

**TEACHER DECISION MAKING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION**

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Abstract

The study investigated early childhood teacher decision making at the preschool level in the state of Victoria, Australia. Victorian teachers at the preschool level were in an interesting position in 2004. Unlike most other Australian states Victoria did not have a curriculum framework guiding educational content and pedagogy. Consequently, this study was able to take advantage of this situation and examine teacher decision making at a time when early childhood teachers were relatively autonomous in deciding curriculum content. The opportunity to study teacher decision making in this way has since passed, as Victorian preschool teachers are now regulated by newly introduced state and national curricula frameworks.

To identify influences affecting teacher decision making three preschool teachers were interviewed and curricula related policies were analysed. The data were analysed using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) technique. Critical discourse analysis enabled a close analysis of influences on teacher decision making illustrating how discourse is legitimated, marginalised, and silenced in certain curricula practices. Critical theory was the underpinning framework used for the study and enabled taken-for-granted understandings to be uncovered within early childhood policies and teacher interviews.

Key findings were that despite there not being a government-mandated curricula framework for Victorian preschool education in 2004, teachers were held accountable for their curricula practice. Yet as professionals, early childhood teachers were denied public acknowledgment of their expertise as they were almost invisible in policy. Subsequently, teachers' authority as professionals with curricula knowledge was diminished. The study found that developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) was a dominant discourse influencing teacher decision making (TDM). It operated as legitimated discourse in the 2004 Victorian preschool context. Additionally, the study found that teacher directed practice was legitimated, marginalised, and silenced by teachers. The findings have implications for early childhood teacher decision making at the practice, research, and policy levels. Findings show that the dominance of the DAP discourse informing teacher decision making limits other ways of thinking and practising.

Key Words

Teacher decision making, early childhood curriculum, policy, accountability, preschool education, critical theory, critical discourse analysis (CDA).

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Glossary

Accountability in an educational context refers to teachers being held responsible for monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of their teaching and children's learning.

Child-centred practice (CCP) is an approach to education where education is centred on children and their experience, rather than being solely driven by curriculum content and learning outcomes. Child-centred practice stems from educational progressive theories espoused by Rousseau, Froebel, Dewey, Piaget and others, and was popularised in primary education in England during the 1960s and 1970s (Darling, 1994; Entwistle, 1970; Walkerdine, 1998).

Child development (CD) is concerned with the developmental stages of children, including their biological, social, emotional and cognitive growth (Berk, 2003; Doherty & Hughes, 2009; Kaplan, 2000; Santrock, 2004).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) stems from a combination of critical theories, social theories and linguistic theories and is an analytic approach looking for patterns in language use. Critical discourse analysis has the ability to critique social practices and can focus on the role discourse plays in maintaining unequal power relations (Fairclough, 2001b).

Curriculum is all the planned and unplanned educational experiences and pedagogical practices that occur in early childhood settings.

Curriculum content refers to all the content, subject or topic areas that teachers deem as important knowledge for young children to learn.

DAP is Developmentally Appropriate Practice and is recognised in early childhood education through the practice of meeting the developmental needs of young children through an individual and age-appropriate approach and doing away with subject areas as a basis for curriculum (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Copple and Bredekamp, 2009).

DIP is Developmentally Inappropriate Practice and refers to practices that are deemed "inappropriate", whether "harmful to children", "merely waste children's time" or are "highly questionable" practices in the DAP approach (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 123).

Discourse refers to the ways in which people represent the world. Discourses are sets of social practices and associated language that are found in common sense assumptions in particular contexts (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003).

Dominant discourse is apparent through its ability as a discourse to sustain dominance (Fairclough, 2001a). Dominance is visible through discourse where it is evident that social practices operate in hegemonic ways and sustain power (Fairclough, 1995).

Early childhood teachers in the State of Victoria are three or four-year university educated teachers who are qualified to teach in state-funded preschool settings and, depending on their qualification, in primary schools.

Hegemony is the process of the reproduction of knowledge, values, ideologies, morals, and norms (Gramsci, 1971).

Kindergarten in the Victorian context, describes the educational year before formal school. The term is used interchangeably with the term preschool and pre-reparatory year. Children who attend kindergarten in Victoria are aged four to five years.

Pedagogy is how teaching and learning is enacted. It is the way that teachers go about the business of teaching including how they interact with children and prepare the learning environment.

Performativity in educational contexts is visible where performance-related practices, such as teaching and learning, are regulated through measurable criteria (Ball, 1994, 2003; Lyotard, 1984).

Pre-preparatory or pre-prep are terms used in Victoria to describe the educational year before the Preparatory year for children aged four to five years in a school setting. The pre-preparatory year is also referred to as kindergarten or preschool in the state of Victoria.

Preschool in the Victorian context in 2004 refers to an educational program for children aged four to five years in the year before formal schooling. The preschool year is also referred to as kindergarten. In the Victorian school context in 2004, preschool was sometimes referred to as pre-preparatory year.

Preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers are both commonly used terms to describe early childhood teachers in the Victorian context. Preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers have been educated at university for three or four years.

Program refers to all the planned and unplanned experiences prepared for children's learning. The term program has been more widely used in the Australian preschool context than the term curriculum.

Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) is a national quality assurance system which assesses quality in Long Day Care Settings and is linked to child care funding (National Childcare Accreditation Council, NCAC, 2001).

Teacher decision making in the Victorian preschool context in 2004 included the functions of determining curriculum content, material and resource selection, planning activities and learning experiences, managing children's behaviour, assessing and evaluating children's learning and development, and deciding on the type of teaching and learning strategies implemented (Wood & Bennett, 2001).

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature.....

Date: 29 May 2012

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study is a detailed investigation into the influences affecting teacher decision making at the preschool level in Victoria, Australia. It investigates the types of curricula content decisions that early childhood teachers make and how curriculum decision making is represented in policy documents in 2004 within Victoria. Preschool education in Victorian caters for children aged four to five years and is the year of education before formal schooling commences.

The study is timely due to the changing nature of the Australian early childhood curricula landscape. The year 2004 presented an opportunity to examine teacher decision making conditions in an environment before mandated early childhood curricula frameworks were introduced. At the time of data collection in 2004, Victorian preschool education did not have a government-mandated curriculum framework to guide practice (Australian Early Childhood Association Victorian Branch, Fell, Sebastian-Nickell, Hammer, Adam, & Griffiths, 2003). However, a set of guidelines was produced for the Victorian preschool context in 1991, entitled *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines*, (Department of Human Services [DHS], 1991). These guidelines did not contain curriculum content guidance for teachers and many preschool teachers in Victoria did not find the guidelines useful as they lacked sufficient detail (Australian Early Childhood Association Victorian Branch et al., 2003; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2008; Walker, 2004). The curriculum context in 2004 meant that preschool teachers made their own decisions about pedagogy and curricula content, with little guidance from state (e.g., DHS, 1996, 2002; Victorian State Government, 1996, 1998) and national (National Childcare Accreditation Council, [NCAC] 2001) regulations. At the same time, other Australian states, with the exception of Northern Territory, were in the process of reforming curricula and were introducing both mandated and non-mandated curricula frameworks (e.g., Department of Education Tasmania, 2002; Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998; Stonehouse & Duffie, 2002). As there was minimal government curriculum content guidance in 2004, the Victorian early childhood context was an ideal environment to investigate teacher decision making.

My interest in conducting research in this area stems from my experience as a preschool teacher in the state of Victoria in the 1990s where little curriculum content guidance was provided. My time teaching at the preschool level within state government kindergartens and private long day care centres raised more questions than answers about the role of early childhood educators in curriculum development and provision. This interest led me to study at the postgraduate level and ultimately to pursue a career in teacher education, where I have lectured and researched in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and university sectors within Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). My interest in observing the development, introduction, and implementation of new early childhood curriculum frameworks across Australia and the UK remains.

The question that I consider to be crucial to understanding more about teacher decision making is: What do early childhood teachers and practitioners consider important knowledge and skills for children to acquire before they reach formal schooling? To follow this personal and professional interest, this study was designed to investigate the type of knowledge and skills early childhood teachers at the preschool level consider important for the education of preschool children.

The term preschool is used in this study as the year of education before formal schooling rather than the term kindergarten, used by the Victorian Government in 2005 (DHS, 2005), or the more recent term, early childhood services, introduced in 2009 by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria (DEECD, 2009). Use of the term preschool to denote the year before formal schooling occurs because it was the official term given to the educational year by the Victorian regulator, the Department of Human Services (DHS) at the time data were collected for this study (DHS, 2002). In addition, two national reports, the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Thematic review of early childhood education and care policy: Australian background report* (Press & Hayes, 2000) and *For all our children: National preschool education inquiry report* (Walker, 2004) referred to the educational year before formal schooling as the preschool year across the Australian context. Formal schooling in Victoria starts with the preparatory year, known as the *prep* year within

primary school and progresses to Year 6, followed by six years of secondary education.

This introductory chapter provides four overviews. The first overview centres on the history of early childhood curricula in Australia (Section 1.1). The focus of the second overview is preschool governance in Australia (Section 1.2), while the third overview discusses Victorian preschool provision (Section 1.3). The fourth overview focuses on recent Australian early childhood curriculum developments (Section 1.4). Section 1.5 outlines the significance of this study, and Section 1.6 explains how the research questions were formulated. Section 1.7 provides an overview of the study with Section 1.8 providing an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 A Brief History of Early Childhood Curricula in Australia

To understand the context of this study, this section (1.1) provides a brief history of early childhood curricula developments that have taken place within Australia. It provides an overview of how early childhood curriculum frameworks have developed differently in each Australian state for the purpose of contextualising this study.

Australian preschool education has a history of being fragmented, with little consistency of provision across the different states (Brennan, 1998; Elliott, 2004; Horsley & Bauer, 2010; Press & Hayes, 2000). Preschool education was established initially by philanthropic and church affiliated groups, with day nurseries began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Brennan, 1998; Press & Hayes, 2000). The Commonwealth government became involved in the 1930s, and the provision of preschool education expanded rapidly from the 1980s onwards (Brennan, 1998; Press & Hayes, 2000).

