Introduction

Australia is a multicultural society, with one out of every three people born overseas (29.8%), and is listed as having the highest population of people born overseas among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Miranti et al., 2010; ABS, 2021). The majority of recent migrants come from England (3.8%), followed by India (2.8%), China (2.5%), and New Zealand (2.2%), (ABS, 2021). Of this multicultural population, a significant proportion are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds (CALD is defined in the subsequent section). Early Childhood Education (ECE) services where children from birth to school-age are cared for and educated are very important for the CALD background population (Rajwani et al., 2021). There are a number of research projects, reports, and policies on supporting CALD children and families in Australian ECE settings (Rajwani et al., 2021; Productivity Commission Reports, 2013-2020; Sawrikar & Katz, 2008). However, there is very little research about the cultural diversity of the workforce who work with these children in ECE.

Although information is gathered on many aspects of the workforce, including age, gender, qualification, and longevity of work via the National Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Workforce Census, information about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the workforce is surprisingly absent. Furthermore, recent research, which analyses the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data, states that there are over 80,000 CALD children who are developmentally vulnerable in Australia and ECE has a major role in reducing this vulnerability. However, the ECE attendance of CALD children is lower than non-CALD children. In 2018 13% of CALD children and 7% of non-CALD children did not attend any form of ECE service (Rajwani et al., 2021, p,11). Rajwani et al. (2021) propose culturally responsive practice as one strategy to close the ECE attendance gap of CALD children and suggest that this is supported by a CALD workforce 'to bridge the cultural differences' (p. 17). The potential benefits of having a CALD workforce will be explained in detail in discussion section.

In order to understand the issues facing the CALD ECE workforce and understand its potential contribution to ECE, we conducted an extensive literature review. In the following sections, we report on the results.

Who is CALD?

The term 'CALD' refers to "people from a range of different countries, races and ethnicities, who speak different languages and follow various religious, political and philosophical beliefs" (Allimant & Ostapiej-Piatkowski, 2011, p.12). In 1996, the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (MCIMA) decided to replace the term "Non-English-Speaking Background" (NESB) with "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse" (CALD) background (DIMA, 2001). Sawrikar and Katz (2008) state that NESB "…distinguishes people based on their non-speaking heritage" (p.3). The newer term CALD is inclusive and reflects the cultural richness of the Australian community, as the term refers to ethnicity, religion, and linguistic background (Sawrikar & Katz, 2008).

In this article, a *CALD person* will be defined as someone who: (a) was born overseas or (b) had at least one of their parents born overseas; (c) does not have English as their first language; and (d) has cultural and/or religious values different to the mainstream community and First Nations Indigenous community (DIMA, 2001). CALD generally describes individuals or communities who come from countries in which English is not the prominent language (Sawrikar & Katz, 2008).

Literature Review

A thorough search was conducted using databases such as Web of Science, A+ Education, and Google Scholar. Scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)-Census of Population and Housing, Productivity Commission reports, and other government reports were reviewed. The search period was confined to 2000-2021, with the key terms being "Early Childhood Education", "childcare", "multicultural", "anti-bias", "CALD", "NESB", "diversity", "migrant" and "immigrant". Search terms were decided with reference to common terminology in the ECE field.

The searches conducted on databases yielded few results, leading us to explore whether data had been collected by organisations active in the area of ECE. Thus we also contacted the offices of Federal and New South Wales Education Ministers, shadow ECE ministers, and local

politicians' offices, key non-government organisations, and unions to determine whether they have any published or unpublished reports/data on the CALD ECE workforce.

CALD workforce in the context of Australian ECE

At the time this literature review was undertaken, we identified very little research on CALD educators in the Australian ECE sector. The study conducted by Thorpe et al. (2020), which focused on retention and professional wellbeing in the ECE workforce, reported that 76 out of 913 participants in their research identified themselves as being from a CALD background. Additionally, in the most recent study on educator well-being, 24 of the 73 participants were from CALD backgrounds (people who spoke English as well as another language in their daily lives); three participants indicated that their religious background, and two that their cultural background, was not welcomed in their centre. A further 31.5% and 20.5% were ambiguous about the degree to which their religious and cultural identity was welcomed in their centre - respectively (Cumming et al., 2021). Golebiowska et al. (2018) used the ABS 2011 census data to explore the impact of overseas-born workers in the Northern Territory ECE workforce. Their findings show that overseas-born educators are critically important to the provision of ECE, however, they are sadly excluded from many important government reports and publications, such as national workforce censuses and productivity commission reports (Golebiowska et al., 2018). Similarly to DCA reports, Golebiowska et al. (2018) state that overseas-born educators tend to stay in their jobs longer than their Australian-born counterparts.

