

**NZARE Conference 2019**

**‘Business managers’ in children’s playground:  
A call for re-envisioning teachers’ professional  
Identities in Aotearoa New Zealand early  
childhood policies and practices**

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# CONTENT



• **Researching teachers' professional identities**



• **Planting a seed of 'business' services and professional identities in the New Zealand ECE**



• **Re-constructing teachers into 'business managers'**



• **Problematic (or not!) impacts of the construction of business managers in ECE**



• **A way forward ...**

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How have teachers' professional identities been constructed in ECE policies and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last two decades?
2. How have discourses in policies and practice constructed teachers' professional identities, and what are their effects?
3. What identities are accepted, rejected and negotiated in teachers' specific institutional contexts, and why?

# CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

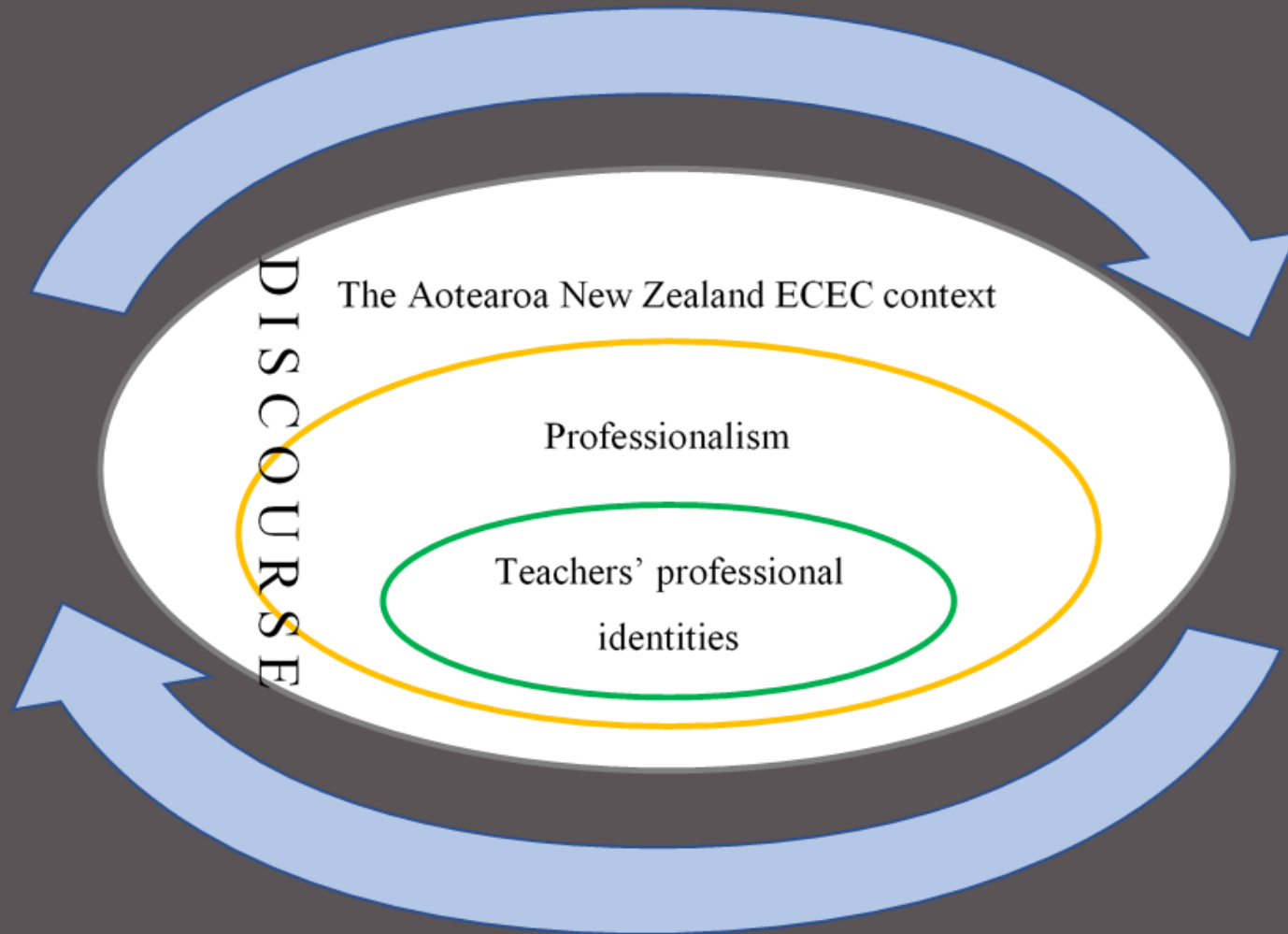
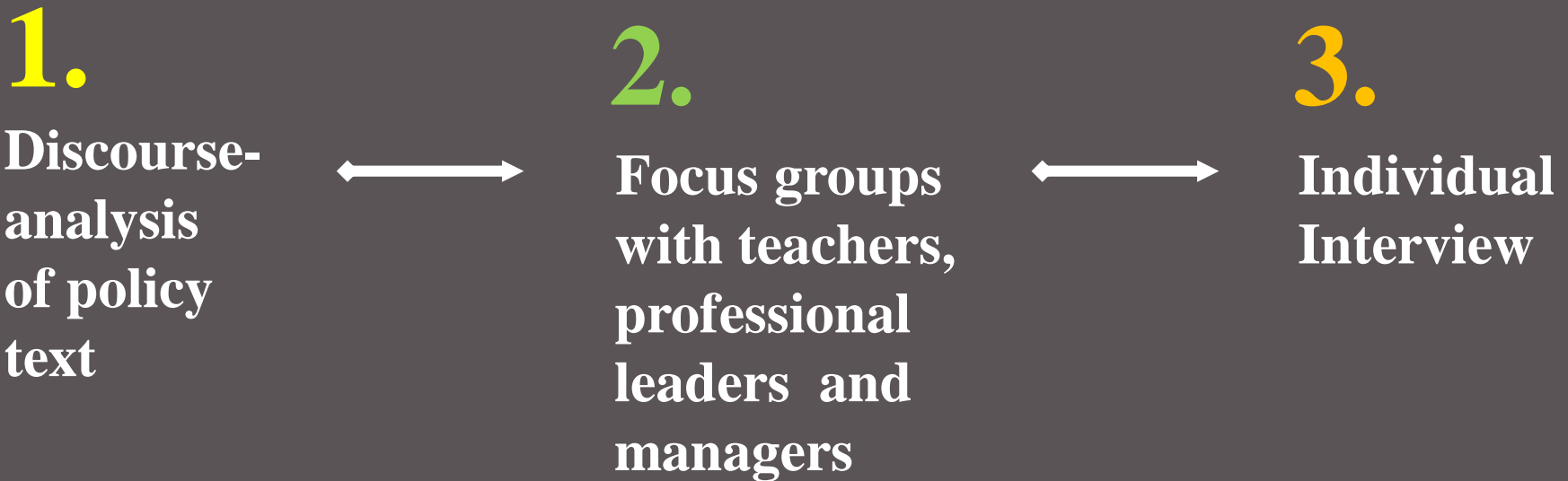