In the absence of a national curriculum for early childhood education, each Australian state was responsible for the development of a curricula framework (Lee, 2007). By 2004, early childhood curricula frameworks had been introduced into preschool education in every Australian state and territory with the exception of the Northern Territory and Victoria, and while the curriculum was mandatory in some states, it was not in others. Queensland was one of the first states to develop a

mandatory curriculum framework for state preschool teachers in 1998 (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998). The *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* provided a framework to assist preschool teachers to develop, implement and evaluate curriculum while aiming to maintain a developmental, social and culturally appropriate learning environment (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998).

In 2002, New South Wales (NSW) released a non-compulsory curriculum framework entitled, *NSW Curriculum Framework for children's services: The practice of relationships. Essential provisions for children's services* (Stonehouse & Duffie, 2002). This framework was intended to guide all practitioners working with young children within the preschool and children's services context (Stonehouse & Duffie, 2002). As a non-compulsory curriculum framework, the NSW document focused on improving children's learning and development outcomes through the practice of relationships between families, practitioners, children and the community.

In Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, curriculum framework documents were developed to guide teaching and learning across three educational sectors; preschool, primary and secondary school. Western Australia developed a state-mandated *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia* (Curriculum Council, 1998). This framework was outcomes-based and shared uniform learning strands for students from the kindergarten (preschool) age group through to Year 12. This initiative was the first time that one curriculum framework shared common learning goals that guided teaching and learning across the preschool, primary, and secondary school sectors. South Australia developed a mandated curriculum, the *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework*, in 2001 (Department of Education Training and Employment South Australia, 2001). The difference between the South Australian and Western Australian approaches was that the South Australian curriculum framework applied to children from birth through to Year 12 of schooling whereas the Western Australian approach guided learning for children from the preschool age. At a similar time (2002), the Tasmanian Department of Education established a curriculum framework, the *Essential Learnings Framework*

1 (Department of Education Tasmania, 2002), which provided teaching and learning guidance for teachers of children aged birth to Year 10.

In 2004, only Victoria and the Northern Territory did not provide curricula content guidance for preschool education. However, during 2003 some progress was made towards developing a state curricula framework for preschool education in Victoria. The Victorian government commissioned a precursory discussion paper resulting in a document entitled *Beliefs and understandings: A conversation about an early childhood curriculum framework* (Australian Early Childhood Association Victorian Branch, Fell et al., 2003). This document was not widely known or distributed, as confirmed by the teacher interview data collected for this study. In the Victorian context, preschool curriculum (commonly referred to as a *program*), was developmentally appropriate and maintained a child-centred approach (DHS, 2005). The term ‘program’ in the Australian preschool context refers to curricula content and pedagogy (Aldwinckle, 2001; Ashby & Grieshaber, 1996; MacNaughton, 1999; McLean, 1992). Up until the late 1990s, early childhood teachers had a “great deal of autonomy concerning...the program [and] the content of the curriculum” (Corrie, 2000, p. 293). The amount of curricula autonomy teachers had in early childhood education in Victoria differed to Victorian primary and secondary education, where teachers were guided by traditional curricula content (subject) areas. For example, primary school teachers in Victoria were guided by the eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs) of the arts, English, health and physical education, languages other than English, mathematics, science, studies of society and environment, and technology (Department of Education and Training [DET] Victoria, 2004). With the exception of Victoria and the Northern Territory, state curricula documents operating in 2004 represented a shift from the relatively autonomous early childhood curricula environment in Australian preschool settings to a more regulated one (Cheeseman, 2007; Goodfellow, 2005; Woodrow & Press, 2007).

1.2 Preschool Governance in Australia

In 2004 each Australian state had different types of governing bodies for preschool education, usually either departments of education or departments of

community, human or family services. As Table 1.1 indicates, in 2004, Victoria was the only state where the government department had educational responsibilities, in this case, the Department of Education and Training (DET) (2004) which did not regulate or jointly regulate the preschool year. The significance of this was that, unlike other states, Victorian preschool education was not shaped by educational agendas, instead by a human services department with an emphasis on providing care.

Table 1.1 Australian Preschool Provision in 2004.

Australian state	Name of year before formal schooling	Department of Education	Department of Human/Community/Family Services
Australian Capital Territory	Preschool	Department of Education, Youth and Family Services (DEYFS)	
New South Wales	Preschool	Department of Education and Training (DET)	Department of Community Services (DOCS)
Northern Territory	Preschool	Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)	
Queensland	Preschool	Education Queensland	Department of Families
South Australia	Kindergarten	Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)	
Tasmania	Kindergarten	Department of Education (DOE)	
Victoria	Kindergarten/Preschool		Department of Human Services (DHS)
Western Australia	Kindergarten	Department of Education and Training (DET)	

State governments across the country were becoming more influential in the implementation of preschool programs, including the process of curriculum design, and were demanding more accountability. For example, this influence is evident by

the introduction of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998) in Queensland in 1998, the *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework* in 2001 (Department of Education Training and Employment, 2001), and other state curriculum frameworks discussed above.

In 2004, each state government was responsible for preschool provision, including governance and regulation (Elliott, 2004). Preschool education across the country was provided by long day care settings, kindergartens, preschools and schools (Press & Hayes, 2000). Approximately 72 per cent of Australian child care provision was owned by the private sector in 2004 (Elliott, 2004). Child care provision is relevant as long day care settings in Victoria were able to provide Victorian state-funded preschool education in 2004 (DHS, 2004a). Significantly, varied ownership, regulations and types of provision made it difficult for policy makers to agree on core curriculum covering all early childhood education sites across the country (Elliott, 2004; MacNaughton, 1999; Press & Hayes, 2000). Different arrangements for administering early childhood services had an impact upon preschool education, evident in the diverse aims and goals of early childhood programs across the country (Press & Hayes, 2000; Walker, 2004).

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, a shift towards governments in westernised countries showing interest in developing preschool curriculum documents has been evident across Australian states, New Zealand and within the UK (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Duhn, 2006; Moss, 2006; Penn, 2007; Woodrow & Press, 2007). One reason for government interest in developing curricula documents for preschool education was that early childhood education increasingly was seen as an important context for maximising children's potential and potentially ameliorating social disorders (MacNaughton, 2003a; Moss 2006). The next section (1.3) provides an overview of the Victorian preschool context during the 1990s to 2005.

1.3 Victorian Preschool Provision

This section (1.3) provides background information about the providers of preschool education in the state of Victoria from the late 1990s to 2005. Significant for this

study are the potential influences of various types of preschool education, such as sessional preschool, preschool within school settings and long day care, on teacher decision making.

In 2004, to be funded by the state government for preschool education (children aged four to five years), early childhood settings needed to adhere to the policies outlined in the *Victorian Preschool Program 2003: Policy, procedures and funding criteria* document (DHS, 2002). Victorian State-funded preschool programs were delivered by qualified teachers (with three or four years of preservice teacher education) within sessional kindergartens, schools, and long day care settings (DHS, 2004a; Walker, 2004).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, preschool provision was opened up to more diverse stakeholders across the country, including Victoria (Cheeseman, 2007; DHS, 2002; Press & Hayes, 2000; Walker, 2004). State governments moved away from direct provision of preschool education and encouraged a range of other forms of ownership, management structures and governance (Cheeseman, 2007). Ownership arrangements for preschool education included for-profit owner-employer settings; for-profit Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) listed corporation owned settings; local, State and Federal government owned settings; non-profit settings including church affiliated groups and other charitable organisations. To a lesser extent, primary schools, either government, private, or independently owned, provided state-funded preschool education within Victoria.

Changes to Victorian preschool provision included the introduction of different stakeholders. For example, preschool education was introduced to the primary school sector in 1998 (Department of Education Victoria, [DoE] 1998; Fell, 1999). Until this time, schools in Victoria did not provide state-funded preschool education (DoE, 1998; Fell, 1998). In 2004, there were 83 independent schools providing preschool education (Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, 2003), and a small number of state schools administering state funded preschool programs (Kirby & Harper, 2001).

In 2004, preschool education was managed and governed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and primary school education was administered by the

Department of Education and Training (DET). This meant that, within a school setting, the DHS had responsibility for overseeing preschool education and the DET has responsibility for the preparatory year and later years (DET, 2004; DHS, 2004a). When situated within the school sector, state-funded preschool programs were frequently referred to as *pre-preparatory* or *pre-prep*. The term pre-prep fitted in with primary school terminology as it included the term ‘prep’ which was common discourse in Victorian primary schools (Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, 2003).

Another example of stakeholder change to Victorian preschool provision was the introduction of the group employer model. This initiative was introduced in 2003 by DHS to manage non-profit kindergartens and child care centres (DHS, 2002). The group employer model was rejuvenated in 2005 as the ‘Kindergarten Cluster Management Scheme’ (DHS, 2005). It is referred to in this study as the group employer model, as this was the name of the initiative in 2004. It was developed by the DHS in response to the Kirby and Harper (2001) report. The Kirby and Harper (2001) report recommended a series of reforms for managing Victorian preschool settings, including the group employer model, where organisations were required to be private and non-profit. These organisations comprised local council groups, church affiliated groups, and other non-profit organisations. Each group employer managed a cluster of children’s services, with the minimum number of settings allowed in one metropolitan cluster being five (DHS, 2004a). The Victorian group employer initiative was developed to counteract difficulties experienced by voluntary committees managing sessional kindergartens (Kirby & Harper, 2001). The main intentions of the group employer initiative were to reduce costs and ensure consistent management (DHS, 2005). Moreover, the aim of the group employer initiative was to support teacher development, increase teacher networking opportunities, and enable parents to participate actively in their children’s education without the stress of managing the service themselves (DHS, 2005). The DHS (2004b) maintained that “cluster management is designed to significantly reduce pressures so that teachers and parent committees can devote their time and energies to the people they are really there for, the children” (p. 2).