National data on the ECE sector have been collected at (a) Governmental levels such as the National ECEC workforce census and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA); (b) Organisational level by advocacy organisations, and (c) Institutional/individual level by conducting empirical research.

a) *National ECEC workforce census:* The national ECEC workforce census collects data directly from the sector every 3 years. This census has two sections. The first section is a compulsory service questionnaire where ECE setting directors provide detailed information - qualification, gender, age, etc.- about each of the employees in their service. The second section is a staff survey and is optional.

ACECQA is an independent national statutory authority to ensure that young children have the best start in life through high-quality ECE. ACECQA conducts research and surveys, and release reports on ECE issues (ACECQA, 2020).

b) *Advocacy organisations:* The Ethnic Community Services Co-operative (ECSC), Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), Community Early Learning Australia (CELA), and Early Childhood Australia (ECA), are only a few of the well-known advocacy organisations who support ECE in various areas and advocate for improving the provision of high-quality ECE.

c) *Educational institutions and researchers:* Government policies and workforce strategies report the importance of supporting professional development and further education to attain and retain quality educators. Recent projects focused on very important ECE issues such as leadership in ECE (Gibbs, 2020; Gide, 2017), the wellbeing of the educators (Cumming et al., 2021; Cumming & Wong, 2018), and workforce issues (Irvine et al., 2016; Thorpe et al., 2020).

To be able to identify data on the CALD ECE workforce, we examined the National ECEC workforce census (1996-2016) and Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning (2013-2020) reports, and the ACECQA reports. We also examined a recent report released by Settlement Services International which drew on findings from AEDC data and argued for the importance of ECE for CALD children (Rajwani et al., 2021). Interestingly, none of the above-mentioned reports contained data on the CALD workforce in ECE, nor did any of the advocacy peak-organisations with whom we made contact have this data. Remarkably, every single peak-organisation representative we contacted stated that having a culturally diverse workforce is very important for the provision of high-quality ECE, despite the noticeable silence on the numbers, experiences, enablers, and barriers of the CALD ECE workforce.

Given the fact that Australia is a multicultural country, along with the statements of importance regarding cultural diversity from the advocacy organisations interviewed, it is surprising and frustrating that very little is known about the representation of CALD educators in ECE settings (only ABS data) or their experiences (no research). The only available data regarding the CALD workforce is data which could be extracted from the 2016 ABS Census. The ABS

uses a variety of codes and different occupational groups to report data about the ECE workforce. The ABS data, presented in Table 1 below, does not fully represent the rich diversity of educators' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It does, however, demonstrate the overall number of overseas-born educators.

Table 1: Total numbers of Australian ECE staff, number/percentage of overseas-born[1] ECE staff

Qualification	Australian ECE workforce	Overseas-born ECE staff	% of overseas-born staff
Bachelor's degree	18,403	10,585	57%
Advanced Dip and Diploma	52,796	11,873	22%
Certificate III & IV Level	58,792	8,127	14%
Certificate I & II Level	1,914	24	1.3%
No ECEC related qualification	22,945	4,453	19%
Not stated	19,160	547	2.9%
TOTAL	174,010	35,609	20.5%

Data Source: ABS-Census of Population and Housing, 2016, TableBuilder

The data as shown in Table 1, derived from the ABS (2016), demonstrates that 35,609 (20.5%) early childhood staff with various qualifications were born overseas. The majority of these people (70.6%) are from English-speaking countries such as England and New Zealand, so they cannot be identified as CALD.

---

[1] Not all overseas born educators can be identified as CALD

Table 2: Percentage of Only English-speaking, and English and another language speaking staff born overseas.

Qualification	Overseas-born ECE staff	Speaks ONLY English	% only English-speaking ECE staff	Speaks English and at least one other language	% Speaks English and at least one other language
Bachelor Degree	10,585	8,334	79%	2,215	21%
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	11,873	9,766	82%	2,107	18%
Certificate III & IV	8,127	7,033	86%	1,094	14%
Certificate I & II	24	10	41%	14	59%
No ECEC related qualification	4,453	-	-	-	-
Not stated	547	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	35,609	25,143	70.6%	5,430	15.2%

Data Source: ABS-Census of Population and Housing, 2016, TableBuilder

Table 2 shows the numbers and percentages of educators who speak only English (70.6%), and English with another language (15.2%). The 14.2% of the overseas-born ECE workforce could not be identified as either group.

