‘turning of the sod’ event that took place on the new building site prior to construction. Families, children, staff, and members of the community were invited to this event. Additionally, open days and classroom visits were scheduled immediately prior to the new service opening.

Allowing a site inspection prior for families was a positive. It was like an intro before moving in which allowed our son to digest after talking about it so much (Parent 7).

Photo books of the new site under construction were regularly shown to and discussed with children and families in the months leading up to the integration of services. The photos were regularly updated by staff as the construction progressed. This allowed the children and families to see the ‘process’ of their new centre being built.

We regularly took photos of the building and displayed them for families to see. We had a sod-turning ceremony and orientation visits ... Talking to the children and having photo books of the old centre as well as the one about the new centre (Early childhood educator (ECE) 3).

Continuity and support of staff were also identified as being important in easing the transition. Although the move to a larger physical space required the hiring of some new staff, many of the staff at the previous sites continued to the new site.

... the teachers in the room helped as immediately he saw familiar faces (Parent 7).

One parent indicated that a support strategy that worked well was:

Having a key staff member from the old centre in charge of the new room where our child now goes (Parent 6).

Communication was repeatedly discussed by many of the families and staff as being a key strategy used to prepare for the transition.

Communication is the key. Keep everyone informed through a variety of means, conversations, photos, newsletters, etc. (ECE 3).
Successful support strategies used by families

Several strategies were used to by families to prepare their children for the transition. Driving by the new site while it was under construction was a common practice.

We drove out with our eldest child to have a look at the building one day as it was being built (Parent 5).

Also, verbal communication with children was seen to be important in supporting children through the transition. Some parents said that when they talked to their children about the upcoming move, they made sure to model their own excitement.

We talked to our child about moving to a new building/home and they got really excited to come and play and meet new friends (Parent 9).

Some families stated that they used strategies that included reference to the previous setting. This may help to show respect for the child’s attachment to their previous early childhood centre, and to maintain some consistency. One parent indicated that when they still refer to the new centre by the name of the previous centre. Another parent stated that talking about the ‘old’ centre (school) was a continued practice.

We still drive by his ‘old school’ and look at it and talk about it, as this was part of our routine when we went into town (Parent 4).

All staff and families indicated that they felt children were well prepared for the transition, and the experience was positive.

The children have transitioned much easier than I thought. They have been excited to be in our new space and enjoyed exploring it and getting to know the staff and children (ECE 3).

One parent stated, don’t just turn up expecting children to accept ‘change’—like adults we need info in order to understand and accept a change in an environment we have become accustomed to (Parent 7).

Challenges faced by families

All of the families who responded expressed that they felt well supported and indicated that the transition was smooth. There were few identified challenges. Issues related to changes in the physical building and location were the most common challenges discussed by families. The new building was larger, rooms were more dispersed, and the new site was some distance outside of the centre of town, resulting in longer driving time for some families. Additionally, the interior doors had automatic locking features that were not always accessible to families. The new physical environment, thus, made changes in routine necessary.

This probably sounds very minor, but the new collecting routine took some getting used to. It was hard to find hats, shoes, bottles, lunchboxes among card-swipe doors (Parent 6).

I missed the homely feel of the old centre and seeing all the staff. Now they are all in their separate rooms (Parent 8).

Although continuity of staff was seen as an effective support strategy, in a few cases, staff and children at the previous centre did not remain continuous. Discontinuity of children and staff attending the new centre was an issue for a minority of families. Not all of the families chose to make the move to the new site, for a variety of reasons. This resulted in a disruption in children’s familiar peer groups. Staff also had to be shifted to different classrooms on some occasions.

... having children from the old centre not go to the new one, either because they go elsewhere or began school (Parent 6).

My son did prefer one particular staff member who he asked for a lot in the first month. She is in a different room (Parent 8).

Challenges faced by staff

There were several identified challenges for early childhood staff. As was the case for families, changes in the physical building were most commonly identified by staff as being problematic.

Some aspects of the building were incomplete to safety standards (gates/doors) as they were not on schedule for starting date. This became evident once children attended and they needed to be fixed (ECE 1).

The building was not adequately inspected or prepared (ECE 2).

I think the major challenge has been getting used to a much larger facility, remembering where things are stored, etc. (ECE 3).

Also, several staff discussed the short time frame for physical re-location as being a challenge. The physical re-location to the new building felt too rushed, and more time was needed to better prepare the physical space prior to the children, families, and staff arriving, as well as transition into the new space. Additionally, a longer transition time would have allowed more of a focus on preparing new staff, and recruiting new families.