Different providers of preschool education have different management and governance structures, along with varied terminology used to describe preschool education. Different terminology had led to some confusion, even when describing the preschool year. For example, terms such as preschool, kindergarten and pre-prep were, and still are used within Victoria and across the country to describe the educational year for children aged four to five years (Barblett & Maloney, 2001, 2002; DHS, 2002; Elliott, 2004; Press & Hayes, 2000; Walker, 2004). Moreover, the terms preschool and kindergarten have been used interchangeably by the Department of Human Services in the past 15 years (DHS, 1996, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007). Unsurprisingly, distinctions between different preschool services and types, such as sessional kindergarten, preschool, long day care settings, were unclear for families and early childhood educators alike (Kirby & Harper, 2001; Walker, 2004).

In early 2010, the Victorian State Government released a new mandatory curriculum framework, the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all children from birth to eight years* (hereafter the “Victorian Framework”) (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, DEECD, 2009). The Victorian Framework was developed to complement the *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* ensuring its principles of practice were based on the pedagogy of the national Framework (DEECD, 2009, p. 6).

1.4 Recent Australian Early Childhood Curriculum Developments

Since 2004, one of the most significant Australian early childhood curricula developments has been the collaboration of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to create a new national curriculum framework for early childhood educators, entitled *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (hereafter “the national Framework”) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). The aim of the national Framework is to “extend and enrich children’s learning from birth to five years and through [to] the transition to school” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 5). It is too early to document the impact of

the national Framework on Australian early childhood education; however, the introduction of state level early childhood curricula has affected teacher decision making (Kable, 2001).

Prior to the publication of the national Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), several curricula developments occurred in Australian states. For example, the state of Queensland published the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines* (EYCG) in 2006 (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006). Guiding the teaching of children who had turned five years and had access the preparatory year, the EYCG were introduced to provide “continuity of learning through the early childhood phase of schooling” (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006, p. v). To supplement the state-mandated *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia* (Curriculum Council, 1998), Western Australia developed an *Early Childhood (K-3) Syllabus* (Department of Education and Training Western Australia, 2007). This syllabus document links with the Western Australian curriculum framework and “provides scope and sequence statements of content” that connect to curriculum outcomes (Department of Education and Training Western Australia, 2007, p. 2). In the Tasmanian context, the *Essential Learnings Curriculum* (Department of Education Tasmania, 2002) has been superseded by the *Tasmanian Curriculum* (Department of Education Tasmania, 2010a). In addition, a recent four-year Tasmanian Government initiative, *Launching into Learning* (Department of Education Tasmania, 2010b), is providing enhanced learning opportunities and is reconsidering how programs can achieve quality for children from birth through to four years of age (Larcombe, 2007).

With the introduction of the national Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), the way the curriculum is and will be enacted in Australian early childhood settings catering for children from birth to five years is changing. It is no longer possible to collect data from Australian early childhood teachers at the preschool level in an environment that has no state or national curriculum framework.

1.5 Significance of the Study

In 2004, Victoria and the Northern Territory had neither a mandated nor a non-mandated curriculum framework guiding content and pedagogy for the preschool year. This position enabled an examination of influences that affected teacher decision making with minimal curriculum content guidance from state (DHS, 2002, 2004a; Victorian State Government, 1996, 1998) and national (NCAC, 2001) regulations. The study examines teacher curriculum decision making in the Victorian preschool context through teacher interviews, and the representation of discourses in key curricula related policies. ‘Discourse’ refers to the ways in which people represent the world. Discourses are sets of social practices and associated language that is found in common sense assumptions in particular contexts (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003); in this case, teacher decision making in the preschool context.

For more than a decade, commentators have observed that little is known about the influences on early childhood teacher decision making and that more research is required (Black & Halliwell, 2000; Genishi, Ryan, Oschner, & Yarnall, 2001; Kable, 2001; Ryan & Goffin, 2008; Wood & Bennett, 2001). Many studies conducted with teachers in early childhood settings have examined teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Early et al., 2006; Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003) that is, how teachers affect children’s social competence, behaviour for learning and educational attainment (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). Few studies, however, have considered why teachers make the curricula decisions that they do, or have examined influences on teacher decisions (Genishi et al., 2001). Exceptions to this, in the Australian context, are studies conducted by Edwards (2004) and Kable (2001). Moreover, when early childhood education is studied, attention is often placed on children’s development and progress rather than on the adult role (Genishi et al., 2001). As influences on early childhood teacher decision making have received little research attention, this study aims to broaden the way in which early childhood teacher curricula work is viewed and represented (see Genishi et al., 2001). Ultimately, this study aims to assist researchers, teachers and policy-makers, in further understanding teacher decision making at the

preschool level by adding to the relatively small research literature in the area. It will identify, discuss, and critique discourses influencing early childhood teacher decision making with the aim of respecting and giving voice to the “collective wisdom and expertise” of teachers (Ryan & Goffin, 2008, p. 390).

1.6 Research Questions

Evolving from the desire to investigate what influences early childhood teachers in their decision making processes, the main research question is: (1) What influences early childhood teachers’ curricula decision making? To explore this question further, two sub questions guided this study:

- (2) How do dominant discourses position early childhood teacher decision making?
- (3) How are curriculum and pedagogy described and represented in key Victorian early childhood policy documents in 2004, prior to the introduction of mandated curricula frameworks?

1.7 The Study

To identify and examine influences affecting teacher decision making, three early childhood teachers working in Victorian preschool settings were invited to participate in the study. Each of the early childhood teachers were working within a Victorian State-funded preschool program for children aged four to five years. One teacher worked in a stand-alone sessional kindergarten (not attached to a school or child care centre); another teacher worked in a state-funded preschool program operating within a long day care setting, and a third teacher worked in a preschool located in a school context. The teachers participated in semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 1988; Silverman, 2006). Interviews were scheduled across the duration of a Victorian school term (approximately 11 weeks), with each teacher interviewed at least three times for a minimum of four hours in total.

To further understand the participant teachers’ curricula and policy context, key policy documents regulating and guiding preschool curriculum were identified and analysed. Three types of policy documents were included for analysis: regulative and governance policies, quality improvement policies, and early childhood setting policies. A rationale for the selection of the eight key policies

selected for analysis is provided in Section 4.3.6 (Chapter 4). The interview data and key policy documents were analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). The critical discourse analysis drew on Fairclough's (2001b, 2003) methods as it was considered the most detailed and effective way to examine influences on teacher decision making.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters. Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the Australian and Victorian early childhood curriculum context at the preschool level. It highlighted the significance of the study and outlined the research questions guiding the study. Commencing with a discussion of what constitutes curriculum, teacher decision making, and pedagogy in an early childhood context, Chapter 2 identifies contextual factors and discourses influencing teacher decision making.

Chapter 3 describes how critical theory functions as an underpinning theoretical framework for the study. With its ability to expose dominance in social practice, critical theory (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964) enables taken-for-granted understandings to be uncovered within early childhood policies and teacher decision making.

A description of the methodology is provided in Chapter 4. It outlines how data were collected, including teacher interviews and early childhood policy documents. This chapter describes how a critical discourse analysis (CDA) was conducted using Fairclough's (2001b, 2003) approach. Details about the CDA process, including how the data were analysed, are provided in this chapter.

Chapter 5 investigates forms of control affecting teacher decision making in relation to curriculum. It draws on the concepts of power, authority, and accountability to describe the role of policy in this context, and it analyses how early childhood teaching is constructed within these documents.

Chapter 6 examines the effect of accountability on teacher decision making focusing on performative accountability. Ranson's (2003) typology of accountability regimes is applied to investigate practices relevant to Victorian early childhood teachers in 2004. With the focus on influences on curricula practices, this

chapter provides insights into how teachers are affected by performative accountability.

Chapter 7 examines the ways in which discourses are legitimated, marginalised, and silenced. The final chapter (8) provides an overview of the study aims, a summary of findings, and a discussion about critical insights and implications arising from the study. It proposes opportunities for future research, puts forward recommendations, and provides a concluding statement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter examines the notion of why early childhood teachers make the curricula decisions that they do, and it identifies discourses that influence their decisions. As the purpose of this study is to investigate influences on teacher decision making [hereafter TDM] it aims to distil hegemony in the early childhood context. Second, this chapter provides insight into the range of contextual factors and discourses affecting teacher decision making. Discourse is an important concept for the study as investigating discourses can reveal common sets of beliefs, language and social practices (Fairclough, 2001b). This chapter commences with definitions of discourse and dominant discourse, followed by an overview of TDM in the early childhood context.

Three bodies of knowledge are relevant for this study, curriculum in early childhood education (Section 2.1), teacher decision making (Section 2.2), and pedagogy (Section 2.2). After the three bodies of knowledge are discussed, contextual factors (Section 2.3) and discourses influencing TDM are identified (Section 2.4). The chapter concludes by summarising the ways in which TDM is affected by dominant discourses within the literature.

Through the identification and analysis of discourse this chapter aims to uncover and distil influences on teacher decision making. Discourses are identified using descriptive features drawing on Gee's (2011) and Fairclough's (2001b, 2003) work. Gee argues that discourses can be distinguished when people recognise features of a particular discourse and these features act as "maps" to assist understanding social practices (p. 39). For example, discourses are apparent as "coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times and places" (p. 36). However, discourses are continually being reformed and the boundaries of each discourse are ever-changing (Gee, 2011). Fairclough's (2001b) description of discourse "type" (p. 122) is identified by ascertaining the contents, subjects, relations, and connections of a discourse. Discourse type can be accessed by asking, What is going on? Who is involved? In what relations? What is the role of language? The notions of discourse held by both Gee (2011) and Fairclough (2001b) assist with the examination of influences on TDM. An examination is

carried out by scrutinising normalised and resisted social practices revealed through everyday language. Normalised social practices are difficult to detect, yet, as Fairclough (2001b) states, “ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible” (p. 71). Fairclough’s statement implies that when a social practice comprises common sense understandings, one has to uncover the discourses in action, to ascertain inherent assumptions.

