

## Exploring 'Attachment Theory' in the Context of Early Childhood Education

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**Abstract :** From the mid-twentieth century onward, the notion of 'attachment' has been used to define the optimum relationship between young children and their carers; first applied to parents and young children and more recently with early childhood educators and children in their care. However, it is seldom, if ever, asked whether the notion of 'attachment' and more especially so-called Attachment Theory, as propounded by John Bowlby and others, provides a sound basis for conceptualising child-adult relationships in early years. Even if appropriate in the context of family, the use of the term raises a number of questions when used in early childhood education. Research has shown that our youngest children (infants) in early childhood centre based care settings, are given the utmost priority to build 'attachments' with their educators. But exactly when, how and why does this priority diminish - and should it (for preschoolers)? This presentation will elaborate on such issues and will argue that there is a need to reconceptualise and redefine how 'quality relationships' should be measured and implemented in the daily practices and pedagogical methods adopted by early childhood educators. Moreover, this presentation will include data collected from the empirical study conducted, that observed various early childhood educators and children in Australian early childhood centres. Lastly, the thoughts, feelings and desires of parents of children in early childhood centre-based care, regarding the term 'attachment' and 'quality relationships' will be shared in the hope that we can take one step closer in bridging the needs of families, children, early childhood centres, educators, and the wider community.

**Keywords :** attachment, early childhood education, pedagogy, relationships

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