Figure 1. The structure of the conceptual and theoretical framework \

# RESEARCH DESIGN



# ECE CONTEXT - SHIFTING POLICY DIRECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

1996 to 2009

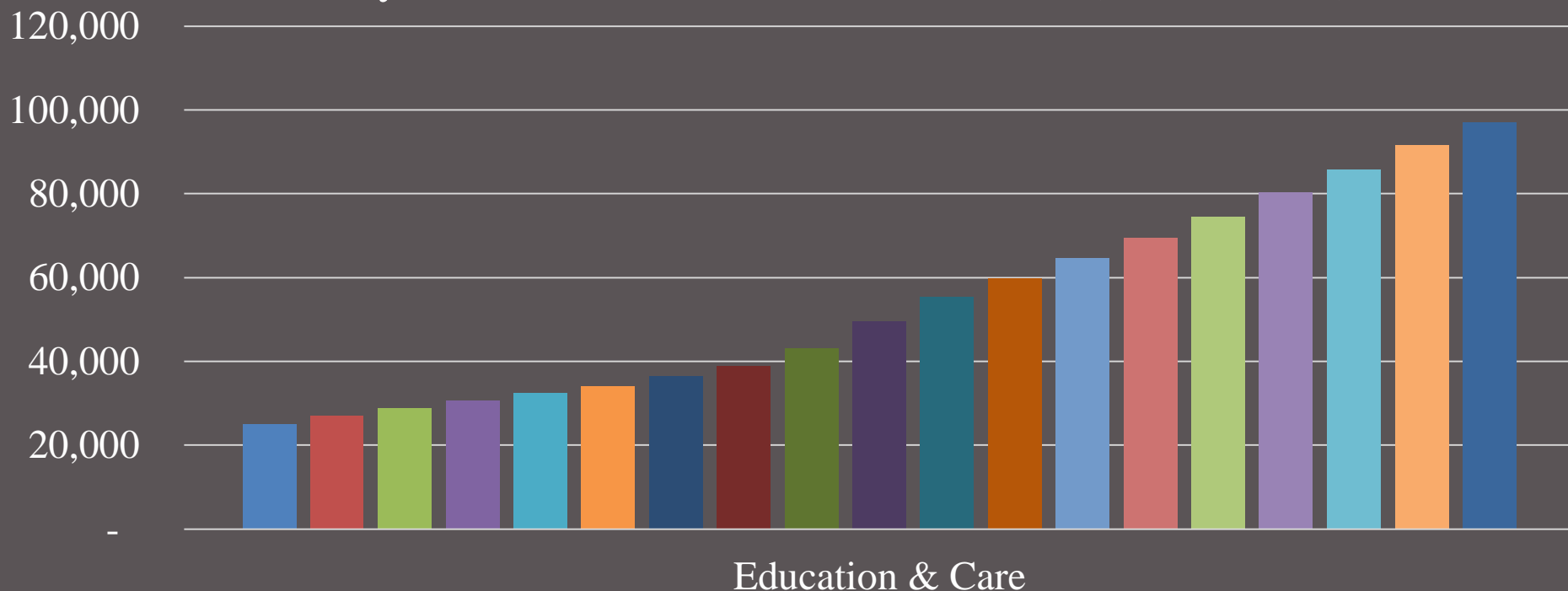
- Te Whāriki ECE Curriculum (updated in 2017)
- Participation of **all children** in **quality** ECE services
- 20 Hours **Free** ECE
- Improving teachers' **status** and **professionalism**
- Strengthening collaborative relationships

2010 to 2019

- ECE for 'priority learners'
- 20 Hours **Free** ECE hours
- Competition over the same funding
- Privatisation, marketization and individualisation of the sector
- 'Business' services, identities professionalism
- New Strategic Plan coming soon...