In this chapter dominant discourses are identified through common sense understandings, ideologies, and social practices that prevail in literature. Dominance is apparent in discourse through “ideological assumptions embedded in particular conventions”, where prevailing ideology strongly influences social practices (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 2). Discourses are considered dominant in literature if they are prevalent (apparent through frequent use of particular terms and concepts), and significantly influence the social practice under examination, (in this case teacher decision making), as well as maintain authority (Fairclough, 1995, 2001a). According to critical theory, dominance is observable when discourses affirm and reproduce power in social practices, giving legitimacy to certain values and interests or through the exclusion of values and interests (Marcuse, 1964; McLaren, 2003). Moreover, hegemonic practices are identifiable through the type of language used in a particular discipline and can be scrutinised to determine dominant values and shared group interests. Hegemony, a key concept for the study, is the process of the reproduction of knowledge, values, ideologies, morals, and norms (Gramsci, 1971).

2.1 Curriculum in Early Childhood Education

Curriculum in early childhood education is described as “dramatically different” to curriculum in other stages of education (Saracho & Spodek, 2002, p. viii). This statement pertains to the North American context, although it also remains true within the Australian early childhood context. In 2002, curriculum in the Australian preschool context was defined as all the “intentional provisions and offerings made by the professionals to support children’s learning and well-being” (Stonehouse & Duffie, 2002, p. 156). Victorian preschool education separated itself from school curricula practices where specific subject content areas are taught. For example, in 1996, one Victorian preschool curricula policy document stated that “young children

do not learn in curriculum subject areas” (DHS, 1996, p. 15) and instead, took a holistic view of curriculum. The interdisciplinary nature of Victorian preschool education existed in sharp contrast to that of its neighbouring educational body, the primary school, where knowledge is bounded by eight definite subject content areas, known as Key Learning Areas (KLAs) (see Section 1.1).

Understandings of the term curriculum within the Australian context have developed differently across educational sectors and are grounded within a particular ideology dependent on the educational context (Press & Hayes, 2000; Smith & Lovat, 2003). The difference between preschool and primary school views of curriculum is partly due to curriculum in early childhood education being child-centred, where education focuses on children’s developmental needs and interests rather than on curricula content areas of learning (Burton & Lyons, 2000; Farquhar & Fleer, 2007; Woodrow & Press, 2007). Significant influences for early childhood education and curriculum content and pedagogy have stemmed from the works of Froebel, Dewey, Montessori and Steiner; with theories derived from Malaguzzi and Vygotsky later incorporated (Edwards, 2005a; Goffin & Wilson, 2001).

Defining the term curriculum can be difficult within early childhood education as it has acquired different meanings depending on the context (Edwards & Fleer, 2003). In the past, the term curriculum has been viewed by Australian educators in the preschool context (the year before formal schooling) as too ‘school-like’ because traditional early childhood curricula practices were based on meeting the individual needs and interests of the child rather than subject or content areas (Raban, 2001). Teachers viewed early childhood education as focusing practice on the child rather than subject matter and understood curriculum as being “process orientated rather than product orientated” (Ashby & Grieshaber, 1996, p. 133). In her study, Edwards (2003, 2005b) categorised early childhood teachers’ perceptions of curriculum into four dimensions:

- (1) The observation of children’s development;
- (2) A reflection of children’s interests and developmental potential;
- (3) The beliefs, values and religious affiliations of the educator; and
- (4) The influence of the management structures governing a setting.

The four dimensions are characteristic of child-centred ways of teaching in the early childhood context, and are discussed in more detail in a latter part of this chapter (Section 2.4.2).

Until quite recently, the term *curriculum* has been viewed as unsuitable and irrelevant for the preschool context. Instead, many Australian early childhood practitioners have used the term *program* to distinguish early childhood curricula from other education sectors (Aldwinckle, 2001; Ashby & Grieshaber, 1996; Corrie, 2000; MacNaughton, 1999; McLean, 1992). In 1992, McLean argued that the term program enabled early childhood teachers to have the “freedom to make unanticipated [curricula] choices” (p. 43). McLean (1992) explains that “a curriculum cannot be tightly prescribed, neatly packaged into ‘everything-you-need’ kits complete with objectives, resources, teaching and evaluation strategies [in preschool education]” (p. 42). Instead, children’s strengths and interests should be taken into account. Coupled with the view that the concept of curriculum was not suitable for early childhood education, Australian early childhood teachers have had relative freedom to set curricula content for programs as there were no mandatory curriculum documents governing content selection (Patterson, 1992; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2008). Currently within the Australian context, early childhood teacher practice is informed by a range of theories, including developmentalism, postmodernism, behaviourist and sociocultural theories (Lee, 2007; MacNaughton, 2003b). It is significant that there is a range of theories available for teachers to draw from and negotiate in the early childhood context. However, it is play-based pedagogies along with child-centred pedagogy that dominate Australian early childhood practice with many educators influenced by developmental theories (Ailwood, 2003; Farquhar & Fler, 2007) (see Sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3).

More recently, within the national Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), curriculum is defined as “all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development” (p. 9). According to the national Framework, this definition was adapted from the New Zealand curriculum framework, *Te*

Whariki (Ministry of Education, 1996). The definition of curriculum adopted is similar to the national Framework, in that it comprises all learning experiences that occur within the preschool context; intended and not-intended learning experiences along with planned and non-planned learning experiences (see Section 1.9). Closely linked to early childhood curriculum and TDM is pedagogy. Both TDM and pedagogy are discussed in Section 2.2.

2.2 Teacher Decision Making and Pedagogy in Early Childhood Education

This section (2.2) provides an overview of teacher decision making (TDM) and pedagogy in early childhood education. The concepts of TDM and pedagogy are central to understanding curriculum in Australian early childhood practice and for the study. Both TDM and pedagogy have particular meanings in early childhood education, different to other educational sectors, so definitions are provided.

Many curricula decisions are made by early childhood teachers; therefore one has to carefully define which aspect of TDM is being referred to. Teacher decision making in early childhood education includes functions such as determining curriculum content, material and resource selection, planning activities and learning experiences, managing children's behaviour, assessing and evaluating children's learning and development, and deciding on the type of teaching and learning strategies to be implemented (Stipek & Byler, 1997; Wood & Bennett, 2001). Early childhood teachers make decisions about how to enact policy and implement curriculum with some decisions having "long-term consequences for children's lives" (Stipek & Byler, 1997, p. 305). The role of early childhood teachers as decision-makers has been described as "to know how to use play as a tool for [children's] learning" (Saracho, 2001, p. 28). The view of 'teacher as facilitator' of children's learning through play is dominant in literature (Logue & Harvey, 2010). According to Genishi et al. (2001) and Ryan and Goffin (2008), in the North American context, much of the literature in early childhood education which focuses on TDM considers children's developmental and academic progress, rather than investigating influences on TDM. Likewise, in the Australian early childhood education context, there are a limited number of studies that have

investigated factors that influence teachers and TDM (Black & Halliwell, 2000; Edwards, 2005; Kable, 2001).

Closely connected to TDM in early childhood education is the concept of pedagogy. As this study is primarily concerned with the pedagogic decisions early childhood teachers make, pedagogy is an all important term as it governs all actions connected to teaching and learning. Pedagogy in early childhood education is described as the science of teaching (Mantovani, 2007; Watkins & Mortimore, 1999) and can include the ways in which early childhood teachers provide for children's learning, how they design the learning environment, and the techniques and strategies used to do this (Wood, 2004). In the national Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), the term pedagogy is defined as "early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning" (p. 9).

Viewed from a critical perspective, the term pedagogy also includes the cultural, historical, and ethical dimensions of teaching (Giroux, 1988). A critical perspective (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Marcuse, 1964) illuminates taken-for-granted discourses and practices, therefore situating pedagogy as a social practice that can be analysed in terms of power and privilege. The term pedagogy has been carefully selected for this study, even if it has not traditionally been used in preschool education in Victoria, because it encompasses early childhood TDM and is used to convey the educator's approach to curriculum, learning, and teaching (Cheeseman, 2007). The definition of pedagogy includes how teachers teach, how they provide for children's learning, whether it is through a play-based program or via a more formal approach to learning and teaching, and how teachers assess and evaluate children's learning.

Working definitions of pedagogy in early childhood education vary in different parts of the world according to different traditions. Interpretations of pedagogy are mediated by expectations of particular management structures under which teachers operate (Edwards, 2005a; Nuttall, Coxon, & Read, 2009) and by the type of knowledge that educators have been introduced to in their early childhood

teacher education programs (K. Smith, 1997; Snider & Fu, 1990). For example, some interpretations include more than the skills of teaching and learning and take into account social and holistic ways of working with people, where learning, care and upbringing are interconnected facets of life (Moss, 2006). Across various cities in Italy, where provision for children from birth to 3 years is run by local educational authorities, early childhood pedagogy is referred to as the “culture of childhood” (Mantovani, 2007, p. 1113), placing children and their relationships at the centre of pedagogy. Pedagogy in this context is about “perspectives, approaches, and general categories rather than specific frameworks and processes of teaching and learning activities” (Mantovani, 2007, p. 1116). The notion of pedagogy expressed in this Italian context is less about the idea that pedagogy is to teach, translate or implement key curricula objectives and content. Instead, it is more about viewing the child as competent and social, with attention paid to the educational and care environment, children’s well-being and relationships (Mantovani, 2007).

In England, a differing view of pedagogy is held. The definition of pedagogy is summarised as “a result of children’s self-directed, self-motivated explorations, rather than as a result of ‘teaching’” (Brooker, 2005, p. 119). Practitioners have been reluctant to discuss pedagogy due to understandings about the purpose of early childhood education, which has a large care focus rather than solely educational aims (Stephen, 2010). Up until 1999, it was contended that almost every form of early childhood pedagogy in England was based on some form of play (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999). More recently, Sylva, Taggart, Siraj-Blatchford, et al. (2007) have defined pedagogy as “the practice (or art or science or craft) of and creation of a stimulating environment for play and exploration in which children will learn without adult guidance” (p. 53). Pedagogical assumptions that children learn without adult guidance altered slightly in England in 2008 with the introduction of the *Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) (Department of Children, Schools and Families, [DCSF], 2008a). For example, the EYFS (DCSF, 2008a) advocates that practitioners should be more hands on with teaching and learning. It expects adults to:

support and extend children's learning and development, based on their [children's] interests and needs. As well as leading activities and encouraging child-led activities, you [practitioners] should support and extend all children's development and learning by being an active listener and joining in and intervening when appropriate. (p. 12)

The emphasis in the EYFS (DCSF, 2008a) is for practitioners to both lead learning experiences and allow some activities to be child-led.

