

## University Lecturers in Early Childhood Mathematics Education: Who are They? What are Their Professional Needs?

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This Round Table is in fact the inaugural meeting of Early Childhood Mathematics Education Special Working Group (ECME-SWG), sanctioned by the MERGA executive. The purpose of the SWG is to provide opportunity and structure for the collaboration of interested MERGA members to identify and articulate issues in early childhood mathematics education and take research-based action towards resolving the issues. All interested conference attendees are welcome.

*The Issue:* The proposed first issue for investigation is the current lack of understanding of the backgrounds and professional needs of our colleagues lecturing and researching in the field of early childhood mathematics. While there is substantial research activity around the characteristics of Early Childhood (EC) educators working directly with young children, there is a profound lack of research about tertiary level mathematics educators teaching future EC pre-service teachers, as a scan of the previous issue of *Research in Mathematics Education in Australasia* (Way et. al., 2020) will attest. The positive influence that EC educators with tertiary qualifications have on the mathematical development of toddlers and pre-schoolers has been established (e.g., MacDonald et. al, 2023), but little is known about those who teach pre-service courses leading to such qualifications. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many EC Mathematics lecturers are either primary mathematics specialists without strong EC teaching experience, or EC specialists without strong mathematics backgrounds. The actual ‘EC Mathematics specialists’ seems to be a rare phenomenon.

### The Proposal

The ECME-SWG will conduct a study to build a profile of EC Mathematics university lecturers and produce a report, with recommendations, for the MERGA Executive, and potentially produce a publication. Participants attending the Round Table will launch a data-gathering exercise by:

- Completing an informal mini-survey and considering the data collected;
- Sharing perspectives on the proposed issue for investigation and discussing the design of a more comprehensive survey;
- Discussing how to conduct the study and who will be active investigators.

The outcome of the ECME-SWG (aka Round Table) will be an action plan for the study.

### References

- MacDonald, A., Deehan, J., & Lee, P. (2023). Relations between early childhood educators’ qualifications and experience and their beliefs about mathematics education for babies and toddlers. *Australian Journal of Education*, 67(3), 253–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00049441231193776>
- Way, J., Attard, C., anderson, J., Bobis, J., McMaster, H., & Cartwright, K. (Eds.). (2020). *Research in mathematics education in Australasia 2016–2019*. Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4269-5>

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