The ABS data is deficient in identifying CALD ECE educators as ABS categories do not match the standard definition of CALD. Additionally, this data is not detailed enough, as some educators who were born in an English-speaking country who could speak another language (French, Japanese, etc.) were included in the 'English with another language' (15.2%) category. These educators may not all be classified as CALD. It is also not possible to identify second-generation CALD educators via ABS data. Furthermore, different classifications are used across jurisdictions and reporting bodies, making it difficult to compile and compare data accurately.

CALD Workforce in Various Sectors

As there is a lack of research focusing on the CALD workforce in ECE settings, we draw on literature concerning other similar workforces which are highly female populated and where *care*[2] is the main service provided, such as Health (nursing) or Aged Care (aged care workers), provides information that may be relevant to the diverse ECE workforce. There are studies that have been conducted in Australian health care and aged care settings that have demonstrated the cultural diversity of these workforces and the benefits of having a CALD workforce. For example, worldwide, there is a dramatic shortage of nurses, which is filled by migrant nurses from less developed countries such as the Philippines, South Africa, China, and India (Li et al., 2014). Similarly, the Australian health care system is facing a shortage of nurses and health care workers due to an increase in the ageing population, and diseases (Xiao et al., 2014).

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2016), 20.4% of registered nurses are from overseas; a 5% increase since 2009. The literature on immigrant nurses points to difficulties as well as benefits associated with having CALD nurses. The study of Xiao et al. (2014) on the integration of immigrant nurses found that both Australian-born nurses and overseas-born nurses learn from each other everyday practices regarding their profession and about each other's cultures. However, they also face difficulties mainly due to language barriers. Xiao et al. (2014) also state that even though both groups of nurses usually work hard to create a positive learning environment, this has not been acknowledged at the management level as there is a lack of resources to support the integration process.

Similarly, the Australian aged care workforce has been reported to be heavily dependent on migrants (Nichols et al., 2015). According to the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) (2018), around 60% of the workforce in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) are from CALD backgrounds. Similar to CALD nurses, CALD aged care workers experience difficulties and discrimination, however, they also experience very positive

---

[2] 2 Unfortunately, centre-based Long Day Care services in Australia are still sometimes viewed as *'care'* services rather than *'education'*.

interactions when they have the opportunity to share their cultural values and beliefs with clients from the same background.

According to FECCA (2018) reports, Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) have a high percentage of CALD employees who are vital for building trusting relationships between service providers and clients (King et al., 2013). As the FECCA report (2018) states, "...many organisations seek to employ staff members who are able to build a connection with communities beyond language-bicultural workers" (p.5).

As was found in aged care settings, having a diverse workforce could help in developing positive relationships and establishing a sense of trust between CALD families and ECE settings. Indeed, bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff are employed to target specific CALD communities, as having a CALD workforce amplifies the benefits for clients (King et al., 2013; Nichols et al., 2015). Therefore, having a multicultural ECE workforce may also be advantageous in establishing a culturally safe place for families to bring their children with confidence.

Moreover, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) report 'Staffing in Australia's Schools in 2013' has data on the country of birth of primary and secondary school teachers. According to this report, 16.4% of primary school teachers and 19.2% of secondary school teachers were born overseas, with the largest group of overseas-born teachers coming from the United Kingdom, followed by New Zealand (McKenzie et al., 2014).

The above-mentioned research and reports demonstrate that there is an interest in exploring the cultural diversity of various workforces. This data helps researchers, policymakers, and employers to understand the proportion of CALD background staff amongst their employees, how those employees may be supported to integrate into the workforce, and how the workplace can benefit from them to establish a more multicultural workforce (AIHW, 2016; FECCA, 2018; Mackenzie et al., 2014). Trenerry et al. (2012) explored the efforts of 13 organisations from various sectors in several countries in promoting and/or managing diversity in workplaces, while Brown et al. (2020) surveyed representative of 3,000 Australian workers to explore the impact of inclusion on performance and wellbeing of the workers. Such research on the general workforce has shown that diversity in race, culture, and religion may assist employees' job satisfaction, innovative thinking, better work performance, and customer/client

satisfaction, but only when/if race-based discrimination is not permitted in that workplace (Brown et al., 2020; Trenerry et al., 2012).

Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian workforce

Over the last three decades, researchers along with diversity and inclusion practitioners, have begun to challenge inequalities in workplaces through diversity and inclusion initiatives and programs. Recent research from the Diversity Council of Australia (DCA) reports that First Nations peoples, people with disabilities, women, and migrants in Australia, have experienced discrimination and exclusion in workplaces. DCA conducted Australia's first nationally representative survey of workplace inclusion in 2017, then in 2019, surveying a nationally representative sample of 3,000 Australian workers. The aim of this biennial survey is to explore "how inclusive is the Australian workforce…?" (Brown et al., 2020, p.6).

This recent survey also reports data about discrimination and harassment experienced by minority groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people with disabilities, experiencing the highest rates of discrimination (48%). Workers from a non-Christian religious background experienced the next highest rate of harassment and discrimination at work (40%) (Brown et al., 2020).

A key finding of this research is that inclusion in the workplace benefits everyone, not just people from targeted or minority groups, and boosts employee performance and wellbeing (Brown et al., 2020). According to this study, if you are working in an inclusive organisational culture, you are: five times more likely to innovate, three times more likely to work extra hard, to be more effective than workers in non-inclusive organisations, and to provide excellent customer/client service. Inclusion at work is beneficial for employees from diverse groups. If you are working in a culturally inclusive organisation, you are: Five times more likely to be satisfied with your job, two times more likely to receive regular career development opportunities and to have been given constructive performance feedback, and three times less likely to leave your current employer (Brown et al., 2020).

Discussion

While we do know that a large proportion of children and families attending ECE settings are from culturally diverse backgrounds (Productivity Commission Reports, 2013-2020), we do not know the numbers or percentages of CALD educators and directors in ECE settings. Whether or not the cultural diversity of the children and families attending EC services are reflected in the workforce is also an important matter.

The role of ECE settings

ECE settings have an important role in achieving policy objectives such as the educational success of young children, supporting families (especially women) returning to the workforce after having children, and supporting and building community (Warren & Haisken-DeNew, 2013; Productivity Commission Report 2020). The Productivity Commission Report of 2020 reports that 1,317,069 children under the age of 12 years (852,675 children being 0-5 years) attended registered ECE settings. High-quality ECE settings play a significant role in the early years and development of young children (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007).

In the first five years of life, a child's brain develops faster than at any other time in life and early years experiences stimulate the brain to lay down the foundations for learning (Shonkoff & Philips, 2000). Data from the Longitudinal Studies of Australian Children (LSAC) involving 4157 children between the ages of 4-5 years, found that early years learning made a positive difference in later school life (Warren & Haisken-DeNew, 2013). Furthermore, during the recent Covid19 pandemic, the Australian government's declaration of ECE settings as one of the 'essential and fundamental' services revealed again that ECE settings are extremely important for the community and the Australian economy (Thorpe et al., 2020).

ECE settings also play an important role in supporting families, especially mothers, in returning to work after having children. According to Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2021) reports, based on data from 4,943 organisations, 50.5% of employees are women (https://data.wgea.gov.au). The workforce participation rate in Australia for women aged 25 to 34 has increased, as some of the barriers to work participation for women with children were reduced (Nowak et al., 2013). The Australian government's Parental Leave Pay Scheme (PLPS)   which   was   introduced   in   2011

(https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/parental-leave-pay) and Child Care Subsidy (CCS) are some examples of support for parents returning to the workforce. The provision of affordable and culturally sensitive ECE settings also play an immense role in women deciding whether or not to return to work (Novak et al., 2013). We anticipate that this will be especially important for CALD women who do not have extended families to help with caring for children.

While research generally reports the importance of ECE on various levels, there remain many unknown details of the workforce, especially regarding the cultural diversity within it. We argue in this article that collecting data on the CALD workforce will help policymakers in developing support programs for CALD educators. An inclusive work environment encourages staff retention, which is one of the key elements for the provision of high-quality ECE (OECD, 2019; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007; Thorpe et al., 2020). Our observations and experience lead us to believe that there are large numbers of CALD educators in the ECE workforce, at least in metropolitan areas. We suspect that the workforce may be stratified along the lines of cultural background with CALD educators concentrated in certificate III and diploma positions. However, we cannot test these assumptions because there is an absence of data on the CALD workforce in the ECE sector.