In England, the term pedagogy has often been described as child-centred pedagogy (Walkerdine, 1984, 1998). In her critical exploration of why developmental practices in the English context were considered to be pedagogy, Walkerdine (1984) traced historical conditions that produced the "developmental psychology and child-centred" approach, from the child study movement through to scientific experiments within pedagogy and the education sector itself (p. 162). Walkerdine (1984) maintained that, early in the twentieth century, the first ideas of an individualised pedagogy emerged. The origin of an individualised pedagogy stemmed from Piaget's theories of 'normal' stages of development (Walkerdine, 1984). According to Walkerdine (1984, 1998) the scientific apparatuses of observing and monitoring children's development became pedagogy. The parameters of practice in an early childhood setting were provided by a commonly held view of child development and this was embodied within teacher education, classroom recording and monitoring systems, and classroom layout (Walkerdine, 1984). Walkerdine's ideas (1984, 1998) have resonance today. For example, in a recent study, Stephen (2010) labelled play and child-centred practice as "big ideas" in early childhood pedagogy in the UK and denoted the magnitude of these approaches (p. 18). Consequently, the pedagogy of child-centred practice is discussed in more detail in the next section (2.4.2).

In addition to the term pedagogy being used cautiously in the Australian early childhood context, teaching is also used sparingly (McArdle, 2001). Teacher centred practice, where teachers intervene in children's learning and teach particular skills to children, is almost the antithesis of the practice where children learn through play and discovery with minimal adult interventions (Logue & Harvey,

2010; Saracho, 2001). The phrase that McArdle (2001) uses, to ‘teach without teaching’, uncomfortably “holds together the two opposing areas of freedom (child-centredness) and discipline (teacher directed pedagogy)” (p. 215). Confirming this notion, where teachers are seen to be providing the conditions for children’s learning rather than ‘teaching’, was made apparent by the Industrial Relations Tribunal in the State of Queensland (Burton & Lyons, 2000). For example, it was found by the tribunal that pre-school teachers employed in long day care centres were not teaching, but rather providing developmental programs (Burton & Lyons, 2000). This issue is contentious as policy trends show that, as the definition of the term teacher narrows, early childhood contexts can be “marginalised” and function as “non-pedagogical spaces” (Woodrow, 2007, p. 233).

Affirming the view that early childhood educational contexts do not always embrace pedagogy as a concept, Stephen’s (2010) study in the UK illustrated that early childhood practitioners were hesitant engaging with the discourse of pedagogy. At the same time, Stephen maintained the importance of practitioner’s understandings of pedagogy, particularly when these understandings can make a positive difference to practice and children’s learning. Within the Australian context, Cheeseman (2007) noted that there were pedagogical silences in Australian early childhood social policy. The implications of this according to Cheeseman were that pedagogy in early childhood education could be potentially reduced to “models addressing developmental deficits and preparation for later stages of schooling rather than recognising the potentials of children and their universal rights in the present” (p. 250). Instead of referring to teaching, early childhood educators have been said to create learning environments reflecting their perceptions of what play should look like (Gibbons, 2007). With this framing, the role of the early childhood educator is to encourage and challenge individual children to meet their developmental potential (Danby, 1996). The role includes classifying children’s behaviour, development, and children learning within a play context to see whether certain skills and dispositions are being acquired (Gibbons, 2007). Usually conceptualised from a developmental view, pedagogy in early childhood education is said to be more about the “process of waiting for children to grow and learn on

their own” rather than direct instructions coming from teachers (Grieshaber, 2008, p. 507). The terms pedagogy and teaching have been contentious in early childhood education, particularly as they can conjure up school-like practices.

A small number of studies have been conducted into teacher decision making in early childhood education. A significant literature review on research into teaching in early childhood education was carried out by Genishi, Ryan, Oschner and Yarnall (2001). Even though this review was written ten years ago, it provides a useful categorisation of research on teaching in early childhood education.

In their review, Genishi et al. (2001) found that research on teaching in early childhood education could be grouped into five categories: (i) process product research (teacher effectiveness); (ii) mediating process research; (iii) classroom ecology; (iv) teacher cognition and decision making; and (v) teacher research. Research conducted on teacher cognition and decision making in early childhood is broken down into a further three categories by Genishi et al. (2001): teacher planning, which considers links between teacher planning and teaching; teacher beliefs, and teacher theories (refer to Figure 2.1).

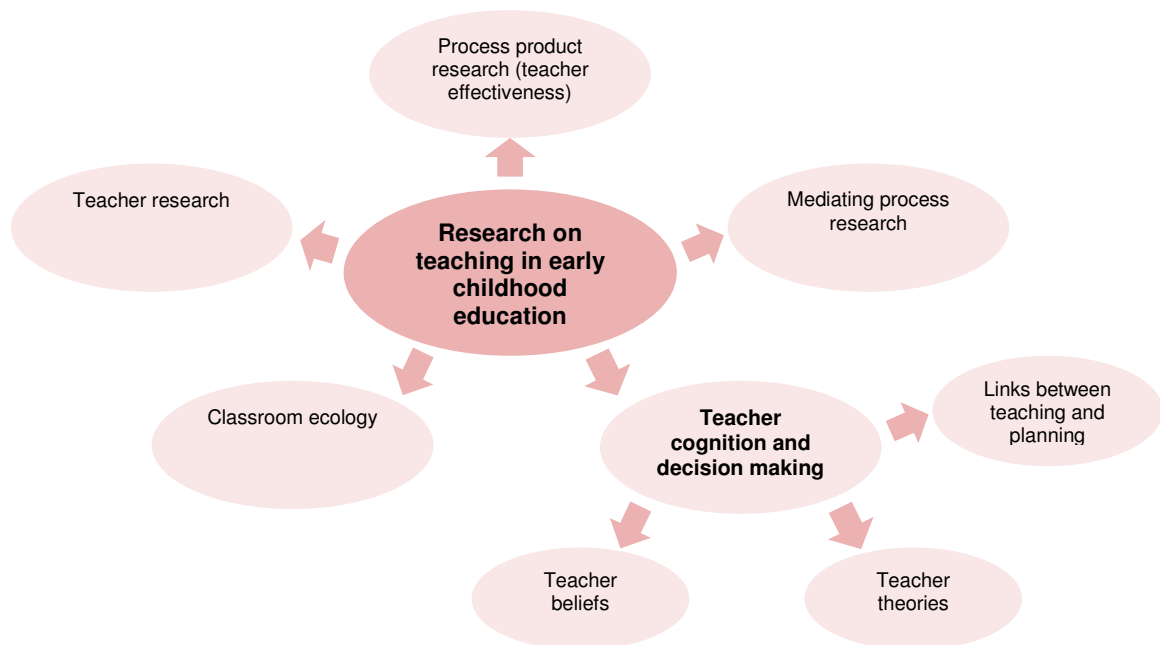


Figure 2.1 Research on teaching in early childhood education (Genishi et al. 2001).

The concept of teacher cognition research, according to Genishi et al. (2001) is concerned with “what teachers think, know, and believe about their teaching and why they behave the way they do” (p. 1183). Of the three teacher cognition and decision making research categories (Genishi et al., 2001), only two are relevant for the aims of this study, teacher beliefs and teacher theories. The third sub-category, links between teaching and planning is not a focus of this study. I have added another category to those identified by Genishi et al. (Figure 2.1): ‘Influences on teacher decision making (curriculum)’ (blue oval shape in Figure 2.2) to illustrate where this study fits within the research literature (see Figure 2.2).

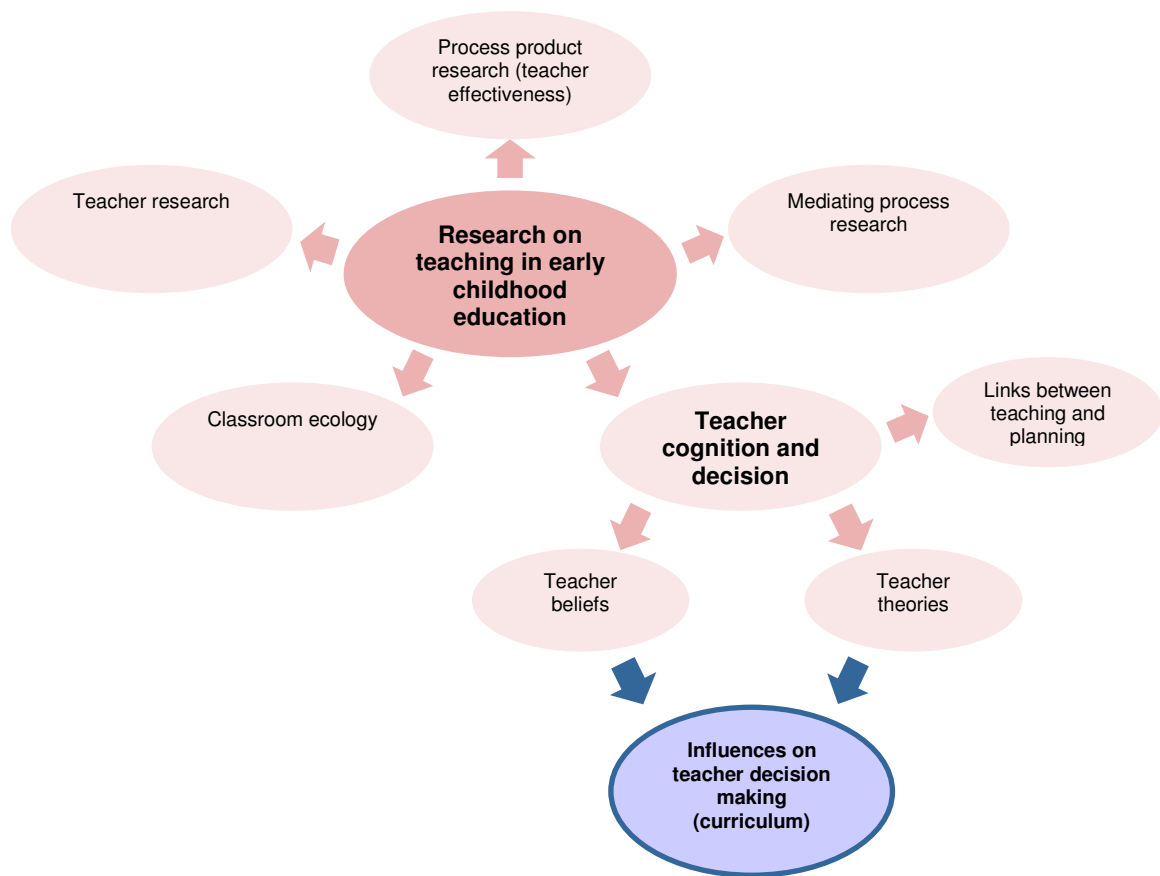


Figure 2.2. Where this study is positioned.

