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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Historical Context of Early Childhood Education in Queensland Before the Preparatory Year.

To further our understandings of the lived experiences of teacher aides in Preparatory classes in Queensland Catholic Schools, it is useful to locate the historical socio-cultural landscape of the education system in which they work.

The establishment of Catholic Education in Australia

Education existed primarily for religious, social and moral purposes in colonial times and was considered the realm of the church (Fogarty, 1959; Higgins, 1994). Deemed outside government responsibility, it had been presumed that parents would provide for their own children in this new colony (Fogarty, 1959; Mellor, 1990). However, this wasn't the case, and the growth of population in the Australian colonies saw a growing number of destitute and orphaned children forming roaming gangs. Relying on the capacity of the church to provide education, efforts to address this problem resulted in the opening of schools by ministers of religion or missionaries to cater for children of convicts and of Military Officers. This was followed by the establishment of Protestant and Catholic orphan schools in 1803 (Fogarty, 1959; Higgins, 1994; Mellor, 1990).

As the country became established, colonies supported the establishment of denominational schooling, providing funding for teachers' wages, school buildings or rental costs or housing for teachers (Fogarty, 1959). However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, governing bodies found it necessary to review the organisation of educational services. There was growing political and social unrest regarding the rights of the Church over education, and existing funding arrangements were becoming too costly. In response to these challenges, the colonies began to assume a more dominant role in the provision of education for all children (Fogarty, 1959; Higgins, 1994; Sands & Berends, 2012). Two significant outcomes of this intervention were the extension of secular education for all children, and the restriction of funding to non-state schools.

The establishment of Catholic education in Australia faced tremendous challenges. The removal of funding by governments for non-state schools in the second half of the nineteenth century was a serious threat to its development (Fogarty, 1959; Mellor, 1990). Further, in his 'Syllabus of Errors' 1864, Pope Pius IX mandated that religion and education were inseparable, and that it was the role of the Catholic Church to tackle 'the evils of modern, liberal, secular ideas gaining currency in Europe' (Ryan, 2005, p. 9).

The Pope's mandate, in conjunction with the formation of the first Plenary Council of Australian Bishops in 1865, was of great consequence to the development of Catholic

education in Australia. In response to government initiatives to extend secular education, the Plenary Council directed that primary and elementary schools be established in every mission where there was a priest. Priests were responsible for the schools. Any priest who did not support an existing school or the building of a new school would be removed (Ryan, 2005). Schools were to take precedence over the church, and could be used out of hours for liturgy. Catholic families were expected to support these schools.

The pattern of each parish building, responsibility for its own school and installation of a community of religious teachers was consistent throughout Australia (Fogarty, 1959). The provision of education for poor and working class children, which represented the majority of the parish community, was considered critical to improve their social condition (Fogarty, 1959). Thus, education was viewed as a means to protect society from the exploits of idle, poverty-stricken children (Coldrey, 2000).

The establishment of Catholic schools in Queensland occurred within a very difficult socio-political arena. Throughout 1860, debates continued regarding the funding of colonial schools. The government argued that it could no longer financially support religious communities in their pastoral missions. In 1860, under Queensland's Governor Bowen, the *State Aid Discontinuance Act* was passed, following the lead by New South Wales (Ryan, 2005). However, in response to the mandates given by Pope Pius IX and the first Plenary Council of Australian Bishops, as discussed earlier, Catholic education continued to grow in Queensland. At this time, these schools offered no early childhood education services.

Towards the development of early childhood education in Australia

By the 1880s, Catholic infant schools were operating in all capital cities (Mellor, 1990), funded by support from local parishes. Alongside these, wealthier private schools were also expanding, providing kindergarten classes, as well as enabling an increasing number of girls to graduate from high school. With more educated women entering the workforce, more care was required for their children. Consequently, more children were attending school before compulsory attendance age, perhaps as a substitute for supervised care (Brennan, 1989; Mellor, 1990). In educational terms, this resulted in overcrowding of classrooms and increased pressure upon schools to cater for these younger children. However, the depression in the late 1890s resulted in a reduction of educational expenditure, and to reduce the pressure on schools, the minimum school entry age was raised to reduce the number of younger children attending school (Brennan, 1998).

Mellor (1990) reveals that the second half of the nineteenth century saw more active provision of children's services with the expansion of more orphanages, industrial schools and boarding out provisions. The development of crèches in the late nineteenth century 'represented a way for supporting parents' efforts to maintain their children in

their own homes' (Mellor, 1990, p. 32). These crèches were established primarily by individual wealthier women or women's committees and were influenced by the Christian values of the time: hard work ethic, frugality in charitable services, independence and social order (Mellor, 1990).

The latter years of the nineteenth century brought specific early childhood methods to the education stage. Kindergartens established by charitable associations reflected a twofold commitment: the care and education of young children, and social reform and support for needy families (Bowes, 2004; Brennan, 1998; Weiss, 1989). For the first time, the child-centred philosophy of Froebel, in which play was the central methodology, was implemented in early childhood classes. However, the depression in 1892 limited the progression of these classes until the start of the twentieth century. Kindergartens offered sessional programs, with the emphasis on the education and socialisation of young children. The shorter hours of the kindergarten program did not suit working-class mothers. Day nurseries, the forerunners to child care centres, providing care for infants to school-aged children, began to emerge. Unlike crèches and kindergartens, these centres catered for children over longer periods of the day. Emphasis was on wellbeing and health (Bowes, 2004; Brennan, 1998; Press and Hayes, 2000).