# ECE STATISTICS

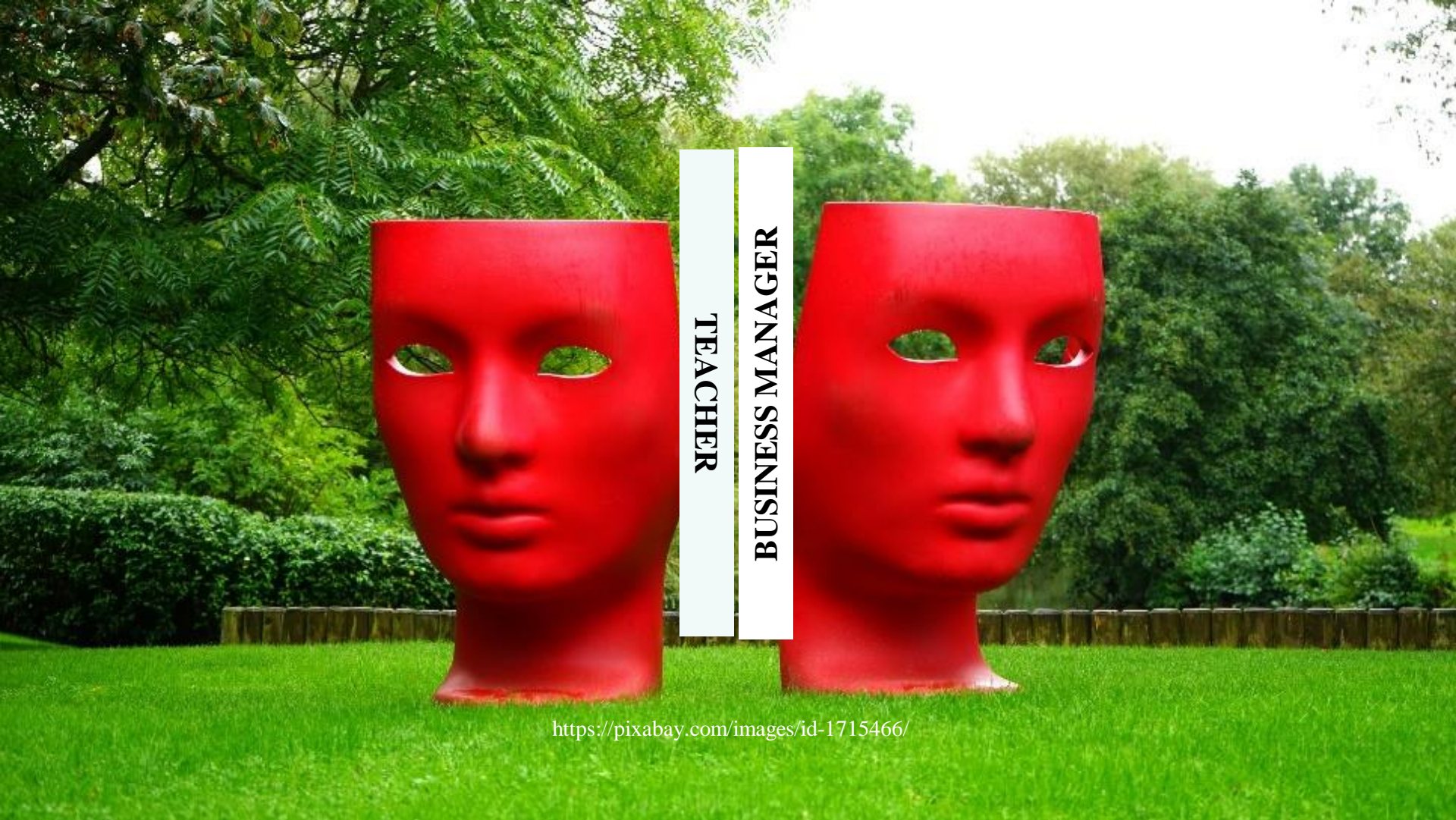
## Privately-owned education and care centres (2000 - 2018)



- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
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- 2009
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- 2011
- 2012
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- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018 - Private

**Education and care centres represents 61% of the ECE sector; 73% in private ownership (Education Counts, 2018)**

# RE-CONSTRUCTING TEACHERS INTO 'BUSINESS MANAGERS' IN ECE PRACTICES



**TEACHER**

**BUSINESS MANAGER**

<https://pixabay.com/images/id-1715466/>

# ‘TWO SIDES OF THE JOB’ - ‘BUSINESS AND SOCIAL’

“ We need to meet both, the ‘social’ [teaching] and ‘business’ [making profit] expectations of our job.... We are business and it is just how the business works.”  
(Focus group, ECE managers)

“The biggest challenge for us is to balance between making the profit and supporting the vulnerable children to stay longer in our centres.”  
(Focus groups, ECE managers)

# BUSINESS PRINCIPLE AND FOR-PROFIT INTERESTS IN ECE

“Our company is very good in giving money to support children's learning and buying teaching resources, but we still have the pressure from the business side of our job ... We still have that expectation ... to get this type of occupancy [referring to enrolment numbers]. We need to be within the given budget, and to still make sure that business side is getting enough money and that everything is not free”.

(Interview, Karla)