Previous studies conducted into early childhood TDM in relation to curriculum are shaded in blue in Figure 2.2. These studies are now discussed.

Empirical studies that have investigated TDM in early childhood education have been reviewed in this chapter. To identify relevant empirical research studies the following criteria were used:

- Empirical research studies published in peer-reviewed journals written in English;
- Published or unpublished MA or Doctoral Studies available electronically;
- Studies conducted in an early childhood educational context with children aged from birth to six years;
- Studies relating to curricula teacher decision-making;
- Studies where teachers or student teachers were participants;
- Studies conducted between 1990-2010.

Using the criteria listed above, a total of 31 international empirical studies that investigated early childhood teacher views, beliefs, and understandings about curriculum and pedagogy were reviewed. Ten of the 31 studies that examined early childhood teacher views of curriculum are discussed below. The remaining 21 of the 31 studies that have investigated teacher views of curriculum contain a developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) focus. As the DAP studies are significant in number, they are discussed separately in Section 2.4.1.

The ten studies that examined teacher views of curriculum ranged in their focus. For example, the area of TDM and mathematics was the focus of Herron's (2010) and Thiel's (2010) studies. Play and TDM was investigated by Logue and Harvey (2010), Taylor, Rogers, Dodd, Kaneda, Nagasaki, Watanabe and Goshiki (2004), van der Aalsvoort, Prakke, König, and Goorhuis (2010), and Wood (1999). A study about children's learning and TDM was conducted by Brownlee and Chak (2007), and TDM and the effect of a curriculum framework document in the Australian context was investigated by Kable (2001). Sofou and Tsafos (2010) examined teacher views on the Greek *National Preschool Curriculum*. Sumsion's (2002) Australian study elicited teacher views about their experience of becoming and unbecoming a teacher. Each of the ten studies is now briefly discussed.

In the United States of America (USA), Herron (2010) interviewed and observed three early childhood teachers over a six month period to ascertain their beliefs about mathematics education in an early childhood classroom. Herron's study provides data about the changing nature of teacher understandings about mathematics. However, Herron's findings do not provide enough insight into the influences on TDM to assist this study. Instead, Herron's study assists with improving mathematical outcomes for young children through providing teacher education and professional development opportunities in mathematics rather than providing in-depth insights into the influences affecting teachers' curricula decision making. Similarly, Theil's (2010) study in a German context investigated TDM based on early childhood teachers' views about mathematical domains and ways mathematics should be taught in preschool. Theil surveyed 110 early childhood teachers to ascertain how teacher beliefs influence classroom practice. This study did not provide substantial detail about influences on TDM, but rather it concluded that there was a relationship between teachers' general view about mathematics and that of their mathematical understandings and knowledge.

In another one of the ten TDM and early childhood curriculum studies reviewed, Logue and Harvey (2010) surveyed 98 teachers of 4-year-old children in the USA about their attitudes to children's dramatic play. In particular, teacher attitudes about children's rough-and-tumble play were examined. Logue and Harvey (2010) aimed to identify teacher beliefs in relation to children's dramatic play, and find out what influenced teacher beliefs in this context. The aim of the mixed methods study was to further inform early childhood pedagogy and teacher knowledge and expectations about children's behaviour. A *Preschool Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Questionnaire* (Logue & Harvey, 2010, p. 37) was designed and used to examine teacher beliefs. The study found that teachers were not consistent with the different types of rough-and-tumble play they thought was acceptable in the classroom, with some forms of play sanctioned and others not. Of interest to this study is that Logue and Harvey (2010) advocated for further research to be conducted into early childhood teacher perspectives about curriculum. They maintain that children's academic success relies on early childhood teachers to

continue to “examine their own beliefs and build curriculum [based] on sound, research based practices” (p. 47).

In a qualitative comparative study in the USA and Japan, Taylor et al. (2004) investigated early childhood teachers’ understandings of play. Forty-one teachers from Japan and 41 teachers in the USA were surveyed about their beliefs about play in early childhood education. Findings from the Taylor et al. (2004) study show that teachers in both countries valued children’s play and were influenced by cultural understandings of play as well as through “universal views of play” (p. 318). However, findings from the Taylor et al. (2004) study have limited application here as they do not provide a detailed analysis about what teachers understand influences on their curricula decision making to be.

The van der Aalsvoort et al. (2010) quantitative study was a cross cultural comparison between teacher and student teacher views about play activities in Germany and the Netherlands. It was found that teachers and student teachers differ in views of play activities, and that teachers notice more aspects of children’s play than student teachers. For the purposes of informing this study with potential influences on TDM, the van der Aalsvoort (2010) study confirms that time for teachers to reflect on their practices can “stimulat[e] their thinking about the beliefs they hold about child development and how this influences their actions in the classroom” (p. 362).

Part of Wood’s (1999) study was to investigate nine teachers’ views on children’s play and classroom practice after the introduction of the *National Curriculum* (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority [SCAA], 1996) into reception classes in England. Significant for this study is that Wood found that teacher views about curriculum and pedagogy influenced and shaped their approach to how they accommodated the aims of the *National Curriculum* (SCAA, 1996). Even though this study was conducted in an environment without a mandated curriculum, the ways teachers were influenced and their practice shaped by outside policies is of interest for this study.

In a cross-cultural early childhood teaching experience between Hong Kong and Australia, Brownlee and Chak (2007) investigated Hong Kong student teachers

understandings about children's learning before and after a practicum experience. They found that student teachers changed and increased their knowledge about a child-centred approach to children's play and academic learning once they had experienced teaching in another context and had an opportunity to reflect on their experience. The way student teachers were able to articulate how different practical and theoretical examples could change their views about TDM is important as it shows how teacher views can be influenced and subsequently changed.

Kable's (2001) study, conducted in the state of Queensland, Australia, found that early childhood teachers' personal and professional knowledge and beliefs influence their priorities for children's learning and provide a base for TDM. This is significant as Kable's study showed that pre-school teachers who trialled a pilot version of the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1997) understood the guidelines to both endorse existing practices and generate new expectations of practice.

In the Greek context, Sofou and Tsafos (2010) examined teacher views on the Greek *National Preschool Curriculum*, providing insight into the understandings of nine teachers. They found that most of the teachers welcomed the guidance provided in the national curriculum. However, the majority of experienced teachers relied on their experience to guide practice rather than adopting practices outlined in the national curriculum. Sofou and Tsafos do not reveal how many experienced teachers disregarded the national curriculum, but they did state that one experienced teacher's practice was not influenced at all by the new curriculum.

Sumsion's (2002) phenomenological case study investigated early childhood teachers' lived experiences through accessing teacher experiences and understandings of being an early childhood teacher. Sumsion's study informs this study through its in-depth analysis of becoming and unbecoming an early childhood teacher, in particular how interlinked personal, relational, and contextual factors are in influencing teacher practice. The study provides insights into how influential a teacher's personal beliefs and understandings are for teaching and TDM.

Each of the 10 studies briefly outlined above provides some insights into TDM in the early childhood context. It is noticeable that there is a lack of studies

investigating influences on TDM in early childhood contexts, in particular, studies that pursue curriculum as a focus, rather than one subject or focus area of curriculum. Most studies that investigated TDM and curriculum focused on one area, for example, mathematics (Herron, 2010, Theil, 2010) or play (Logue & Harvey, 2010; Taylor et al., 2004; van der Aalsvoort et al. 2010; Wood, 1999). Next, Section 2.3 identifies and categorises contextual factors influencing TDM identified in literature.

2.3 Contextual Factors Influencing Teacher Decision Making

Four contextual factors have been found to influence early childhood teacher decision making (TDM): (i) initial teacher education; (ii) the ideology and identity of the individual teacher; (iii) policy context; and (iv) the type of setting in which the teacher works.

The first factor influencing early childhood TDM is the effect of initial teacher education. Findings from K. Smith (1997) and Snider and Fu (1990) illustrated the importance of initial teacher education on teacher beliefs and practice. K. Smith's (1997) study found that student teachers' preservice education is "perhaps more stable than it is often assumed to be...[and] teaching perspectives may be difficult to alter later" (p. 239) Smith argues that teaching perspectives gained through teaching preservice education are likely to remain stable regardless of pressures stemming from the school. Snider and Fu's study found that the factors that most influence teachers' knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), was the content learned in their preservice qualification. These findings suggest that initial teacher education is a key factor in framing and influencing early childhood TDM. According to these studies, initial teacher education provides an epistemological basis from which teachers base their pedagogy on.