The following sections argue that employing CALD educators in the ECE may be beneficial, not only to children and families but also to CALD and non-CALD educators. Consequently, this may reflect and contribute positively to the sector and Australian society.

The potential benefits of a CALD ECE workforce for children

Young children are aware of, and demonstrate curiosity about, human diversity in their environment (Glover, 2016) and they even notice gender and race differences in their first year of life (Shutts, 2015). It is important for the identity development of young children that they feel positively about their families and recognise that they are accepted and valued in society (Dau, 2001). According to Hydon and Bose-Rahman (2016), learning is largely influenced by culture. Indeed, as we discuss below, a number of policy documents state the importance of recognising the culture of children in ECE settings. However, how effectively these policies are implemented in ECE settings is arguable.

Identity development is a life-long process (Raburu, 2015; DEEWR, 2009). ECE settings have an important role in supporting young children at the beginning of this process. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), which is the national approved learning framework in Australian ECE, emphasises that "experiencing belonging –knowing where and with whom you belong– is integral to human existence" (DEEWR, 2009, p.7). The EYLF also has a strong focus on children developing a sense of identity. For example:

- Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity;
- Outcome 2.1: Children developed a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation; and
- Outcome 2.2: Children respond to diversity with respect (DEEWR, 2009, p.18).

Furthermore, the National Quality Standards (NQS) which was introduced in 2012 to set a benchmark for the quality of ECE services in Australia also require educators to provide a culturally safe learning environment. Quality Area 1.1.2 Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities, and interests are the foundation of the program (ACECQA, 2020). Likewise, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) supports multicultural education and cultivating children's respect for their own and others' cultures. For example:

> **Article 29** - Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, and their own and other cultures.
>
> **Article 30 -** Children have a right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether these are shared by the majority of people in the country or not (United Nations, 1990).

These policies highlight the importance of supporting the cultures of children. As Hydon and Bose-Rahman (2016) argue, children develop cultural identity by interacting with people and artefacts in their environment. Therefore, providing a multicultural educational environment via books, songs, games, and so on, supports children's identity development (Dau, 2001).

Hydon and Bose-Rahman (2016) also suggest that it would be beneficial to have a culturally diverse ECE workforce who have similar backgrounds, cultures, and rituals to children attending ECE settings. CALD children may identify more readily with CALD educators who are similar to them or their families, which subsequently may assist children in developing a

strong sense of identity (Cheruvu et al., 2015; Hydon & Bose-Rahman, 2016). Moreover, having CALD educators might be beneficial for all children including those from the dominant culture. A culturally diverse workforce will provide children with the opportunity to interact with diverse educators in everyday activities and observe CALD and non-CALD educators working in harmony. As they are exposed to cultural diversity from a very young age, these children will develop multicultural awareness and tolerance and be shaped into more accepting/tolerant and less biased/intolerant adults (Dau, 2001; United Nations, 1990; Vuckovic, 2008).

The potential benefits of a CALD ECE workforce for families

Having a CALD workforce may also be beneficial for CALD families. The number of CALD children and families using ECE settings is increasing every year (Productivity Commission Reports, 2013-2020). ECE settings are assessed against seven NQS. Quality Area 6- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities - focuses on the importance of establishing a positive, respectful relationship with families. Element 6.1.2 states that *'the expertise, culture, values, and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing'.* In addition, to achieve an Exceeding rating for any standard, three Exceeding themes need to be reflected in service practice for each standard. The themes are: (1) Practice is embedded in service operations, (2) Practice is informed by critical reflection, and (3) Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community (ACECQA, 2020). Meaningful engagement and collaboration between ECE settings and families boost the quality outcomes for children, as well as for the ECE settings. Given a large number of CALD families using ECE settings, a CALD workforce may be beneficial to establish '*meaningful engagement with families'*, especially with CALD families.

The potential benefits of a CALD ECE workforce for educators

Having a CALD workforce may also be beneficial for educators themselves. The National Early Years Workforce study conducted by Irvine et al. (2016), aimed to identify "effective strategies to grow and sustain a professional early years workforce" (p.2). The main findings of this research were reported under twelve major ECE workforce issues, along with possible solutions to overcome these issues. One of the major issues identified by Irvine et al. (2016, p.16) was

'growing a diverse workforce' with suggested strategies to promote a culturally diverse ECE workforce such as:

> Foregrounding cultural diversity as a strength; greater focus on funding and initiatives more culturally diverse ECE workforce; strategies to build the capacity and retention of culturally diverse educators; improved process for recognition of overseas qualifications; supported by clear pathways; and bridging courses obtain recognition.