We needed to allow more time to develop the staff as a team. Allow more time to have children visit. Allow more open days to have community members visit and get new families in (ECE 2).

The focus was on old staff and families almost exclusively with no emphasis on new staff and families (ECE 2).
Finally, two early childhood staff expressed difficulties with emotional attachment to the previous sites.

On an emotional level I was more affected by the transition than I expected. I knew the change would be difficult/different but I do miss the old centre more than I thought I would (ECE 3).

I didn’t realise I had such an attachment to the previous centre ... I did not transition easily. I found it very difficult (ECE 4).

Perspectives on transitioning into one integrated service

The Directors of the long day care centre and the Early Childhood Intervention Service offered insight into the process of merging to become an integrated service for children and families. First, they indicated their goals for the integrated service, including:

- high-quality education, therapy and care
- increasing the experience of staff through increased training and awareness of child development
- better learning opportunities for children and families
- more empowered, well-prepared professional education teams
- happier families
- children who feel safe and engaged
- streamlined entry to education services
- a community that understands the benefits of integrated services.

Although both Directors shared similar goals, there were challenges in reaching these goals through the integration of services. Prior to the integration process, the grand vision was to facilitate a seamless integration. However, the Directors indicated that prior to the integration, and three months afterwards, policies had not been put in place to support the integration process.

The policies are not yet devised, but we plan to do so. At the moment I feel like there is a lack of support from both sides’ governing organisations in assisting us with these policies (Director 1).

No such policies exist, and this is the primary roadblock to us making progress as two organisations working toward mutual outcomes (Director 2).

Both Directors indicated that they communicate regularly with each other to discuss common goals, a shared vision, and strategies to achieve an effective integration. The Directors work under the structure of two unique organisations; one of which operates within an allied health framework and the other operates as a commercial enterprise. Senior leaders from each organisation are responsible for approval of resources needed to make significant changes to policies and procedures. An integration committee, including senior leaders and the directors or managers charged with carrying out the on-the-ground operations, should be founded and have ongoing action plan review meetings from start to conclusion of the integration transition. Some of the visionary planning goals generated during the development stages did not evolve into soundly implemented processes. Time and monetary resources were needed to support continued collaboration between services. Service integration processes are ongoing. An iterative operational framework is suggested to enhance productivity and best fit during the development and implementation. However, without a strong infrastructure and the support of key stakeholders who hold the power to make changes, the integration process has stagnated.

I wish we had more structure in place that aligned organisational charts, mutual outcomes, and a five year plan before we moved into the building. We are two different organisations that live in the same building. We are incredibly supportive of each other’s work. However, without the support of senior leaders at the university, we are limited in what change we can bring about without their support and resources. They must share our vision and support us in the journey (Director 2).

The actual integration of the two services however has been much harder than I originally thought. I think the crucial factor is the loss of several key players during the transition. This has meant that some really important information that was gathered during the planning stage was lost or changed when new people arrived (Director 1).

The comment of Director 1 (above) refers to the loss of two key early childhood leaders who played major roles in planning the integration. These two leaders represented ‘collaborative champions’, who had a great deal of influence on key stakeholders and who were enthusiastic in keeping momentum to move the project along (Press et al, 2010). However, just a few months before the physical relocation of both services, these two ‘champions’ were called away from the project due to other commitments. Thus, the two services were left without strong leadership to guide them through the last phases of the integration, which called into question the sustainability of the integration.

In the best case scenario, Directors expect to have ongoing support and involvement from senior leaders to develop and review transition processes and to unfold the integration in stages according to the size and capacity of the service over a period of time. Despite the challenges, both Directors remained positive about the experience and have hopes for becoming an effective and quality integrated service.
The aims of this research were to document the transition experiences of children, families, and early childhood staff after the relocation and merging of two children’s services into one integrated service, to identify support strategies, and to identify areas of further support. Findings indicated that families expressed that they felt well supported and felt their children did well with the transition. Numerous support strategies were used by families and early childhood staff and these were viewed by families and staff as successful. Continuity of people, staff, children and families, as well as preparing children for the upcoming transition by talking to them and various orientation activities, were highlighted as being key factors in the success of the transition. These findings correspond to those of previous research indicating that relationships, which involve continuity and regular communication about changes, are important (Perry et al., 2006). Also, the use of social stories was viewed as a useful strategy to assist children to prepare for the transition. This method of support could be used for children without diverse learning needs as well (Sansosti et al., 2004).