A second factor influencing early childhood TDM is teachers' identity and personal teaching ideology, including underpinning educational philosophies and epistemological beliefs (Edwards, 2005b; Lynch, 2009; Press & Hayes, 2000). Teachers are not passive when it comes to professional decision making. Professional identity is dynamic in that it is continually constructed and influenced by the educational context, and in turn influences decision making (Beauchamp &

Thomas, 2009). As active agents, teachers construct their own professional identities while negotiating “their objective circumstances (for example curriculum and assessment standardisation, accountability etc.)” (Ryan & Bourke, in press). The ongoing process of TDM is shaped by teachers’ personal teaching ideology which responds to the context around them (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). For example, Kable’s (2001) study found that early childhood teachers’ personal and professional knowledge and beliefs influence their priorities for children’s learning, along with providing a base for TDM. Teachers who trialled a pilot version of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1997) understood the guidelines to both endorse existing practices and generate new expectations of practice (Kable, 2001). In some cases the new guidelines gave credibility to teachers’ work, and in other situations the guidelines forced them to view curriculum in new ways. That TDM is influenced by teachers’ own teaching ideology is also apparent within the Northern American context, where early childhood teachers use their own personal values, aims, and philosophies to create curriculum and to make curricula decisions (Hyun & Marshall, 2003). Likewise, Yonemura (1986) commented that early childhood teachers draw from their own “reservoir of experiences” (p. 5) to create curriculum.

A third factor influencing early childhood TDM is the policy context. Regulations and policies affect early childhood TDM through accountability measures, which shape teachers’ work (Corrie, 2000). State and federal mandated curriculum frameworks, quality assurance measures, teacher registration, licensing policies and regulations, all contribute to shaping teacher practice (Barblett, 2000, 2003; Corrie, 1999, 2000; Fenech, 2006; Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Grieshaber, 2000; Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002; Martin, 2001; Woodrow, 2007). Teachers have responded differently to the proliferation of regulations in the Australian early childhood education context and the ways in which regulations and policies have affected TDM are discussed in Section 2.4.4.

A fourth factor influencing early childhood TDM is the type of setting in which the teacher works. Australian early childhood settings are managed by a range of government organisations, non-profit and private sector businesses, all with

distinct educational agendas affecting TDM (Press & Hayes, 2000; Sumsion, 2007; Woodrow & Press, 2007). Specifically, it is the setting's religious and philosophical orientations, management governance agendas and local family and community partnerships that have been found to influence teacher identity and TDM (Edwards, 2003, 2005b; Press & Hayes, 2000; Sumsion, 2007; Woodrow, 2007). The philosophical underpinnings and values held by each localised setting influence teaching practices, such as religious, local community and business agendas shaping teachers' ideology. Further, the shift towards privatised provision for early childhood education has led to the care and education of children becoming a "commodity in the market place", subsequently changing social relations and teaching agendas (Woodrow & Press, 2007, p. 317). This means that a particular view of educating children is normalised, with teaching practice swayed by political agendas and ways of constructing childhood and education of young children.

This section has argued that there are four contextual factors influencing TDM in an early childhood context: (i) initial teacher education; (ii) the ideology of and identity of the individual teacher; (iii) policy context; and (iv) the type of setting in which the teacher works. Even though these four factors go some way in explaining influences on TDM in early childhood education, from a critical point of view, discourses are central for uncovering assumptions and dominance in social practices. Therefore, the next section (2.4) argues that there are four discourses affecting TDM in early childhood education.

2.4 Discourses Affecting Teacher Decision Making

Investigating discourse as sets of social practices requires that literature discussing teachers' curricula decision making, specifically, how particular discourses are constructed, how they operate, how they maintain dominance, and give legitimacy to certain values and interests is considered (Marcuse, 1964; McLaren, 2003). Discourses are dynamic in nature, in that the boundaries of discourses are shifting and ever-changing (Gee, 2011). Thus, this section discusses four discourses identified within the literature on teacher decision making at the present time, realising that discourses reflect social practices at a particular points in time in particular contexts. Additionally, as researcher with insider knowledge of discourses

in early childhood education, it is likely that my participation will have influenced the discourses that have been identified. The four discourses and contextual factors affecting TDM are illustrated in Figure 2.3. Each is discussed in turn.

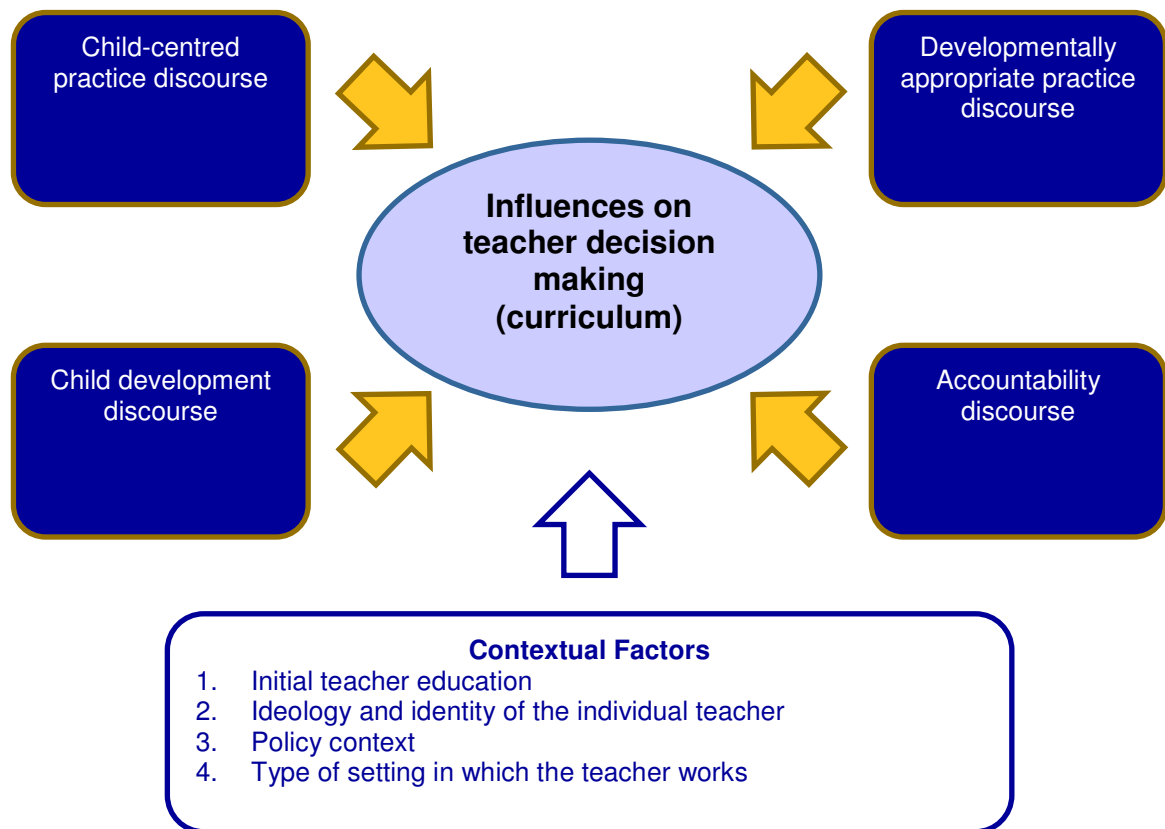


Figure 2.3 Influences on teacher decision making in early childhood education.

2.4.1 Child development.

Child development (CD) operates as a discourse, recognisable through common words, assumptions, values, and beliefs (Fairclough, 2001b; Gee, 2011). For example, CD as a discourse is recognisable through two main underlying principles: (i) children develop in individual ways and (ii) children's development can be categorised into emotional, social, physical and cognitive domains (Bowman & Stott, 1994). These two principles assist educators in understanding children's

learning and behaviour and inform their work with young children (Bowman & Stott, 1994). Child development operates as a sub-discipline of developmental psychology (Edwards & Flear, 2003). Developmental psychology is concerned with psychological and biological changes that take place as humans progress through different stages of physical and cognitive growth and development (Muir, 1999). It includes changes that occur across the lifespan that are affected by the specific context. The unit of development under scrutiny can be variable and pertains to the process, the mechanism itself, or the individual (Burman, 2008). The “developing child” is the “lynchpin of developmental psychology” (Walkerdine, 1998, p. 154). Hence, CD is concerned with the development of children, including their biological, social, emotional, and cognitive growth through the life cycle (Berk, 2003; Doherty & Hughes; Kaplan, 2000; Santrock, 2004). Early work within the child development paradigm was undertaken by Gesell (1950), who followed laws and sequences of maturation. Within this perspective, a developmental view involves an:

examiner who is truly imbued with a developmental point of view [and] is keenly sensitive to the past history of the child, and looks upon the psychological examination, not as a series of proving tests, but as a device or stage for evoking the ways in which this particular child characteristically meets life situations. (Gesell, 1950, p. 18)

Child development is identifiable as a discourse due to its particular social practices and language features. Language features apparent in discourse, according to Fairclough (2003), “lexicalize’ the world in particular ways” (p. 129) and are where social practices are commonly understood to contain particular meanings. Child development has had a century-long domination of early childhood education and numerous early childhood educational programs have been built on underpinning knowledge and values contained in CD theories (Bloch, 1992; Krieg, 2010; Zimiles, 2000). Even though CD is not a pure discipline, but a diverse set of beliefs drawn from developmental psychology, it is used to guide educators in their knowledge about how children develop (Flear, 1995). Child development functions as a discourse as it holds together different ideas that represent the world in a

particular way (Fairclough, 2003). For example, CD has been built on diverse theories that have stemmed from theorists with varied backgrounds, such as Locke, Rousseau, Montessori, Piaget, Erikson, Freud, Gesell, Vygotsky, and Bruner and has come together to form what is recognised as child development knowledge (Berk, 2003; Cannella, 1997; Flear, 1995; Grieshaber, 2008; MacNaughton, 2003b). Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory is an example of how theory can be understood as part of the CD discourse. Even though Vygotsky's theory (1987, 1978) is developmentally inspired, the theoretical assumptions are drawn within a wider social, cultural, and historical frame. The social practices particular to Vygotsky's theory (1987, 1978) attend to cognitive development occurring through socially constructed episodes where peer to peer learning, direct guidance and teaching, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory has made significant inroads into shaping early childhood education in Australia (Anning, Cullen & Flear, 2004).