The place of the Catholic Church in Australian early childhood education

By 1930, there were six Catholic kindergartens operating in Melbourne (Fogarty, 1959). The growth in Catholic kindergartens was influenced by the growing needs of families but was also a reaction to the development of secular kindergartens and the Free Kindergarten movement (Fogarty, 1959; Mellor, 1990) in the market place. The development of the Catholic Kindergarten Union by Dr Beovich, Director of Catholic Education in Victoria in the 1930s, was in direct competition to the Free Kindergarten Union movement. Arising from the need to be competitive in the market place, the provision of voluntary workers to assist trained teachers working in Catholic Kindergartens was also introduced by Beovich in the 1930s. This volunteer role was the precursor to the role of teacher aides today. The volunteer teacher aides required no qualifications; nor was it considered necessary for kindergartens to formally employ or pay these workers. On the contrary, this volunteer work was considered beneficial to young women as preparation for their later married life and their life vocation as mothers. Although the kindergarten movement was supported by Catholic authorities, the provision of day care or nursery schools was not deemed consistent with the Catholic school system (Fogarty, 1959; Brennan, 1989). Fogarty (1959) reveals that Catholic authorities strongly condemned the government's intervention into childcare services.

The late 1930s had brought two significant groups to the stage of early childhood advocacy and provision. The Australian Association of Pre-School Child Development began in 1938. This association has had numerous name changes, from the Australian

Pre-School Association (APA), the later Australia Early Childhood Association (AECA) and is now known as Early Childhood Australia (ECA). This association was originally founded to ‘assist groups concerned with the welfare of young children, and in particular, to assist the federal government with matters relating to young children’ (Mellor, 1990, p. 128). Federally funded Lady Gowrie Child Centres were established nationally from 1939. This was a result of recommendations from the National Health and Medical Research Council to demonstrate and test methods of caring for young children (Mellor, 1990). The Australian Pre-School Association ran these Lady Gowrie centres too, and for many years these early childhood services reflected the dual role of the provision of education and social reform.

While kindergartens were established by Catholic parishes, offering sessional programs for children of kindergarten and preschool age, it is of interest to note that the first Catholic preschool did not open in Queensland until 1988. Like their state counterparts, these Catholic preschools were housed on school grounds. Enrolment was for children turning five years old. The introduction of Catholic preschool classes came 15 years after the development of a state preschool service throughout the state. It can be seen that preschools were ‘relative newcomers’ (Grajczonek, 2006, p. 7) to the Catholic education system. Considered to cater for a pluralistic and diverse range of students, the Catholic preschools did not cater for the local faith community alone (Grajczonek, 2006). The introduction of preschool classes boosted enrolments for Catholic schools. Some smaller schools without capacity to grow enrolments offered full-time preschool classes with 25 children attending five days per week. These children then moved into Year 1 classes the following year. Other schools offered two part-time preschool classes with 25 children in each group, similar to the state preschool system. Many schools gave preference to families with children attending the school, or to parishioners. However, other families without religious ties to the school were also offered places when vacancies occurred.

The development of early childhood education in Queensland

While both Catholic and state infant schools operated in Brisbane in the 1880s, there was no provision for specialist early childhood teacher training. The immigration of overseas trained teachers to supply the demand for teachers in government schools paved the way for the introduction of a new education style familiar to immigrants from Europe and America, primarily influenced by the works of Froebel and Dewey.

The economic depression in the early 1890s severely affected many services. Unable to sustain support from wealthier families who themselves had been affected by the depression, institutions suffered from overcrowding due to the growing numbers of impoverished children. Many of these services closed their doors, placing more pressure on government and religious departments. In Queensland, the school entry age was raised to six years and, until the economy improved in 1895, five-year-olds were not admitted to school (Brennan, 1998; Mellor, 1990). A flow-on effect of this was that

kindergarten programs were now considered outside the school provision, and education was deemed to commence at five years.

The establishment of the Kindergarten Union in New South Wales in 1895 heralded significant changes. Additional kindergarten centres opened, and more early childhood teaching methods were introduced into early years' primary classes in this state. However, it was not until 1904 that a new infant's syllabus was introduced into Queensland schools (Mellor, 1990). The influence of the New South Wales Kindergarten Union was also pivotal to the formation of the Crèche and Kindergarten Association, now known as C&K, in 1907. C&K's objectives differed to those in other states. Primarily philanthropic, C&K provided day care and kindergartens. Mellor (1990) argues that their mission was hampered by the state 'education authority's claim that children should not be educated before the age of five' (Mellor, 1990, p. 124).

In 1911, C&K established the Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers College, providing specific early childhood training for teachers working in kindergartens. Interestingly, although the University of Queensland enrolled its first students in the same year, it was not until 1914 that the first teacher training college opened in Queensland. C&K recognised the importance of specialist teachers and should be acknowledged for the leadership shown in regards to the professional standards of early childhood teachers. However, these same expectations were not held for the assistants helping the teachers. Specialist qualifications were not considered mandatory for teacher aides working in kindergartens until 2003, when the *Queensland Child Care Regulation 2003* (Qld) was introduced.

The 1930s witnessed the development of significant early childhood reforms in both Queensland and nationally. In 1930, the Queensland primary school syllabus included a formal Preparatory Grade to be completed over 18 months. Students attended for a half day, and in combination with Grade 1, this was defined as the Infant School work. Preparatory students were four and a half years to five years old (Library Services, 2013). In 1938, Preparatory classes were increased to two years. However, Preparatory was later abolished in 1953. Although the Government had started planning towards the creation of a state preschool system, this was not implemented until 1973. Consequently, the demand for child care rose.

