Professional standards for after school hours care in Australia

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Highlights

Professionalisation of the Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Workforce

Development of Professional Standards for OSHC educators

Used Guskey (2016) 5 level model of evaluation of professional development

The professional development was not as effective as anticipated due to the contextual features such as time and finances or OSHC services

The Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) sector is the fastest growing child care sector in Australia. It is staffed by a workforce that is an eclectic mixture of disciplines. In policy and public perception the workforce has been often linked inappropriately to the workforce of very young children. Queensland Children's Activities Network (QCAN) developed a set of professional standards (The Standards) for educators working in OSHC. The Standards reflect and build on national and international evidence that an educator's effectiveness has a powerful impact on children's development and wellbeing. The Standards were introduced to the OSHC sector with a professional development program. A five level model of evaluation (Guskey, 2016) is being used to provide a systemic evaluation of the professional learning associated with the Standards. This paper discusses some of the findings associated with the levels one and two of the evaluation.

TITLE

Professional standards for After School Hours Care in Australia

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INTRODUCTION

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) programs provide a vital service for large numbers of Australian Families. OSHC provides care, leisure, play and education for children aged five to twelve years of age in the hours before and after school, and sometimes on curriculum days and during school vacations. Whilst mostly conceptualised by government as a care service for the children of working and studying parents, OSHC serves multiple purposes. As well as providing care, OSHC is recognised as a site of play for children and increasingly as a site of education (Cartmel & Grieshaber, 2014; Hurst, 2017). OSHC has undergone a gradual transformation since the 1980's from having an often unqualified workforce to becoming increasingly professionalised (Cartmel & Hayes, 2016). The workforce is highly casualised and does not have mandated qualifications like the child care workforce for children under five years of age. The push for professionalism in OSHC has not always proceeded smoothly. The profession of OSHC educator has a low status meaning that community members, families and educators themselves may not see the role as a profession.

To support the OSHC practitioners through the process of professionalisation the Queensland Children's Activity Network (QCAN) developed Outside School Hours Care Professional Standards for Educators (Queensland Children's Activities Network (QCAN), n.d.). For the remainder of the paper we will refer to these as the Standards. QCAN is an independent, not for profit organisation that provides advocacy, training, resources, information and support for the OSHC. The Standards, developed by QCAN, aim to "define the work of educators and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective Outside School Hours Care provision in quality services that will contribute to enhancing outcomes for children" (QCAN, n.d., p. 3). These standards are intended to be more than simply a descriptor of an educator's role. It is also hoped that they will help assume an active role, informing

professional development and the training of educators. QCAN conducted a professional development program to inform OSHC practitioners about the Standards and support them with the implementation. A five level model of evaluation (Guskey, 2016) is being used to provide a systemic evaluation of the learning associated with the Standards. This paper report of the findings from the first levels of the evaluation. It will detail the project methodology and insights into educators' engagement with the standards.

Outside school hours care in Australia

Australian OSHC programs are a significant site of care, leisure, play and education for Australian children and their families (Cartmel & Hayes, 2016; Hurst, 2019). OSHC has been provided since the 1980's. However, after school activity programs have been provided in Australia for over 100 years (Hurst, 2017). These very early programs were recreational in their approach (Cartmel, 2007). The demand for after school activities began to increase in the 1970s when women's increased participation in the workforce produced demand for custodial care of school-age children (Brennan, 1994; Cartmel, 2007). In that time, demand for OSHC has increased dramatically. Attendances have grown from approximately 85,800 attendances per day in 1993 to 398,730 in 2015 (ABS, 1994; Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2016). Approximately 1 in 3 children attend OSHC nationally (Baxter, Hand, & Sweid, 2014).

OSHC has undergone continual transformation in terms of function, approaches and how it is conceptualised by community and government. In the 1980's its function was primarily to provide custodial care (Cartmel, 2007). Increasingly it has become recognised also as site of play and leisure, and most recently as a place of learning (Cartmel & Grieshaber, 2014). These shifts in the accepted purpose of OSHC have implications for the children who attend them. The recreational and custodial focus of the 1980's encouraged adult-directed

approaches to programming which have since given way to play-based, child-directed practices common in early childhood settings (Hurst, 2017). In its current incarnation, OSHC practitioners are also required to attend to children's learning outcomes in their programming. These approaches are by no means universal. OSHC practitioners are diverse and have a broad range of professional backgrounds and skills (Cartmel & Brannelly, 2016). Qualifications have not been mandated for the practitioners working in OSHC (Cartmel & Brannelly, 2016) . These diverse backgrounds would inevitably contribute to a variety of programming philosophies.

