
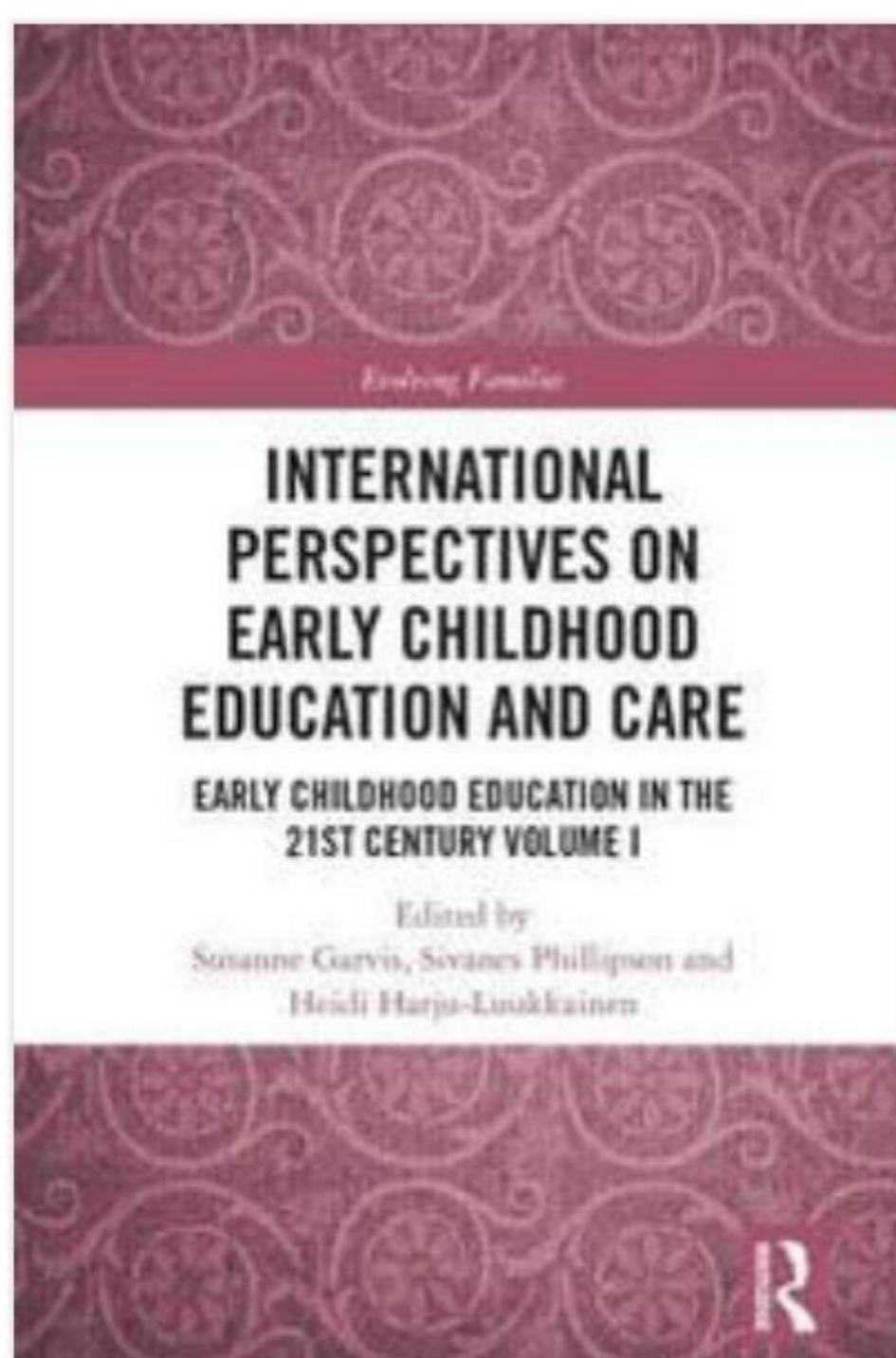


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Title: The knowledge and professional identity of early childhood educators
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Abstract:
 This article discusses the knowledge and professional identity of early childhood educators (ECEs) in a global context. It explores the challenges of defining professional knowledge in a field that is often characterized by a lack of formal regulation and standardized training. The author argues that ECEs' knowledge is often tacit and experiential, and that their professional identity is shaped by their interactions with children and families. The article also discusses the importance of ongoing professional development and the role of research in informing practice.

Keywords: knowledge; professionalism; phronesis; ethics

JOURNAL OF CHILDHOOD STUDIES **ARTICLES FROM RESEARCH**

Professional Knowledges for Early Childhood Education and Care

Verity Campbell-Barr

Verity Campbell-Barr is an associate professor in early childhood studies at the University of Plymouth. She has over 15 years of experience researching early childhood service provision and related policy developments. Her research interests centre on the quality of early childhood services, with a particular focus on the role of the early childhood workforce in facilitating "quality." In 2015 she spent 18 months in Hungary undertaking a Marie Curie European research fellowship (funded by the European Commission) considering the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for working in early childhood education and care services. Most recently she has embarked on a research project considering interpretations of child-centred practice in different European countries in support of quality early childhood education and care. Email: verity.campbell-barr@plymouth.ac.uk

This article proposes reconceptualizing professional knowledge in early childhood education and care (ECEC) as knowledges, incorporating phronesis (practical wisdom), techné (skill), and episteme (pure knowledge). Conceptualizing professional knowledge in the plural broadens perspectives on the professional knowledge base and opens up a discussion of how different forms of knowledge are acquired. Drawing on Bernstein, the author identifies ECEC as requiring horizontal and vertical constructs of knowledge that have different structures and legitimization processes. While phronesis is presented as being a part of ECEC professional knowledges, the discussion explores the difficulties in defining phronesis, because of the variable ways it is articulated.

Key words: knowledges; professionalism; phronesis; ethics

Specialized knowledge is core to the identification of a profession (Young & Muller, 2014), but within early childhood education and care (ECEC), concepts of professional knowledge are much debated. In this article I present an argument for a plurality of specialized professional knowledge for ECEC, but identify challenges in articulating all forms of knowledge. Drawing on Basil Bernstein's sociological work on knowledge (1999, 2000) and those who have iterated it (e.g., Hordern, 2016; Young & Muller, 2014; Winch, 2014) in relation to ECEC professionalism enables a consideration of knowledges, their different structures, and how they are developed and legitimized. Having outlined Bernstein's sociology of knowledge to provide a theoretical framework for the article, I present Aristotle's three forms of knowledge: *episteme* (pure knowledge), *techné* (skills) and *phronesis* (practical wisdom) as a structure for discussing knowledges. I focus on phronesis, considering what it is and what it might constitute within the ECEC knowledge base. I emphasize that phronesis is a considered and learned knowledge and an important component of the ECEC knowledge base that should be considered at all stages of professional development.

My discussion is set within the context of debates on quality and professionalism internationally. An international discussion creates challenges of how to refer to those working in ECEC given the variable training requirements that exist internationally. I refer to professionals and ECEC as general terms to represent those who work in care and education services for children from birth to just prior to starting school. Later I discuss the challenges of professional as a term, particularly in light of circumstances where there are no, or minimal, qualification requirements. While qualifications do not equate to professionalism and professionalism is not a given predictor of quality ECEC, both are concerned with the knowledge base to be acquired that represents the focus of the paper. The exploration of knowledges for ECEC seeks to broaden perspectives on the ECEC knowledge base and to recognize the complexities of professional learning in ECEC.

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