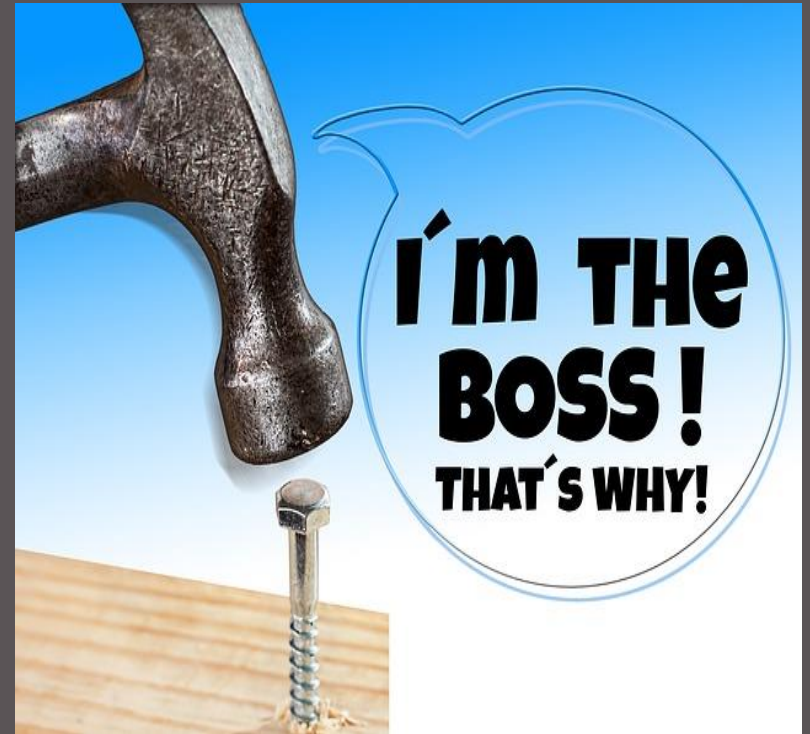


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# ‘STRENGTHENING COST-CONSCIOUS MENTALITY IN DECISION MAKING’

“They [teachers] need to understand when they get the answer “No, you cannot do it, and this is why” ... I want them [teachers] to understand that there are restrictions in the business that restricts the learning and that is just the way that this business goes. You cannot expect that you will be given everything if you are not making money in your centre. You have to learn how to make the profit in your centre”.

(Interview, Karla)



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# ‘WEARING TWO HATS’ AND ‘JUGGLING’

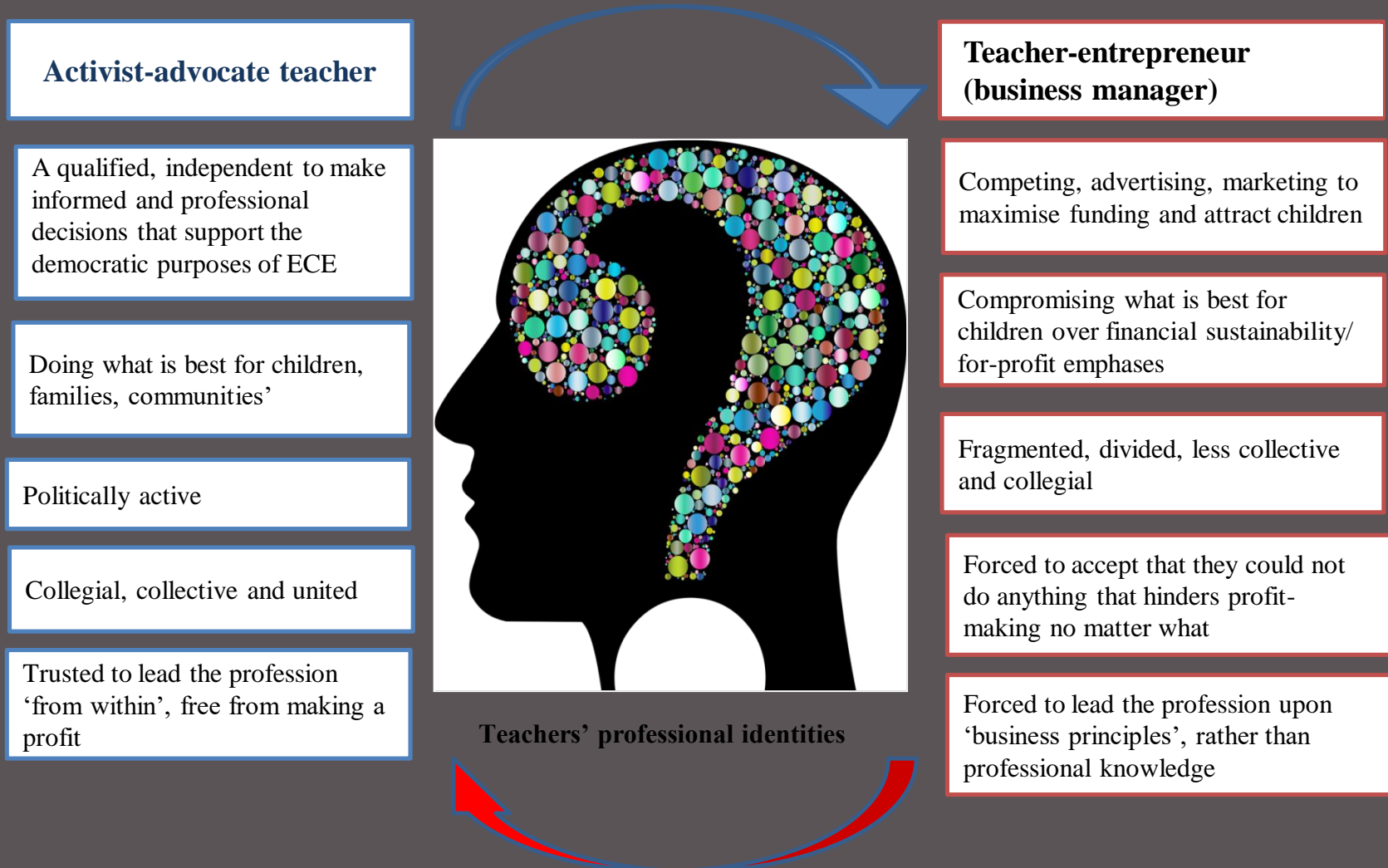
“You definitely need these two different hats. You need a hat to be a teacher and a hat to be the business manager ... You definitely need to juggle ... When I am on the floor I am teaching, but in the back of my head I am also thinking of the business side ‘how this is going to impact on our business’. I am always wearing two hats, and .... always juggling. Every decision that I make on the floor must relate to the business side”