OSHC's status as a profession has also undergone transformation. Early in its history, OSHC was largely unregulated (Cartmel, 2007). Since the late 1990s there have been a succession of government interventions that have contributed to OSHC being seen as a profession (Cartmel & Hayes, 2016). In 1995 the National Guidelines for OSHC were introduced (Cartmel, 2007). These were a set of voluntary guidelines with a focus on health and safety, not supported by legislation or compliance checks, so uptake was likely uneven. In 2004, OSHC became part of the Quality Assurance scheme that had already been adopted by early childhood education and care (ECEC) services (Cartmel, 2007). Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) had a broader focus than the National Standards for OSHC, encompassing programming practices, interactions with children, service management and some attention to child safety (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). Compliance with OSHCQA was required by legislation and was enforced by compliance visits from government officers. Most recently in 2009, OSHC was subject to a suite of reforms called the National Quality Framework (NQF) (Hurst, 2017). These included a curriculum framework called My Time Our Place, a set of minimum benchmarks called the National Quality Standard (NQS) and national health and safety laws (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), 2019; Australian Government Department of Education Employment and

Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2011). Similar to OSHCQA, the NQF also subjects practitioners to compliance visits and spot checks to ensure compliance with the standards.

This gradual regulation of OSHC has resulted in a gradual professionalisation of the sector. With the implementation of the NQF, practitioners were required for the first time to have qualifications. Anecdotally, regulation has required educators to develop and practice new skills. Coordinators, the staff typically responsible for the management of the service need to be able to guide their teams through a quality assurance process, develop policy, guide the development of a formalised curriculum, and implement national laws. Even those practitioners whose primary role is to work directly with children are required to understand laws and standards, and participate in preparing for assessment (ACECQA, 2019; Cartmel & Hayes, 2016). In addition to professionalising OSHC, regulation has increased the administrative and regulatory burden on practitioners (Cartmel & Hayes, 2016).

Whilst the NQF and its associated documents provided standards against which services are measured, they are not always quantifiable. The NQS and My Time Our Place only provide broad guidelines, leaving it up to practitioners to interpret the standards and develop practices that are suited to their OSHC service and community (Hurst, 2017). This can sometimes lead to practitioners lacking clarity what is required of coordinator and educator. Addressing this uncertainty is one of the aims of QCAN's Professional Standards.

Professional standards for outside school hours care

The Professional Standards for Educators (QCAN, n.d) comprise seven Standards which outline what educators should know and be able to do. The Standards are interconnected, interdependent and overlapping. The Standards are grouped into three domains; Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement. In practice, the role of the educator in Outside School Hours Care settings draws on aspects of all three domains.

Developing professional standards for educators that can guide professional learning, practice and engagement facilitates the improvement of educator quality and contributes positively to the public standing of the profession. The key elements of a quality educator are described in the Standards. Within each Standard focus areas provide further illustration of educator knowledge, practice and professional engagement. The Professional Standards for Educators are organised into four career stages and guide the preparation, support and development of educators (QCAN, n.d). They articulate what educators are expected to know and be able to do at four career stages: Foundation, Developing, Proficient and Lead (QCAN, n.d.). The stages reflect the continuum of an educator's developing professional expertise from training and prevocational preparation through to an exemplary practitioner and a leader in the profession (QCAN, n.d).

The Foundation Standards will underpin the initial induction and training of educators. The Developing Standards demonstrate progress as educators move beyond the Foundation level towards Proficiency. The Proficient Standards will be used to underpin processes for full recognition as an experienced educator and to support the requirements of nationally consistent approach to educator practice. The Standards at the career stage of Lead will inform the effective delegation of a suitably qualified and experienced educator to the role of Educational Leader.

The language used to describe each of the career stages has been thoughtfully approached. As many educators do not hold formal qualifications when they begin their career in OSHC, the standards articulate the essential knowledge, practice and engagement foundations. The next level describes educator's progress as developing and complements the formal qualifications that educators may be working towards. At the proficient and lead levels, educators may have completed and obtained a relevant qualification.