Non-CALD workers may also benefit from having CALD colleagues, as this allows them an opportunity to learn more about different cultures. According to Cheruvu et al. (2015) "the presence of pre-service teachers of color serves the need of preparing white teachers to work with diverse children" (p.243). Therefore, this interaction and exchange of knowledge in an inclusive team will improve the whole team's dynamics (Brown et al., 2020; FECCA, 2018). The CALD workforce can also be used as "native informants" (Khan, 2005, p.2023) by non-CALD educators, to enrich their knowledge of other cultures. In a diverse workforce, educators can learn about different cultures from each other (Scarlet & Fargher, 2016), and reflect this knowledge in everyday practice. Educators who feel comfortable with their cultural identity, accepted and valued in their workplace will develop a strong sense of identity which then enables them to relate to CALD children and families (Vuckovic, 2008) as well as co-workers.

The potential benefits of a CALD ECE workforce for the sector and society

Having a CALD workforce has potential benefits for the profession and broader society. According to OECD report (2019), attending ECE settings is beneficial for children's future, however, these settings must be of high-quality to be effective. A qualified ECE workforce is one of the key elements of high-quality ECE (OECD, 2019; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007), therefore, a well-qualified culturally diverse workforce may promote high-quality ECE settings in multicultural Australia.

The EYLF states that "educators who are culturally competent respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and have an ability to understand and honour differences" (DEEWR, 2009, p.18). Having a culturally diverse workforce will bring diversification to the sector. All educators come with their own life experiences, individual skills, and ambitions. How much of this they share with children/families/colleagues can depend on the opportunities given in their workplace.

One of the other key elements of the provision of high-quality ECE is low-staff turnover (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). According to a DCA report (Brown et al., 2020), CALD workers who work in an inclusive environment work hard, feel more satisfied with the job, and are less likely to leave their job. Providing an inclusive working environment and diverse workforce may contribute to staff retention in the ECE sector (Irvine et al., 2016). Therefore we argue in this article that gathering data on the number of CALD employees, who is working in which position, and what their experiences and needs are, may guide policymakers in developing inclusive practices in a culturally safe work environment.

The Australian anti-bias pioneer, Elizabeth Dau, focused on multiculturalism and anti-bias education for young children and how to support children and families from diverse groups in ECE. Her work provided insight into the importance of accepting different communities in ECE, she argued that the environment in ECE settings should reflect the cultures represented in that setting and the wider community (2001). Dau then asked questions such as "…is there anything in the environment that says I am valued? …Do the books, posters, games and so on reflect the cultural diversity in your service and the community?" (2001, p.122). It might be time to add another question to Dau's extremely valuable list of questions; '*Do the ECE workforce reflect the cultural diversity in your service and community*?'

CALD educators and directors, with their cultural/linguistic knowledge and their personal experiences as migrants, may be able to help and connect with CALD communities by displaying empathy and understanding to new families during the difficult stage of settling into a new society. In this way, ECE directors and educators from CALD backgrounds have the potential to build a bridge between CALD communities and mainstream Australian society and services.

Silence about the CALD ECE workforce

According to Hydon and Bose-Rahman (2016), "the prevailing view sees cultural diversity as a strength and indeed something to foster and support in all aspects of society" (p.30). However, the main focus in ECE policies, NQS, and EYLF is supporting CALD children and families. Similar to academic research, these policies are silent about the CALD workforce.

The lack of data and empirical research on the cultural background of the ECE workforce raises the question of whether there is a reduction in interest in multiculturalism. The Ethnic Community Services Co-operative's (ECSC) annual reports state that in the late 1970s, multiculturalism was on the political agenda which resulted in the establishment of ECSC in 1976 to promote and advocate for the needs of children from CALD backgrounds. As a first initiative, they established a culturally responsive long day care centre in Sydney. Since then, Australian society has changed and become more diversified, as has the focus of ECSC. Currently ECSC advocates and promotes for culturally appropriate services to meet the needs of older persons, young children, and persons with a disability from CALD communities (ECSC, 2020).

Conclusion

The main issue identified in this article is the silence about the CALD workforce – that is, there is a lack of data and empirical research on the CALD workforce, and the ABS data relating to the overseas-born ECE workforce is ambiguous. There could be many reasons for the silence surrounding the CALD workforce, and the impact of this silence remains unknown due to the current lack of data regarding cultural diversity in ECE (Irvine et al., 2016). We urgently call for research that breaks the silence around the CALD workforce.