(Interview, Karla)



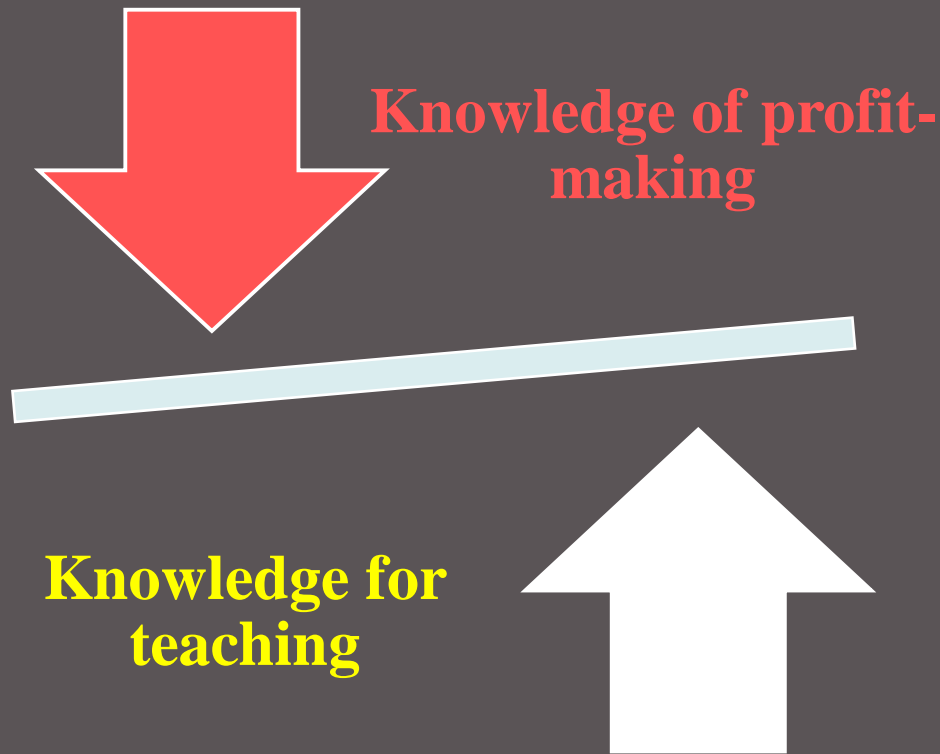
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# Figure 2. Conflicting and yet coexisting identity constructions