The Standards and their descriptors represent an analysis of effective, contemporary practice by educators throughout Australia. Their development included a synthesis of the descriptions of educators' knowledge, practice and professional engagement used by accreditation and training authorities, employers and professional associations (QCAN, n.d). Each descriptor has been informed by educators' understanding of what is required at different stages of their careers (QCAN, n.d). A sector specific validation process ensured that each descriptor was shaped by the OSHC profession. Effective implementation of the Professional Standards supports OSHC services to meet Element 4.2.2 of the National Quality Standard 'Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships'.

The development of professional identities

In Australia there are no mandated qualification for the OSHC workforce (hurst, 2017). The introduction of the Standards is a strategy to help the sector develop a professional identity. OSHC has only recently emerged as a job that might be seen as a profession. An area of interest for this research is how the professional development associated with the introduction of the Standards influences the emerging professional identities of OSHC practitioners. Do OSHC practitioners see themselves as professionals, and if so, what does that professionalism look like? There is almost no peer-reviewed research relating to OSHC and how professional development programs can inform the professional identities of educators. However, there is some literature pertaining to professional identities in early childhood education, a closely related setting. Unsurprisingly, there are differing theoretical perspectives on this question.

Some researchers understand the formation of professional identities during professional development as a social process where practitioners gain knowledge through formal and informal processes (Colmer, 2017; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010). Professional identities are sometimes seen as being informed by formal activities such as training

programs like the professional development at the centre of this research. These researchers also identify informal processes like self-reflection and engagement with service leaders and other practitioners as important. These models conceptualise professional identities as something that is formed by a transfer of knowledge about what constitutes professionalism.

Feminist poststructural theorists view the development of professional identities as a more complex process. Osgood (2006) summarises this thinking by proposing that in early childhood settings, educators navigate gendered and neoliberal discourses in complex ways to construct their professional identities. They desire and access the power attached to performing professional in autonomous, self-governing, rational, masculinized ways. However, educators also find power in dominant, gendered discourses that naturalize women as caring and nurturing. Osgood's findings likely have relevance to professionalism in Australian OSHC, a sector that is dominated by neoliberal technologies and the perception that work in OSHC is unskilled and performed by 'nice ladies' (Cartmel, 2007; Hurst, 2017). The perceived professional identities of OSHC educators is attributed to the low status of the caring work they perform.

Fenech, Sumsion, and Shepherd (2010) conceptualise professional identities similarly to Osgood. Whilst they agree that collaboration with colleagues is important in forming professional identities, they consider the process more complex than a simple transfer of knowledge. Fenech, Sumsion and Shepherd (2010) draw upon Foucault's theories of power and knowledge to argue that educators can also resist normative views on professionalism in ways that are individually situated.

These different views on professional identities have important implications for our work on this project. They highlight the importance of collaboration in forging professional identities but remind us that simply describing OSHC educators as professionals is not enough. Their

engagement with the professional standards is also rooted in dominant cultural discourses and will be much more complex and individualised than a simple transfer of knowledge about what it means to be a professional. They also remind us that there is no guarantee that OSHC educators will embrace professionalism and might resist engagement with the concept and the Standards themselves.

Methodology

Our analysis of how participants engage with the Professional Standards and enact them in their services adopts a qualitative methodology. The collection of rich, detailed data characteristic of qualitative methods is well suited to the founding assumption underpinning this project, that how educators take up the standards will be complex, individualised and reflect a diverse range of social settings and actors (Patton, 2002). The focus is on the professional development program and its impact on the uptake of the Standards. The project adopted a combination of surveys and semi-structured interviews using a model proposed by Guskey (2016). Guskey's model is well suited to this project in that it is designed to measure the impact of professional development programs. Guskey proposes a 5-level process using different layers of data of increasing complexity and richness. The first level investigates participants' initial responses to the training. Guskey's second stage seeks to understand any new knowledge and skills gained from the training and ideally should be conducted some time after the training. Guskey's 3rd level of data seeks to provide insights into organisational factors that influence the uptake and effectiveness of professional development. The 4th and 5th levels examine the impacts on the individual workforce practices and the impacts for children and families (Guskey, 2016). This approach acknowledges that whilst participants might be sufficiently motivated to implement new knowledge gained in the professional development approach, there might be organisational and cultural barriers that make the task

more difficult. This is particularly salient for OSHC educators and one of the reasons we are drawn to Guskey's model.