Arasaratnam (2014) noted that there is a reduction in interest in multiculturalism, and the gap between the theory of multiculturalism and the actual implementation of multicultural policies. Silence about the CALD workforce could be underlying equity and social justice issues which also should be researched urgently. For a peaceful and productive multicultural society in Australia, acknowledgement of our CALD ECE workforce, disrupting the pattern of silence, and providing equal opportunities for all are particularly important. To begin, immediate attention towards the collection of consistent data regarding the CALD status of the Australian ECE workforce is required by policymakers and researchers alike.

References

Allimant, A., & Ostapiej-Piatkowski, B. (2011). *Supporting women from CALD backgrounds who are victims/survivors of sexual violence: Challenges and opportunities for practitioners.* Australian Institute of Family Studies. https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/w9.pdf

Arasaratnam L. A. (2014). A discussion of multiculturalism in Australia from educators' perspective. *Springer Plus*, *3*(36). https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-1801-3-36

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Migration, Australia: Statistics on Australia's international migration, internal migration (interstate and intrastate), and the population by country of birth. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/migration-australia/latest-release

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Census of Population and Housing, TableBuilder. Findings based on use of ABS TableBuilder data.

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2020). *Guide to the national quality framework.* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2016). *Nursing and midwifery workforce 2015.* https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/workforce/nursing-and-midwifery-workforce-2015

Brown, C., D'Almada-Remedios, R., Dunbar, K., O'Leary, J., Evans, O., & Rubin, M. (2020). *Class at Work: Does social class make a difference in the land of the 'fair go'?* Diversity Council Australia. https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/class-work.

Cheruvu, R., Souto-Manning, M., Lencl, T., & Chin-Calubaquib, M. (2015). Race, isolation and exclusion: What early childhood teacher educators need to know about the experiences of pre-service teachers of color. *Urban Review, 47*, 237-265. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11256-014-0291-8.pdf

Cumming, T., Wong, S., & Logan, H. (2021). Early childhood educators' well-being, work environments and 'quality': Possibilities for changing policy and practice. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 46*(1), 50–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/1836939120979064

Cumming, T., & Wong, S. (2018). Educator well-being: Why does it matter? *Early Childhood Australia Voice*, *20*(1), 3-3. https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/educator-well-being-why-does-it-matter

Dau, E. (2001). Exploring families: The diversity and the issues. In E. Dau (Ed.), *The anti-bias approach in early childhood* (2nd ed., pp. 115-133). Pearson Education.

Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework (EYLF) for Australia*. https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia

Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. (2001). *The guide: Implementing the standards for statistics on cultural and language diversity*. Commonwealth Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/50da5ceab92ba25cca2570af004614ba/$FILE/DIMA%20Guide_Final.pdf

Ethnic Community Services Co-operative. (2020). ECSC Annual report 2020. https://ecsc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ecsc-annual-report-2020-web-2_compressed.pdf

Gibbs, L. (2020). Leadership emergence and development: Organizations shaping leading in early childhood education. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership,* 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220940324

Gide, S. (2017). *An exploration of leadership in high quality early childhood education services* [Master's of Research thesis, University of Sydney] https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/17700

Glover, A. (2016). Children and bias. In R.R. Scarlet (Ed.), *The anti-bias approach in early childhood* (3rd ed., pp. 3-16). Multiverse.

Golebiowska, K., Boyle, A., Pennec, S., & Horvath, D. (2018). Immigrant-born workers and quality early childhood education and care in the Northern Territory, Australia *International Journal of Training Research, 16*(2), 103-121. https://doi.org/10.1080/14480220.2018.1444666

Hydon, C., & Bose-Rahman, R. (2016). Claiming a new space for multiculturalism in early childhood education practice. In R.R. Scarlet (Ed.), *The anti-bias approach in early childhood* (3rd ed., pp. 27-40). Multiverse.

