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Personal, interpersonal and organisational factors that enable or constrain the  
development of attachment-type relationships between infants, toddlers and their  
teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood settings

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

Research has demonstrated that close and affectionate relationships between infants/toddlers and teachers within early childhood settings are of vital significance. It is within these relationships that infants and toddlers cognitive, emotional and physical health is promoted and protected (Dalli, White, Rockel, & Duhn, 2011; Rolfe, 2004; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). It is also in these close foundational attachment-type relationships that children develop adaptive emotional regulation and individual self-concept. These relational experiences form the blueprint for the manner in which children and adults approach and negotiate current and future relationships (Treboux, Crowell, & Waters, 2004). The goal of this mixed-method design study was to identify the structural and process quality factors that predict high quality relationship development opportunities between teachers, infants and toddlers.

Three case studies were undertaken in the first phase of data generation. The sample for the research comprised groups of teachers, infants/toddlers and their families/whānau. Case study data identified organisational factors that influence the opportunities for quality relationships to develop in Early Childhood Services (ECS); these organisational factors were then further validated in phase two through a national survey of 213 centres that were identified as catering for infants and toddlers.

Results showed there is a need for centres to develop relationship-based approaches, which could include primary/key teacher programmes within an organisational climate that is flexible, safe and open to critique and change. This relationship development requires specific attention in each of the three planes of activity: personal, interpersonal and institutional (Rogoff, 1998). The three planes pay attention to: participation of an individual within an activity and how this participation transforms during the course of the activity (personal focus of analysis), the individual's collaboration and relationships with others (interpersonal focus of analysis), and on cultural/institutional/historical factors (community or cultural or contextual focus of analysis).

It is in the structures such as rosters, or duty lists, and staff rotations where relationship opportunities get missed or unfulfilled. The findings suggest that the reduction of teacher rotation in the infant and toddler areas should be considered to promote consistency and continuity for the infants and toddlers and their families/whānau. The need for increasing infant and toddler specific preparation within initial teacher education and on-going professional learning programmes were identified as key factors in improving the development of quality teaching practice.

Implications from this study include the need for teachers to recognise the importance of developing attachment-type relationships with the infants and toddlers with whom they work, and to engage in on-going professional learning focused on infant and toddler pedagogy. Finally, the findings recommend that policy makers should develop regulations to ensure ratios for infants and toddlers be maintained at one adult to three children (1:3) for under two-year-olds. There is a call to reinstate the 100% fully qualified teacher requirements (particularly for infants and toddlers); and a need to provide financial and professional support to ensure all infant and toddler teachers can be exposed to a variety of on-going professional learning opportunities. The framework of planes of activity (Rogoff, 1998) has been utilised to make coherent sense of so many variables, each of which contributes to quality relationships between the teachers and the infants, toddlers.

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## Glossary

Centre	Early childhood place, building or institution. The Ministry term is ECS.
Education Review Office ERO	The New Zealand Ministry of Education Review Office
Initial Teacher Education (ITE)	Initial Teacher Education, takes place largely or exclusively in institutions of higher education. A teacher can first obtain a qualification in one or more subjects (often an undergraduate bachelor degree), and then studies for a further period to gain an additional qualification in teaching. Other pathways are also available; it is possible for a person to receive education as a teacher by working in an early childhood centre whilst studying part time with an approved provider.
ITERS-R	Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale- Revised Edition
Key teacher/primary care	Based on attachment theory; successful implementation requires attention to activity in each of the three planes of analysis: <b>The institutional</b> ECS culture, philosophy, staffing and low adult:child ratios, planning for continuity of teachers; routines, assessment procedures <b>The interpersonal</b> warm, caring, intersubjective attunement to cues to children's needs and interest; collaborating teachers and <b>The personal</b> for chn: secure attachments to a few teachers; confident exploring and peer and adult relationships; for teachers: fulfilling, shared understandings.
Profile	A profile is a record of the child's process of learning: what the child has learned and how she has gone about learning and how she interacts, intellectually, emotionally and socially with others. Generally contains: stories, photos and examples of artwork.

Profile teacher	In this study the profile teacher is commonly the teacher assigned to document the child's learning, often with input from other teachers. This role does not equate to that of a key teacher or primary care role.
Professional Learning PL	The term professional learning in this study is used in reference to a wide variety of specialised learning opportunities, intended to help educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.
Three Planes of Analysis	A system of analysis in which the focus can be on one of the planes while the others remain in the background. The three planes focus on: participation of an individual within an activity and how this participation transforms during the course of the activity (personal focus of analysis), the individual's collaboration and relationships with others (interpersonal focus of analysis), and on cultural/institutional/historical factors (community or cultural or contextual focus of analysis).
Whānau	Extended family or community of related families who live together in the same area.