This tiered approach to the project provides detailed data from the perspectives of different people involved with the OSHC service and also at different time periods. We anticipate that it will provide rich insights into participants' reactions to the Professional Standards, how they interpret them, implement them in their services, and to qualities of and influences on the professional development linked to the introduction of the Standards. In this paper we report on the first two levels of data collection.

Level one data was collected via an evaluation survey completed by 83 participants after the initial training on the Standards. They were asked about the training delivery, how they plan to use the Standards and also about comfort factors. Participants were either coordinators or educators in OSHC services. This first level presents quite shallow analysis of subjective reactions to the training. These responses are still important in that they provide insight into participants' initial reaction to the material (Guskey, 2016).

Level two (Guskey, 2016) seeks to understand any new knowledge and skills gained from the training and ideally should be conducted some time after the training. Our project accomplished this using semi-structured interviews with a small sample of 9 educators who participated in the training. Semi-structured interviews had a consistent framework however the interviewer did follow any unexpected themes that emerged during the conversation (Patton, 2002). The interviews were conducted via Zoom, a web-based application which allows conversations to be recorded for detailed transcription. Using Zoom also reduces inconvenience for the participants, allowing interviews to be conducted in a convenient location. This is particularly the case for participants in rural Queensland who are sometimes

long distances from the university. It also made it easier for the researchers to include participants from rural areas.

The questioning in the interviews went beyond Guskey's second stage and also sought information on how participants have used the Professional Standards in their services. This information aligns more closely with Guskey's fourth stage. However, given the limited funding available to the project, it is possible that the researchers will not have the resources to collect a fourth round of data. We allowed a duration of a six months to pass since the training to give participants time to implement the standards. This enabled them to provide insights into the ways they have used the standards and any impacts they have experienced. This was well suited to the ways that OSHC educators are accustomed to working. After 10 years of working under the NQF, most educators actively collect data about changes in practice and their impacts for children and families.

Findings

The insights gained about the circumstances of the professional development about the Standards are described within each level of the research activity.

Level one analysis – initial engagement with the professional development about the Standards

This section will provide some insights into participants' initial engagement with the professional standards after participating in the professional development program. Evaluation forms were completed by 83 participants, most of whom were employed in leadership roles as service coordinators with overall responsibility for a single service, or as area managers for corporate providers with responsibility for multiple services. Whilst the

Standards are intended for practitioners of all levels, these predominance of service leaders means that the participants are arguably those best positioned to implement the Standards in OSHC services. This analysis will focus on two aspects – attendance and use of standards.

Attendance

Participants why they attended the training. The most popular response (65%) can be summarised as wanting to 'stay up to date'.

> "Professional development is always great. Gaining further knowledge and understanding of our ever changing sector is the only way to keep up to date. "

Responses like this represent a desire to keep up with developments in the OSHC sector, in particular a desire to have a better understanding of the Standards. This suggests that most participants saw them as potentially relevant and useful. This finding is unsurprising. As stated earlier, OSHC has been subject to ongoing regulatory change since 1995. Each of these iterations has been significant. Some like the NQF and OSHCQA have direct implications for an OSHC service's approval to operate, so it is understandable that practitioners would want to keep up with emerging developments.

The second most common response was from participants who wanted to know how to implement the Standards.

> "To gain a better understanding of the standards and be able to support my teams with the introduction of the standards to improve practices with all educators. "

These responses reflect a desire to know more about what the Standards might look like in practice and suggestions for how leaders can implement them in practice. These responses are consistent with our own experiences with educators who are often looking for answers

about ‘how to do it’. This is supported by early childhood research that indicates that educators operating under non-prescriptive frameworks like the EYLF often have anxiety about how to do it ‘right’ (White & Fleer, 2019). The Australian learning frameworks including My Time Our Place are non-prescriptive, instead providing broad principles for educators to base their own practices on. Our experiences with OSHC practitioners is consistent with White and Fleer’s findings that practitioners can be unsure about how to implement these broad principles.

Use of the standards

The other main question participants were asked was how they planned to implement the Standards in their services. The responses fell into three broad categories:

- Identifying a clear role for the standards in service operation
- Using the standards as a source of knowledge to share with team members
- Little or no use for the standards.