Early childhood provision and social reform: a national perspective

The post war years saw an unprecedented demand for child care. This was a result of: the 'baby boom'; more women entering and remaining in the workforce; and immigrating families in which both parents worked in order to establish themselves. Yet, the Karmel Committee report (1971) reveals that by the end of the 1960s there was still no uniform system of preschool education in Australia. This report, coupled with increasing pressure from feminist lobby groups and the rise in demand for child care places, contributed to the federal government's response to child care provision in the

1970s. The Federal Child Care Act (1972) promised a 20 per cent increase in childcare places, wage subsidies for qualified staff and fee relief for low-income families. The election platform of the Whitlam government in late 1972 pronounced one year of preschool education for all children, and the expenditure of 130 million dollars on child services (Brennan, 1989). Mellor (1990) suggests that this government heralded a new perspective, from that of children's needs or rights to one of women's rights to engage in society as they choose. Brennan (1989) qualifies this view and reveals that only after the Labor Party took office did serious consideration of women's policies take place. Thus, it can be seen that women's rights, rather than young children's rights, framed policy agendas, and continue to do so. Nonetheless, these election promises were impeded during the reign of this government. The Children's Commission was proposed in 1974 to fund and administer community-based integrated early childhood services nationally. However, the newly elected Fraser Liberal-National Coalition government replaced this Commission with the Office of Child Care. This resulted in a shift from universal provision of children's services to a needs-based model. Four target areas were considered: socio-economic status, geographical location, children with a disability, or children considered at risk. The Aboriginal Child Care unit was also established within the Office of Child Care to liaise and fund health and education support services for Aboriginal families. The Office of Child Care was also the department responsible for providing grants to state governments for preschool services including childcare centres and out-of-school services. This funding arrangement led to the development of state-based preschool education initiatives rather than universal Commonwealth programs or provision (Mellor, 1990). Arguably, this has led to fragmentation across the field, resulting in inequality between the different types and costs of services, confusion over different names for similar services, and irregular delivery sponsors and funding arrangements for services between the states (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009; Mellor, 1990; Walker, 2004).

State preschool education in Queensland

In 1943, a Pre-School Coordinating Committee, with representation from C&K and Education Queensland assumed responsibility for the state's kindergartens. The Committee was to advise the Department on creating a system of state preschool education (Library Services, 2013). The government began reserving suitable land for preschools, but it was not until 1972 that the Queensland government began advocating a universal, sessional one year of preschool education for children. This year was targeted at children aged four to five years old: the year immediately before commencing school. This policy was enacted in 1973, along with the creation of the Preschool Education Branch, which later became the Division of Preschool Education. The government began establishing state preschools offering sessional programs on primary schools sites, where possible, throughout the state. The Preschool Correspondence Program was also established to support children in remote areas, and a supervised play program was developed for regional centres. From 1996, Early

Education Classes were also established in small primary schools, integrating preschool with early years' classes.

Mellor (1990) reveals that the expansion of state preschools was so immense that by 1981 over 90 per cent of Queensland children aged between four and five years attended preschool at state preschools sites, Early Education Classes, C&K centres or at home through the Preschool Correspondence Program. In many cases, children were receiving two years of early childhood education before school. Many three-year-old children were attending a kindergarten program before attending either state preschool or returning to the C&K centre for their preschool year. Mellor (1990) also raises the issue of the disparity in salaries paid between the state preschool award and the kindergarten teachers' award. This resulted in many teachers leaving C&K and community centres to work within the state preschool system.

The creation of the Division of Preschool Education in 1973 was a coup for early childhood education in Queensland. Rather than locating preschool education and policy within an existing division of government, the creation of an autonomous division enabled a wider scope for reform, policy and service implementation (Education Queensland, 2006). The inaugural Director for the Division of Preschool was Gerald Ashby, a leading early childhood educator from Victoria. Together with the Director-General of Education, Ashby consulted closely with C&K, the Australian Preschool Association and also commissioned eminent early childhood educator Marianne Parry 'to provide a set of external perspectives against which local viewpoints could be evaluated' (Education Queensland, 2006, p. 2). It was clear that the provision of service facilities and staffing should reflect these recommendations.