The figure of human head in Figure 1 was retried from <https://pixabay.com/en/human-head-man-male-cranium-1211467/>

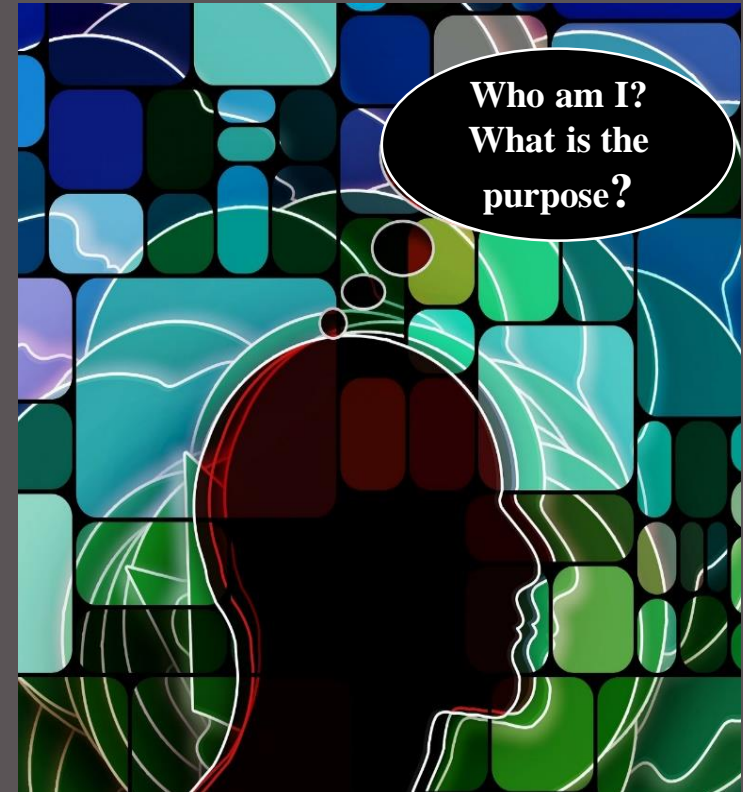
# ‘PROFESSIONALISM’ IN ECE - TWO BASKETS OF KNOWLEDGE



“You need to know how to keep the full occupancy in the centre, by welcoming new parents, showing them around and talking to them. This is what keeps families into the centre. It is about relationships that you form with them as soon as they walk into that door ...”  
(Interview, Karla)

# PROBLEMATIC (OR NOT!) IMPACTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF BUSINESS MANAGERS IN ECE

- The purpose of education – ECE as a commodity, fulfilling for-profit interests of business-owners **vs.** ECE for the best interests of children, families and community
- Managerial (institutional) professionalism **vs.** democratic professionalism from within the teaching profession
- Sense of belonging to the company **vs.** sense of belonging to the teaching profession
- Teachers as ‘agents of change’ in a business company **vs.** ‘agents of change’ within the teaching profession as a collective; contributing to the purpose of education in its broadest sense



<https://pixabay.com/images/id-1715466/>

# ASKING SOME CRITICAL QUESTIONS ....

**How can we come together to strengthen advocate-activist teachers' identities and the teaching professional at a time in which competition, individualism and loyalty to the organisational (i.e. business) principles drive teachers' work, forcing them to choose enterprise interests over the wellbeing of children, families and community?**

# A WAY FORWARD ...

What can we do to create the competent ECE workforce and services that contribute to a more democratic and socially just and less unequal world?

Challenging dominant discourses

Consciously and actively searching for alternative discourses

Activist-advocate  
**ECE**  
professionals

Transformative  
activist  
professionalism

‘Ethics of resistance’

Building leadership capacity

What is the purpose of education/ECE in a wider context and ethical responsibilities of teachers?

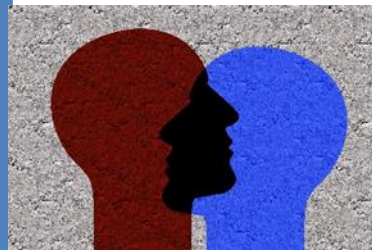
# A FINAL THOUGHT ....

**You are personally [and professionally] responsible for becoming more ethical than the society you grew up in.**

Eliezer Yudkowsky



Thank You!



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