The overwhelming majority (100%) of responses identified a role for the Standards in their service that would contribute to practice improvements. These will be discussed in more detail below. It is important to note that due to the theming approach adopted for the data and the fact that many respondents identified multiple strategies in their responses. One third of respondents saw the standards primarily as a source of information to be shared with staff. These responses did not offer a concrete role for the standards in driving practice improvements. Only 7 respondents indicated no clear plans for using the standards. These responses varied from being vague to finding insufficient value in the standards..

The most common strategy for using the standards was as a tool for driving improvement through improving the performance of individual educators. There were a number of

strategies that fell under this theme. More than half the respondents in this theme reported using the standards as a goal setting tool with individual educators. It is inferred that this would involve using the standards as a benchmark that educators could measure themselves against and then identify areas for improvement. This goal setting was identified as something that was done in partnership with the educator or by the educator alone. Some respondents also planned to use the standards as a tool for identifying individual professional development needs.

These proposed uses of the Standards are consistent with neoliberal approaches to service governance that locate professionalism at the site of the individual (Moss, 2014).

> "As a benchmark to measure where educators can acknowledge the level their skills are at. "

> "The team will use it to reflect and review their practices and identify their strengths, improvement areas and to set goals for themselves."

The above comments are examples of neoliberal approaches to use of the Standards. Under neoliberal paradigms, individuals are encouraged to be self-governing and autonomous, and responsible for their own improvement. It is unsurprising that many respondents adopted these approaches. The NQF and previously OSHCQA are both examples of neoliberal technologies. Osgood (2006) details how early childhood educators take up neoliberal ways of being in order to be seen as 'professional' educators under a dominant form of governance. OSHC practitioners work in a similar paradigm, so it is unsurprising that they would take up neoliberal practices as a way of using the Standards in order to embody a particular form of professionalism where it is the task of service leaders to promote self governance.

A quarter of the respondents planned to incorporate the professional standards in existing management practices in particular staff appraisal and staff induction. This suggests that these participants might see the standards as an effective benchmark capable of clarifying what 'good' practice looks like, and something that educators can be measured against. As discussed earlier, this might be due to the possibility that the NQF and FSAC (Framework for School Age Care) do not offer certainty about what good practice looks like. In this way, the professional standards may fill a perceived knowledge gap.

> "Using them as an introduction to our annual appraisals which will now be the replaced with the standards. On going training to ensure knowledge and accountability for all. "

> "I would like to see it implemented at the beginning of their employment."

The second most common strategy was to share the content of the standards with staff.

> "Go through with educators at a staff meeting."

These responses often positioned the standards as a source of knowledge but often didn't identify a practical role for them in the management or operation of the service. The most common ways proposed for doing this were to discuss the standards with educators at a staff meeting or discuss informally. These responses are reflective of a different approach to service leadership. Rather than use the Standards as benchmarks for self-monitoring, these leaders position themselves more as carriers of knowledge to be shared with staff. It is a much less prescriptive use and appears to give educators greater agency in their engagement with the Standards. However, it is important to acknowledge that these responses are often brief and few in number.

A much smaller number of respondents (14%) saw a role for the standards in contributing to whole of service improvements.

> "Working as a team and myself on critical reflection on what is done well and what needs improving."

The suggested strategies were varied and less clear but at least indicated that these respondents saw value in the standards for service leaders as well as educators. These contrast with the neoliberalised approaches discussed earlier that were targeted more at educators rather than leaders. It is an approach to leadership that is more distributive and democratic where leaders see relevance in the Standards for themselves as well as educators.

Other insights

This data detailing engagements with the Standards as a consequence of the professional development program contains many possible indicators for QCAN and the OSHC sector, but also possible areas of concern. There is little doubt from the evaluations that many service leaders attending the training approached it positively anticipating that there would be value in the Standards. This suggests that these participants were open to finding something of value. A large number of participants also emerged with clear strategies about how to use the Standards in their services. These strategies were largely consistent with QCAN's intent that they are active in setting baseline standards for different roles, guiding professional development for staff, and informing induction process and policy.

Additionally, there is at least one emerging concern, in particular that many leaders who attended the training saw the Standards as something that applies largely to educators and not service leaders. This runs counter to the content of the Standards which identify 4 different levels of OSHC professional, including both early career educators and experienced leaders.