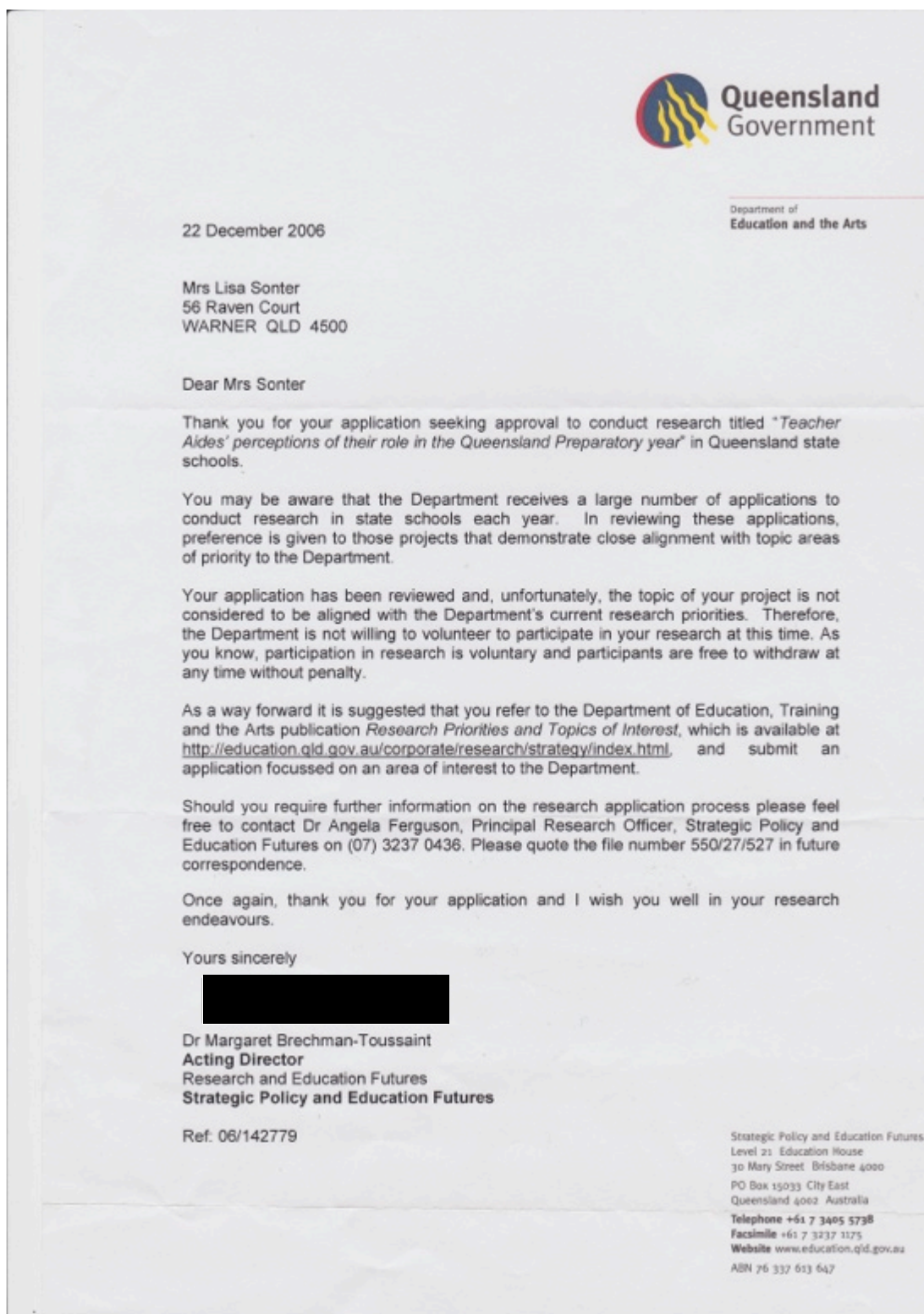
In line with this, university courses offering specialist qualifications in early childhood education also expanded. Colleges of Advanced Education offered short courses to enable teachers working in primary classes to teach preschool. At the same time, new Diploma courses offering both preschool and primary specialisations became available for undergraduate students. In 1977, the first accredited childcare course was available in Queensland. The Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers College offered the two-year Associate Diploma in Childcare. Graduates found employment in childcare centres as group leaders and assistant directors. Some also worked as teacher aides in kindergartens and state preschools. Interestingly, when applying for positions as aides in kindergartens, some graduates of this course were considered overqualified for the role (K. Parker, personal communication, 29 April 2009). Some short certificate courses were available for teacher aides through TAFE colleges. However, qualifications were not mandatory for these workers in schools, kindergartens or childcare centres. Nearly 30 years later, Education Queensland accredited a suite of three qualifications for education support in 2001, which were upgraded in 2006. *The Queensland Child Care Regulation 2003* (Qld) saw the introduction of prescribed qualifications at Certificate III level for assistants working in Queensland childcare centres or kindergartens. In practical terms, the focus of training was on the teacher as an expert in the field.

Professional support for preschool teachers was offered through the Preschool Advisory Service. From 1975, a team of preschool advisory teachers liaised with and provided a high level of professional development and assistance for teachers. These advisory teachers were practicing preschool teachers seconded to the role for three years. This helped to maintain practical perspectives and added depth of experience to the field (Education Queensland, 2006).