Irvine, S., Thorpe, K., McDonald, P., Lunn, J., & Sumsion, J. (2016). *Money, love and identity: Initial findings from the national ECEC workforce study. Summary report from the national ECEC workforce development policy workshop*. Queensland University of Technology. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/101622/1/Brief_report_ECEC_Workforce_Development_Policy_Workshop_final.pdf

Khan, S. (2005). Reconfiguring the native informant: Positionality in the global age. *Sign: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 30*(4), 2017-2035. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/428423

King, D., Mavromaras, K., & Wei, Z. (2013). *The aged care workforce 2012: Final report.* Department of Health and Ageing. http://www.agedcarecrisis.com/images/pdf/The_Aged_Care_Workforce_Report.pdf

Li, H., Nie, W., & Li, J. (2014). The benefits and caveats of international nurse migration. *International Journal of Nursing Sciences, 1*(3), 314-317. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnss.2014.07.006

McKenzie, P., Weldon, P., Rowley, G., Murphy, M., & McMillan, J. (2014). *Staff in Australia's schools 2013: Main report on the survey.* Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER). https://research.acer.edu.au/tll_misc/20

Miranti, R., Nepal, B., & McNamara, J. (2010). *Calling Australia home: The characteristics and contributions of Australian migrants. NATSEM Income and Wealth Report.* AMP. http://media.corporate-ir.net/media_files/irol/21/219073/natsem_10.pdf

Nichols, P., Horner, B., & Fyfe, K. (2015). Understanding and improving communication processes in an increasingly multicultural aged care workforce. *Journal of Aging Studies, 32*(1), 23–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2014.12.003

Nowak, M.J, Naude, M., & Thomas, G. (2013). Returning to work after maternity leave: childcare and workplace flexibility. *Journal of Industrial Relations55*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185612465530

Organisations for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019). *Providing quality early childhood education and care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*, TALIS, OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/301005d1-en

Productivity Commission Reports. (2013-2020). *Early childhood development workforce, research reports.* Commonwealth of Australia. https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2020/child-care-education-and-training/early-childhood-education-and-care

Raburu, P. (2015). The Self - Who Am I?: Children's Identity and Development through Early Childhood Education. *Journal Of Educational And Social Research, 5*(1), 95-102. https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2015.v5n1p95

Rajwani, H., Culos, I., & McMahon, T. (2021). *Stronger starts, brighter futures: Exploring trends in the early development of children from culturally and linguistically diverse*

backgrounds in Australia. Settlement Services International. https://apo.org.au/node/312414

Sawrikar, P., & Katz, I. (2008). *Enhancing family and relationship service accessibility and delivery to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families in Australia*. Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, Issue paper3. https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications

Scarlet, R.R. & Fargher, D. (2016). Creating anti-bias environments: Rethinking, reshaping, and reconfiguring. In R.R. Scarlet (Ed.), *The anti-bias approach in early childhood* (3rd ed., pp. 17-26). Multiverse.

Shonkoff, J.P. & Phillips, D.A. (2000). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.* National Academy Press.

Shutts, K. (2015). Young children's preferences: Gender, race, and social statues. *Child Development Perspectives, 9*(4), 262-266. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12154

Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Manni, L. (2007). *Effective leadership in the early years sector (ELEYS) study: Research report.* Institute of Education, University of London.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia. (2018). Australia's Bilingual and Bicultural Workforce. http://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Australias-bilingual-and-bicultural-workforce-Report-2017.pdf

Trenerry, B., Franklin, H., & Paradies, Y. (2012). *Preventing race-based discrimination and supporting cultural diversity in the workplace – An evidence review: Full Report*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. https://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30058483/paradies-preventingracebased-2012.pdf

Thorpe, K., Jansen, E., Sullivan, V., Irvine, S., & McDonald, P. (2020). Identifying predictors of retention and professional wellbeing of the early childhood education workforce in a time of change. *Journal of Educational Change*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-020-09382-3

Thorpe, K., Staton, S., Houen, S., & Beatton, T. (2020). Essential yet discounted: Covid-19 and the early childhood education workforce. *Australian Educational Leader, 42*(3), 18-21. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.602031319978894

United Nations Commission on Human Rights. (1990). *Convention on the rights of the child.*, 7 March 1990 E/CN.4/RES/1990/74. https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f03d30

Vuckovic, A. (2008). Making the multicultural learning environment flourish: The importance of the child-teacher relationship in educating young children about diversity. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 33*(1), 9-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693910803300103

Warren, D., & Haisken-DeNew, J. P. (2013). Early bird catches the worm: The casual impact of pre-school participation and teacher qualifications on year 3 NAPLAN outcomes. SSRN-id2344071.pdf

Xiao, L. D., Willis, E., & Jeffers, L. (2014). Factors affecting the integration of immigrant nurses into the nursing workforce. A double hermeneutic study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 51*(4), 640-653. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2013.08.005