These results speak to postmodern understandings of professional identity, that there is no single professional identity, and that how practitioners think about and enact professionalism are individually situated, governed by culture, history and dominant discourses about what it is to be an OSHC professional (Osgood, 2006). Some participants took a more hierarchical view of the need for professionalism, seeing it as mostly applying to educators. Others viewed it more equitably as applying to both. It would be interesting to see if some participants viewed leaders, like themselves, as 'already professional' and therefore less in need of Standards. It raises the question of whether more attention needs to be paid promoting the Standards as applicable to all practitioners regardless of role.

Level two analysis – changes in practice based on the professional development about the Standards

Nine services consented to being interviewed, however many more were contacted. Most services did not respond to calls or emails. There was also a number of services where the training participant had left the job they were employed in at the time of the training and could no longer be contacted.

Each of the service leaders interviewed provided their own distinctive case study. No two service leaders responded to the training, or used the standards, in the same way. Their varied responses speak to a range of contextual factors unique to each service. This reinforces the risks in trying to generalise the interview data and trying to draw universal findings from them. Whilst the findings presented in this paper need to be considered with this in mind it does limit their usefulness. They instead highlight the need for more thoughtful interpretation that accounts for complexity.

It is important to note that not all services had implemented the Standards since the training. There was an observable trajectory when organising the interviews. The first few interviews were organised quickly and easily, and participants were keen to engage. However, later interviews took longer to organise, often requiring multiple phone calls and emails. It is likely that the latter participants were reluctant to participate because of their lack of engagement with the Standards. These participants often expressed regret about having not

used the Standards which also adds weight to this being a possible factor in their reluctance to be interviewed. This raises more questions about the nature of the professional development than could be answered. Perhaps it was contextual factors such as the investment of time and finances to utilise the Standards that were barriers. Professional development programs may need to provide information about the Standards in conjunction with processes to utilise them in services.

One of the most significant findings to emerge was the importance of part time and casual staff in how compelled the participants were to use (or didn't use) the Standards. Whilst some participants expressed a willingness to grapple with the challenges of casualised staffing, others decided not to.

> *I'd probably wait to the see if that educator would be coming back in a more, you know, long term permanent capacity and then I would put that extra work in* (Participant 6).

The casualised nature of the Australian OSHC workforce (Cartmel & Brannelly, 2016; Cartmel& Hayes, 2016) and the experiences and perceptions of the participants as they considered the Standards in their workplaces was a conundrum. It demands deeper consideration for future training relating to the Standards.

Participants also spoke of other benefits and useful qualities that the Standards have. In particular, they proposed that the Standards were helpful in raising the profile of OSHC as a profession.

> *It's a great tool for speaking and having conversations… about the work that we do, and how it is, it's not glorified baby sitting* (Participant 3).

Participants 3 explained that the Standards help to create a form of literacy for speaking about the work that OSHC educators do. Further suggesting that the Standards can play a similar role with stakeholders, such as school teachers, helping to disrupt perceptions of OSHC as a low status occupation. Some participants expressed that the Standards gave them and their teams a shared way of speaking about their professional practices. Related to this is many participants' belief that the Standards helped to quantify common understandings of what constituted quality practices in OSHC. The professional development about the Standards had exposed the participants to the contents of the Standards document to use in this way.

Conclusion

Professionalism is a relatively new idea in OSHC. It is a sector that has only been regulated for approximately 10 years. QCAN's Professional Standards for OSHC are an attempt to produce a universal understanding of what constitutes professionalism in a rapidly growing sector. The project described in this paper seeks to provide insights into how the professional development about the Standards would influence OSHC leaders to engage with the Standards and use them in their services.

The first level of analysis demonstrates that the professional development about the Standards were largely well received and that leaders had already identified possible uses for the Standards. The second level analysis demonstrated that the professional development had underpinned mixed responses, in that no two service leaders used the Standards in a similar way and that contextual factors such as the casualised workforce tempered the enthusiasm and commitment expressed at the professional development to use the Standards in their OSHC services. The participants engaged with the Standards in multiple, complex ways that reflect different understandings of professionalism in OSHC and the usefulness of the Standards. Engagement with the Standards was affected by contextual factors unique to OSHC, in particular the likelihood that some participants in the training will have moved out of the sector (McNamara & Cassells, 2010). These findings contribute to understanding how OSHC practitioners think about professionalism in the context of their sector and the role of the Standards. More significantly they expose how important it is to provide professional development and support that can sustain the introduction of the Standards developed to professionalise the OSHC workforce. This evaluation will assist QCAN with their work in providing professional development and support that leads to improving OSHC for children, families and practitioners.

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