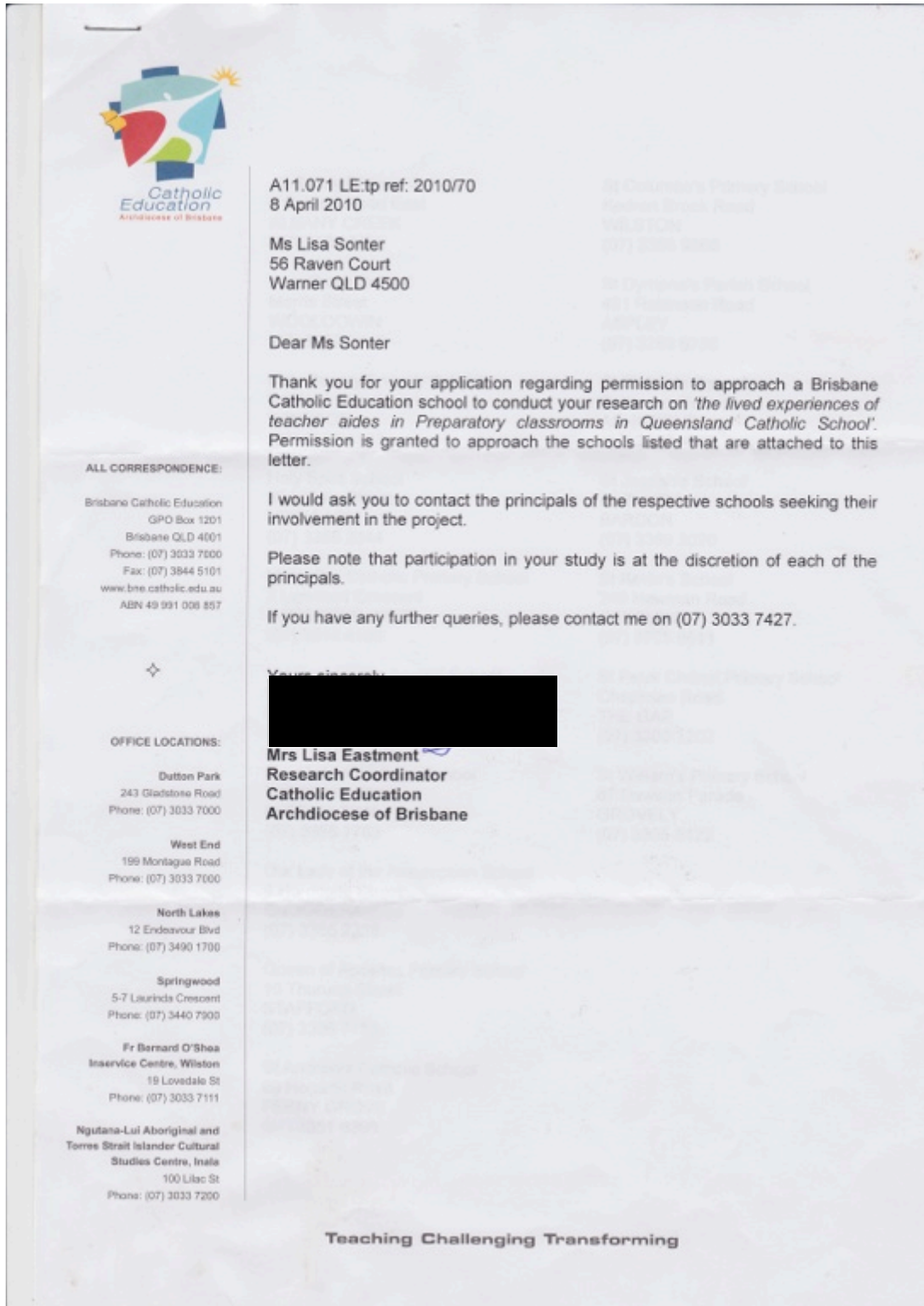
In 1998, the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1988) were published, following consultation with the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC), the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc. (AISQ), C&K, Education Queensland and the Office of Child Care and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC). This provided guidance for teachers working across a variety of settings offering preschool classes throughout Queensland. Interestingly, the same year, the Division of Schools replaced the three previous autonomous divisions of preschool, primary and secondary education. Consequent to this, Education Queensland's definition of early childhood was broadened to comprise the years from preschool to Year 3 (Education Queensland, 2006). Arguably, the loss of the autonomous preschool division may have affected the strength of the preschool sector's capacity to advocate for policy and service provision for preschool aged children.

By 1995, there were 581 state preschools, 142 Early Education Classes and 32 special education developmental units in place, with 34,397 children enrolled at state preschools (Library Services, 2013). By 2006, approximately three quarters of state schools across Queensland provided sessional preschool programs. Although often situated within school grounds, the state preschool system still provided separate and specialist buildings and playgrounds. Staff teams working in preschools were afforded a great deal of autonomy and flexibility. However, 2007 heralded the introduction of the Preparatory Year throughout Queensland schools and the cessation of state preschool education.

Appendix 2: Application response from Department of Education and the Arts



Appendix 3: Research approval Brisbane Catholic Education



Appendix 4: UNE Ethics approval 1



RESEARCH SERVICES

Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Telephone (02) 6773 2070, Fax (02) 6773 3543

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: A/P N McCrea/Dr R Forrest/Ms L. Sonter
School of Professional Development and Leadership

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Aides' perceptions of their role in the Queensland
Preparatory year at Catholic Primary Schools

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 19/02/2007

COMMITTEE APPROVAL No.: HE06/168

APPROVAL VALID TO: 19/02/2008

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full.

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/ethics/hrec_pages/final.report.doc

The *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.



Andrea Sjoval
Secretary

19/02/2007

Appendix 5: UNE Ethics approval 2



Ethics Office
Research Development & Integrity
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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr R Forrest, A/Prof N McCrea & Mrs L Sonter
School of Education

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: The lived experiences of teacher aides in Preparatory classrooms in Queensland Catholic Schools.

APPROVAL No: HE10/012

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 01/05/2010

APPROVAL VALID TO: 01/05/2011

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full.

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: <http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/researchdevelopmentintegrity/ethics/human-ethics/hrecforms.php>

The *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

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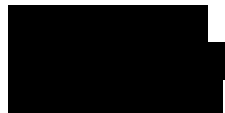


Jo-Ann Sozou
Secretary

24/02/2010

Appendix 6: Letter to Principals

Lisa Sonter



lsonter@une.edu.au

The Principal

Good morning,

I am writing to seek permission for _____, a member of your staff team, to participate once again in a research project regarding the introduction of the preparatory year in Queensland Catholic schools. I began this research study in 2006 as part of a Masters of Education (Honours) (Early Childhood) at the University of New England, Armidale. In 2009 my study was upgraded to PhD level, and I would like to invite _____ to continue in this research study. This research project comprises the thesis component for this award. I have sought and gained ethics approval for this project from the University of New England (HE10/012) and the Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane (copies attached).