Challenges identified by families were largely focused on the physical aspects of the new building. Different features and processes in the physical building, such as the use of card swipe doors, seemed to be most disruptive. Although there will be ‘teething problems’ involved in any transition, this finding highlights the need to adequately prepare the new physical space and to inform staff and families of new procedures ahead of time. Accessibility and inclusive design are important for all children, families, and staff. Design and security features should be sufficient for the space, but equally important are values of belonging and inclusion. Features like electronic locking doors, door release buttons, and accessible toilets should be thoughtfully placed to allow for safe and convenient operations. Families want their children to be safe, but also require open, convenient access which demonstrates a sense of belonging.

Although families and children generally had positive experiences of the transition, some staff felt the transition was emotionally challenging. In this case, more preparation was needed in supporting staff through such changes. There is a need for future research about early childhood staff experiences during transitions in their work setting, as there is little empirical research on this topic. Although there are transition guidelines in place that can be used and adjusted for those experiencing different transitions (Perry et al., 2006), more emphasis should be placed on supporting early childhood staff though workplace transitions. Previous research has identified that adequate resources are essential for having a prepared staff ready to lead children and families into new learning environments (NCETI, 2008; Press et al., 2010). Although it is important to allow opportunities to mourn the loss of old familiar places and practices, it is equally important to focus on the benefits afforded by new environments. Although the transition process may be challenging and highlight loss experiences, over time staff may be able to develop new attachments, gain new knowledge and skills which accommodate the needs of children and families (Silin, 2011).

In relation to the Directors’ experiences of the process of integrating services, there was an overall positive and hopeful attitude about the process and about the benefits that such an integrated service could bring to children, families and staff. However, a lack of strong senior leadership in the months prior to the transition, policy, and support from powerful stakeholders were identified as barriers. These findings support previous research showing that proactive planning and preparation for the integration of services helps to make the transition more successful (Press et al., 2010; Prichard, Purdon & Chaplyn, 2010; Tytler, 2011). Also, there is a need for strong leadership in order for the integration to be sustainable (Press et al., 2010; Siraj-Blatchford & Marni, 2007). Special focus must be targeted to the entire organisational structure of the transitioning organisation. The present research highlights the importance of actively engaging key stakeholders involved in the policy development and applied practical levels within the organisation or collaborating organisations. Successful implementation of integrated early childhood education services calls for policies to be guided by values, which can be adopted and implemented by day-to-day practitioners. Such dynamic changes in operations, philosophy, and vision call for improved infrastructure and resources to support staff in developing protocols with routine evaluations also a fundamental requirement (Press et al., 2010; Prichard et al., 2010; Tytler, 2011). High-level leadership and measurable support throughout the transition process is needed. More research is also needed as the trend toward community-focused, integrated early childhood services continues. Services planning to expand operations from previously independent organisations to integrated services should take special consideration to provide opportunities for families and staff from each organisation to network.
and build relationships before moving to new facilities and making significant changes to practices. Healthy working relationships are critical to successful service integration, and this should be reflected throughout the planning stages.

There are several limitations of this study. The qualitative nature of the study, and the fact that a small subsample of potential participants was used, does not allow for generalising to other settings, and may not reflect the views of all potential participants. However, this study does identify some areas for future research, and some considerations for other early childhood services going through similar transitions. Also, the present study examines the transition process retrospectively and fairly early on in the transition process. Longitudinal studies of the integration process are needed to gain a fuller understanding. Additionally, the children’s experiences of the transition were reported through the parents’ eyes. It is not known if parental perceptions accurately captured how children were actually feeling about the changes. However, due to the fact that many of the children were non-verbal, it was felt that parent perspectives would provide more information about the particular support strategies that were and were not effective. However, it must be acknowledged that even very young children are capable of sharing their experiences of transition (Einarsdottir, 2011) and future research should include their perspectives. Play has been identified as an important transitional mechanism for helping children engage in the process and to express their thoughts and feelings regarding the developmental impacts of transition during the early education period (Brostrom, 2005). In future efforts, play-based experiences can be built in by educators to encourage children’s contribution to evolving environments. Finally, we present a descriptive study about the experience of transitioning to an integrated service. Future studies should apply a more theoretical and analytical approach to examining the transition of early childhood organisational settings. Despite these limitations, this research highlights the need for more attention to be focused on the support of early childhood staff in workplace transitions. The findings also indicate that, during the process of early childhood service integration, careful planning, development of policy and the support and leadership of powerful stakeholders are needed in order to facilitate implementation. As the trend towards early childhood service integration continues in Australia and internationally, it will be essential to develop strategies to best support staff, children and families through this process.

References


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