The topic of my thesis is 'The lived experiences of teacher aides in Preparatory classrooms in Queensland Catholic Schools'. I am undertaking a phenomenological study of a small group of Preparatory teacher aides drawing upon both participant and work place inquiry. Group interviews, individual observations and descriptive experiences will be used alongside policy and organisational analysis to build a broad understanding of perspectives and issues affecting teacher aides in Preparatory. Interviews and descriptive experiences will be held off site. I am seeking your permission to observe _____ in the workplace for four thirty minute sessions.

I have enclosed an information sheet for your information as well as an information and consent form for _____. I would like to reassure you that all information will be kept strictly confidential and no individuals or schools will be identified in this research. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or my University principal supervisor, Dr Rhonda Forrest (Ph: 02 6773 3830, email: rforrest@une.edu.au) with any questions regarding this research. Thank you for your assistance with the continuation of this research project.

Kind regards,

Lisa Sonter 12/03/2010

Appendix 7: Information Sheet for Participants

INFORMATION SHEET for PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: *The lived*

INFORMATION SHEET for PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: *The lived experiences of teacher aides in Preparatory classrooms in Queensland Catholic Schools.*

I wish to invite you to participate once again in my research on the above topic. This is an expansion of the research I undertook with you as part of the Masters of Education Honours (Early Childhood) program. My study has been upgraded to PhD level and I hope you will consider being involved once again. I am conducting this research project for my PhD at the University of New England. My supervisors are Dr Rhonda Forrest and Associate Professor Nadine McCrea of University of New England. Dr Rhonda Forrest can be contacted by email at rforrest@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 3830. Associate Professor Nadine McCrea can be contacted by email at nmccrea@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 2039.

Aim of the Study:

The primary focus of my research is what it means to be a preparatory teacher aide. This research will contribute knowledge and understanding to the educational reform process involving the preparatory year in Queensland schools, and allow practitioners in the field the opportunity to discuss and develop their understanding of the reform process.

Time Requirements:

Participation will require approximately five and a half hours . This will consist of 2 group information sessions (collaborative conversations), four observational sessions lasting 30 mins each and two reflective experiences.

Group Collaborative Conversations:

These two sessions will consist of round table conversations to introduce and reflect upon the data collection process. These will last approximately thirty (30) and sixty(60) minutes respectively. These interviews will be audiotape recorded or electronically captured.

Observations:

There will be four visits to each participant, enabling me to build a picture of each aide in a particular time and place over a period of two months. These successive observations will help me uncover and illuminate the way teacher aides manage their particular work situations.

Reflective Experiences:

Participants will be asked to write a short description of one event in their classroom. Participants are also asked to offer a description through either the use of drawing, painting, collage, or photography.

Participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the project at any time and there will be no disadvantage if you decide not to participate or withdraw at any time.

It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues but if it does you may wish to contact your local Community Health Centre (ph: 13HEALTH).

The audiotapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's office. The transcriptions will be kept in the same manner for five(5) years following thesis submission and then destroyed.

Research Process:

It is anticipated that this research will be completed by the end of 2012. The results may also be presented at conferences or written up in journals without any identifying information.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HE10/012 valid to 01/03/2011)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services

University of New England

Armidale, NSW 2351.

Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543

Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards

Lisa Sonter DipT(P/PS), BEd.

lsonter@une.edu.au

Appendix 8: Consent Form for Participants



School of Education
Armidale, NSW 2351 Australia
Telephone [Int1 +61 2] (02) 6773 4221 / 6773 3716
Fax [Int1 +61 2] (02) 6773 2445 / 6773 5078
email: education@une.edu.au

Consent Form for Participants

Research Project: *The lived experiences of teacher aides in Preparatory classrooms in Queensland Catholic Schools.*

I,, have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. Yes/No

I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time. Yes/No

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published using a pseudonym Yes/No

I agree to the group conversation being audiotape recorded and transcribed. Yes/No

.....
Participant Date

Appendix 9: First Introductory Monologue

Monologue One: Relationships

Thankyou for taking time to be part of these discussions. The purpose of these sessions is to discuss your perceptions and beliefs about your role as teacher aide in prep. Each of you come here today with your own experiences and ideas and I would like to emphasise that everyone's viewpoints will be treated as valid and important. Each of you brings a range of professional and personal experiences which impact upon the way you perceive your roles, and this may differ from others. There are no right or wrong answers today.

I would like to reassure you that your comments will respected and treated confidentially. I will not be involved in your discussions. I shall open this session by giving a brief introduction to the topic and then I shall step back and let you talk. I would ask that you also respect others viewpoints, and please do not speak over each other. This does not mean that you cannot disagree with each other: in fact I would like to hear a range of viewpoints.

The topic I would ask you to think about today is relationships within your role as teacher aides in Preparatory (Prep) classes. When looking at relationships, I am referring to the connection between people and their involvement with each other (Microsoft 2007; Microsoft Corporation 2007). Relationships underpin the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority 2006) developed for the Prep year. The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority 2006) identifies a key role of the educator as a *builder of relationships*. In fact, fostering and nurturing relationships is the first teaching strategy listed within Table 1: Educator roles and teaching strategies(Queensland Studies Authority 2006p.9).

Teacher aides in Prep are involved with a range of relationships: children, class teacher, parents, coworkers (other aides, teachers, support personnel) other school colleagues including teaching and administrative staff. I am interested in your perceptions of the strength of these relationships. Do you feel the introduction of the Prep year has strengthened or diluted your relationships with any of these people?

Teacher aide provision for the Prep year has received a great deal of attention. This year teacher aides have faced numerous changes in their work practices with shorter hours allocated per Prep class than the previous Preschool allocation of thirty hours per group. For some, this has meant working across classes, increasing the scope and demands upon relationships with some aides working with two or more teachers and two or more groups of children. Teacher aides in these situations are expected to step into a class and start working straight away with a new group of children, often without discussion time with the teacher. Perhaps you are in this situation. What are your feelings about this? How does this affect your work practice? Does this add to your stress or physical tiredness levels when you are expected to think and respond quickly.

For others, employment contracts have been revised resulting in shorter working hours per week. What are your perceptions with the way in which your school has managed your employment conditions? Do you feel that you have been a partner in this process? Some teacher aides have worked within the school for considerable time, others may have only commenced this year. How has your position in Prep affected your work conditions? Have you experienced any changes to your stress or tiredness levels? How do you feel about this? Can you think of anything which may improve your working conditions?

You may like to think about the relationships in which you engage at work, and the impact of your work conditions to these. Some teacher aides may have been working with young children for a significant time, for others this is a new experience. Similarly, the Prep teachers will have differing levels of experience. Some teacher aides may be taking on the added responsibility of supporting their Prep teachers through this learning curve. Others may be feeling teacher is not listening to their expertise and experience. For others, the journey together is a shared learning experience. You might like to discuss your perceptions of this, and how you are managing issues such as time for professional discussions about your roles and responsibilities.

For instance, how do you manage observing and planning, organizing and undertaking responsibilities and tasks such as preparation and clean up of resources, supervision? What about longer term planning or discussions, or big picture issues such as behaviour management, class organization? How has Prep affected your role as far as participation in professional relationships? Do you feel that you are a valued contributor? Do you have time and support for building a working relationships with the teacher? Is this considered important? Has your teaching partnership and relationship with the teacher developed as you thought it would? What do you feel would make it stronger? What support or resources could be of benefit?

Your relationship with children is a crucial aspect of your role. I am interested to find out about your perceptions about play, observing and interacting, of listening and following children's ideas. The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority 2006) advocates negotiated learning within a collaborative curriculum. How do you see your role in this? Has the change of hours this year affected how you interact with children? What are your feelings about this? Do you feel that you have time to get to know the children at a deeper level? Are you able to work with all children or is your time spent working with a particular child or small group? Does your knowledge about the children impact upon your relationships with them? Can you think of any examples?

While some independent schools have previously offered a full-time Preschool program and some children have attended child care settings full-time, the majority of children entering Prep this year have not been expected to attend a school setting full-time before. Are there any issues such as children's attention levels, tiredness, safety or stress

management that affect your relationships?

In some classes the inclusion of children with diagnosed additional needs has increased support hours enabling the teacher aide to work with one class full-time, however the impact of working with these children is considered by some to be a stress risk. Has supporting children with additional needs impacted upon your role this year? What support do you believe should be offered to assist staff, children and parents?

Other relationships may have changed as well this year. How do you feel about your connectedness with parents? Is this what you had expected? Have your relationships with parents changed since working with the Prep class? What support or assistance do you think could strengthen these relationships?

What about other school colleagues. What opportunities have arisen to work and /or network within school system? Previously, many teacher aides worked quite autonomously in preschools, and were not expected to take part in duty or administrative responsibilities within the whole school. Has this changed? Is it what you had expected? What are your feelings about this?

Please use this time to discuss your beliefs and perceptions about any of these people and relationships with them and any other teacher aide issues which interest or concern you.

Microsoft 2007, (updated 5 June 2007), *MSN Encarta*. Retrieved from

<http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/dictionaryhome.aspx>

Queensland Studies Authority. 2006, *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*, The State of Queensland (Queensland Studies Authority) Brisbane.

Appendix 10: Second Introductory Monologue

Monologue Two: Resources

Thankyou for taking time to be part of these discussions. The purpose of these sessions is to discuss your perceptions and beliefs about your role as teacher aide in prep. Each of you come here today with your own experiences and ideas and I would like to emphasise that everyone's viewpoints will be treated as valid and important. Each of you brings a range of professional and personal experiences which impact upon the way you perceive your roles, and this may differ from others. There are no right or wrong answers today.

I would like to reassure you that your comments will respected and treated confidentially. I will not be involved in your discussions. I shall open this session by giving a brief introduction to the topic and then I shall step back and let you talk. I would ask that you also respect others viewpoints, and please do not speak over each other. This does not mean that you cannot disagree with each other: in fact I would like to hear a range of viewpoints.

The introduction of the Preparatory (Prep) year in Queensland has had an enormous impact upon resources in Queensland Schools. Some of the major implications of this reform are:

- physical resource management including the design and position within the school of buildings, playgrounds and toilets, and
- the development and implementation of a new play-based curriculum.

In many schools, Prep classes have been situated with other early years classrooms, and many schools have promoted this as the early years precinct of the school. Such placement has the potential to enhance effective resource sharing, collaborative partnerships as well as flexibility in terms of routines and experiences.

Schools are often viewed as places where children work at desks, interact with larger groups of children, are expected to be in particular places at set times, and need to remember different sets of rules for classroom activities, group experiences, lunch breaks and specialist lessons. However, research has shown that, throughout the early phase of schooling, children learn more effectively in an environment that encourages movement, investigation, discussion, outdoor learning and flexible learning contexts.(Queensland Studies Authority 2006p.5)

Consider the environment in your school? Are the school routines and expectations flexible? Are children given the time space and ability to move around, to investigate, to discuss ideas? How does outdoor learning occur? Is this valued? Do you feel that children are offered flexible learning contexts?

The design of the Prep facilities has attracted attention from numerous fields (Allen 2005a, 2005b; Lawrence, 2005). The building design has been criticized for not providing enough space to support play based learning. Issues include the reduced child

space ratio from the original preschool provision, the design of fixed spaces, placement of wet areas, and amount and access to storage. I am interested in your perceptions of the classroom provisions. Does the room design offer flexibility? Does it enable children's investigations, constructions or play spaces to be carried over to the next day and extended upon? Does the classroom allow for a variety of groupings of children through individual play, small groups or the whole class to meet together? Is the space effective for larger noisier play as well as allowing smaller quieter games to flourish? How is the room extended? Can small groups of children meet or work outside the rooms on verandah spaces or covered areas in sight of teaching staff? Can these children be supervised effectively from within the classroom?

The allocation of resources including furniture, play equipment, consumable supplies within the room and playground is another major consideration for Prep. Some schools have previously had Preschool classes operating, and are able to use these resources to supplement their Prep class materials. However many schools are introducing play based curriculum for the first time through their Prep class and have had to fund material purchases for the new classes. In 2008 most schools face the prospect of enrolling a larger Prep population due to an increase in children's age eligibility. This has the potential to place further strain on already restricted budgets. From your experience, what are your views about the levels of resources given to support the curriculum?

The accessibility and safety of toilets for the prep students has drawn considerable attention, especially when teachers are working alone with the class without aide support. Can you comment on your experiences or observations of toileting with the prep children. Has this been an issue to you this year? How have you managed this situation? Some teacher aides have expressed a feeling of guilt that they have not been able to fully support the children and teacher, especially when the classroom teacher is left to work alone with a class and manage health and safety issues such as toileting (ref).

I am interested in your feelings about the safety and hygiene issues for both children and adults when supporting children toileting away from view of the classroom.

Playground provision, safety and access has also been identified as a safety concern due to physical strain of lifting, moving and setting up equipment, supervision of children and resource management and sharing. The preparation of resources including setting up or packing away of outdoor equipment is designated a task for the teacher aide in some schools. You may like to share your thoughts about this.

Some schools have not experienced the concerns of physical resources this year as they are utilizing existing Preschool facilities this year; which have on site toilets and larger play spaces. The development of further Prep classes from 2008 when enrolments are increased to take on board the whole year cohort of children aged four and a half years to five and a half years may challenge these schools. You may like to consider the physical environment of Prep in your school. Do any of these issues impact upon your

role? What are your thoughts about the Prep facilities in your school now or in the future?

The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (2006) lists among the characteristics of high quality environments the provision of time for ‘collaborative planning and reflecting with children...building on children’s learning using extended time for conversations and scaffolding...regular meetings of team members (teachers, teacher aides)..to discuss, compare notes and reflect on their work of teaching (Queensland Studies Authority 2006 p.30). Do you feel you have been given enough time to engage in collegial discussions with your co-workers about curriculum development or issues?

The introduction of the Early Years Curriculum (Queensland Studies Authority 2006) may also be impacting upon your role as a teacher aide. Consider your understanding of the curriculum. How do you feel about your personal level of understanding of the curriculum? Can you identify any areas of curriculum that you feel you would benefit from additional knowledge or professional development?

How has professional development been undertaken? How do you feel about the level of professional development support you have received? Have time or cost factors of professional development opportunities impacted upon the support you have been able to access?

How is the new curriculum affecting your practice with young children? Do you feel that your classrooms reflect a collaboratively negotiated, play based environment? There has been criticism that many Prep classrooms are operating as ‘de-facto’ Year 1 classrooms with the children completing work sheets and undertaking formal literacy and numeracy lessons. The use of passive learning activities such as worksheets is identified as inappropriate for prep children in the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority 2006 p.37). Some teachers have argued that the combination of building design, lack of resources and the allocation of teacher aide time has challenged their ability to operate a play based learning environment. What do you feel about this?

Resource management has the potential to affect many aspects of the Teacher Aide’s role in Prep. Please use this time to discuss physical resources and play based curriculum experiences from your perspective, any other teacher aide issues which interest or concern you.

Allen, E. 2005a, 'Prep rooms could miss the bell', *The Courier Mail*, 12 February 2005, p. 18.

Allen, E. 2005b, 'Special rooms for early starters', *The Courier Mail*, 25 January 2005, p. 7.

Lawrence, J. 2005, 'Littlies doomed to start school in hot 'tin cans'', *The Courier Mail*, 13 February 2005, p. 15.

Queensland Studies Authority. 2006, *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*, The State of Queensland (Queensland Studies Authority) Brisbane.

Appendix 11: UNE Ethics Approval 3



Ethics Office
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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr R Forrest, A/Prof N McCrea & Mrs L Sontor
 School of Education

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: The lived experiences of teacher aides in Preparatory classrooms in Queensland Catholic Schools.

APPROVAL No: HE10/012

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 01/03/2010

APPROVAL VALID TO: 31/12/2011

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full.

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: <http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/researchdevelopmentintegrity/ethics/human-ethics/hrecforms.php>

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Jo-Ann Sozon
 Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

10/03/2011

A09/2592

Appendix 12: Observation Checklist

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--|--|--|--|--|
| † Aide: TIME | Date: | Preparing/clean up | | | | |
| | | Toileting | | | | |
| | | Manual handling | | | | |
| | | Waiting for t or c | | | | |
| | | Instructing c/t/other? | | | | |
| | | Receiving instruction | | | | |
| | | Playing/conversing children | | | | |
| | | Conversing, enquiry teacher professional | | | | |
| | | Helping children | | | | |
| | | | | | | |