However, Piaget's developmental theory (Piaget 1953, 1959) has dominated early childhood education as an informant for the CD discourse and practice in the Australian context (Edwards, 2009; Farquhar & Flear, 2007; Grieshaber 2008). Piaget's theory has significantly contributed to the discourse of CD in early childhood education, where certain practices, sets of language and interactions share common features (Fairclough, 2003). Piaget's theory has been taken up in early childhood education to enact pedagogy in particular ways and subsequently it underpins the CD discourse.

The main contribution that Piaget has made to early childhood education was that he recognised children as active learners and noted sequences in development and learning, particularly from a cognitive perspective (Bowman & Stott, 1994). His theory has been used by others as a basis for informing pedagogy in early childhood education. Piaget's theory was used also to consider the child as an object of study, leading to pedagogical innovations that saw children's development being "observed, normalised and regulated" (Walkerdine, 1998, p. 170). A pedagogy inspired by Piaget's theory is evident where teachers provide "resource rich-

environments and ample opportunities for children to explore as they choose” (Stephen, 2010, p. 20).

Piaget’s theory has had an “unprecedented influence of the field of early childhood education” (Lubeck, 1996, p. 154; Stephen, 2010; Walkerdine, 1984, 1998; Walsh, 2005). Due to his influence, Piaget has been labelled the “patron saint” of early childhood education (D. Walsh, 2005, p. 42). His influence is evident in early childhood education to such a degree (Stephen, 2010) that his theory has been labelled “weapons of mass seduction in ECE [early childhood education] across the globe” (Grieshaber, 2008, p. 508). Piaget’s theory is fundamental to the psychology-pedagogy relationship in early childhood education (Walkerdine, 1998). Even though his theory was not intended as educational discourse it has been appropriated as a conceptual framework for educational practice (S. Grant, 1999; Sullivan, 1967). The nature and applicability of Piaget’s theory led to early childhood educators adapting his ideas to inform and shape practice (Walkerdine, 1998).

Piaget’s emphasis on children exploring and discovering with concrete manipulatives has been a foundation for education methods that promote discovery and learning through a theoretical paradigm known as constructivism (Spodek & Saracho, 2002; Sullivan, 1967). For example, Piaget’s theory underpins the High/Scope (Hohmann & Weikart, 1995) program and pedagogy where children actively construct their learning environment (Goffin & Wilson, 2001; Spodek & Saracho, 2002). A High/Scope program describes the teacher role to be a facilitator of children’s learning (Hohmann & Weikart, 1995). In this way, pedagogy is viewed as supporting children as they actively construct their learning and exploration within a “richly resourced environment” (Stephen, 2010, p. 20). Stephen (2010) challenges the view of free play and exploration, arguing that “free exploration did not lead to the kind of sustained and purposeful encounters” (p. 20). She found that the children in her study were discouraged by the lack of adult interaction and support for their learning to the extent that they did not complete activities or realise the potential of the learning activity. The difficulty experienced in Stephen’s study

suggests that the appropriation of Piagetian theory as a basis for early childhood pedagogy can be problematic.

As well as Stephen (2010), others have argued that Piaget's theory was never intended as pedagogy and should not be considered or distorted in this way (Walkerdine, 1998). Ausubel (1967), more than four decades ago, cautioned educators to attend to practices justified on the uncritical extrapolation of developmental theories transported into education as he maintained that more consideration should be given before using such theories for educational means.

The CD discourse has become integrally linked with TDM in early childhood education. In 1972, Kohlberg and Mayer argued for a defined link between psychological development of children and educational aims. When defining educational objectives, Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) pointed out that a "clear theoretical rationale" (p. 450) underpinning educational aims is required. They maintained that developmental aims, endorsed by research findings and stemming from the theories of Dewey and Piaget in particular, are necessary. Consequently, the argument put forward by Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) supported "cognitive-developmental psychological theory...[as a] viable progressive educational ideology [which comprises] desirable aims, content, and methods of education" (p. 450). Even though Kohlberg and Mayer thought that educational practice could not be derived from psychological theory on its own, they did not question the lack of objectivity within developmental theories (Spodek & Saracho, 2006). More recently, a study conducted in the USA examining stakeholder understandings about important underpinning knowledge and skills for preschool teachers found that these teachers were seen as "facilitators of learning experiences rather than providers of knowledge" (Lobman & Ryan, 2007, p. 373). Each stakeholder group identified "child development knowledge as the most important knowledge for preschool teachers to have and be able to use" (p. 376).

The CD discourse affects TDM in a number of ways. For example, the CD discourse guides educators with regard to children's developmental and educational progress. In curricula terms, the task of the teacher is to match curricula content in the form of activities to the child's developmental level and introduce more complex

materials and learning when the child is deemed to have the cognitive ability for mastery (Elkind, 1989). In addition, the CD discourse is apparent by the way in which children are observed and assessed by teachers according to their developmental competence (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Fleer, 1995; Graue, 2008). Such practices are not part of other educational sectors (primary or secondary education), and are unique to the way the CD discourse operates in early childhood education.

2.4.2 Child-centred practice.

This section commences with a brief historical overview of child-centred education (CCE) and shows how child-centred practice (CCP) operates as a discourse. Child-centred practice stems from the CD discourse, but is a discourse in its own right.

Child-centred education can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings in *Émile* in 1762 (Rousseau, 1974), where he maintained that "childhood is, or ought to be a time of play" (p. 117). Play, as intrinsic to the nature of young children, was picked up as a theme in Froebel's writings in the 1820s-1850s, where he advocated that children learn through play (Froebel, 1912). In the early 20th century John Dewey in *The Child and the Curriculum* (Dewey, 1956) (first published in 1902) further developed CCE concepts. Dewey argued that curriculum (subject matter) should not be outside of the child's experience:

Abandon the notion that subject-matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, outside the child's experience; cease thinking of the child's experience as also something hard and fast; see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital; and we realise that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. (Dewey, 1952, p. 11)

Let the child's nature fulfil its own destiny, revealed to you in whatever of science and art and industry the world now holds as its own. (Dewey, 1952, p. 31)

Known as educational progressivism (Darling, 1994), Dewey's work challenged the notion that direct transmission is the preferred way to teach curriculum content, to

instead advocate young children's learning as something children come to as part of their "own experience, through his (sic) own activities" (Dewey, 1952, p. 106). Treating each child as an individual with varying abilities, aptitudes, interests, experiences, and cultural capital, the CCE movement was a form of backlash and protest against overly rigid and systematised education methods in the UK (Entwistle, 1970). In this movement, didactic teaching methods viewed children as submissive and pedagogy was commonly referred to as 'chalk and talk' (Entwistle, 1970). In an anti-didactic tradition stemming from progressive educational theories espoused by Rousseau, Froebel, Dewey, Piaget and others, child-centred education was popularised in primary education in England during the 1960s and 1970s (Darling, 1994; Entwistle, 1970; Walkerdine, 1998). The core idea underpinning CCE is the belief that children should be treated as individuals who are able to develop in gradual and natural ways through discovery. The central tenet is that the child naturally unfolds (develops), while the teacher's role is one of being receptive to the nature of the child (Darling, 1994). In educational terms, the idea of the child developing naturally results in pedagogy that supports the developmental progression of the individual child, namely meeting children's interests and needs (David, 1990; Dewey, 1952; Walkerdine, 1984, 1998). This is where children learn on their own terms at a pace that is matched to their maturational abilities. Hence, the study of children themselves serves as an important feature of CCE, primarily so that adults can understand the child's developmental progress (Darling, 1994; Walkerdine, 1998).

Child-centred education was officially recognised and endorsed in England in the report *Children and their Primary Schools*, known as the *Plowden Report* (Central Advisory Council for Education [CACE], 1967). For example, the Plowden Report viewed the child to be at the "heart of the educational process" with an understanding of how children develop seen as important for teacher practice (CACE, 1967, p. 7). Child-centred concepts apparent within the Plowden report maintain that educational practice and underpinning theories should be built upon knowledge of children's growth and development and furthermore, children should only be exposed to learning when they are ready (CACE, 1967, p. 7). Such concepts

are particular to the CCE discourse and are “distinguished by their ways of representing, and by their relationship to other social elements” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129). For example, the concept of readiness endorsed in the Plowden Report is noticeable in the following statement: “Until a child is ready to take a particular step forward, it is a waste of time to try to teach him to take it” (CACE, 1967, p. 25). The teacher role in the Plowden Report was to take into account children’s intellectual, emotional, and physical development when planning curriculum (CACE, 1967). Child-centred education at this time (late 1960s) focused on planning activities for children rather than children achieving predetermined outcomes (Wood, 2007). The notion of the teacher role within CCE is as a facilitator, with the “concepts of learning and development ...used interchangeably” (Wood, 2007, p. 123). Child-centred education is described as a practice where the child is seen to be the main source of curriculum (Silin, 1995; Walkerdine, 1984, 1998; Williams, 1994). In this context of post war Britain, liberalism underpinned educational discourses which emphasised children themselves rather than their achievements (Darling, 1994).

A political shift from a liberal context in the 1960s to the Thatcher Government’s conservative approach to education during the 1980s meant that child-centred philosophies were no longer viewed as adequate (Alexander, Rose & Woodhead, 1992). For example, a report by Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) entitled *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools* rallied against many child-centred principles (Darling, 1994). The report proposed different ways to improve academic standards in primary school education, recommending primary school teachers to “abandon the dogma of previous decades” and “focus firmly on the outcomes of their teaching” (Alexander et al., 1992, p. 185). The report proposed that primary teachers should know more about the subject matter that they are teaching and carefully consider teaching strategies and curriculum planning. As a consequence, whole class teaching was re-introduced based on the rationale that it would create more order, control, purpose, and concentration (Darling, 1994). More recently, educators have argued that content-driven and outcomes-based curricula seen in England in recent years, such as the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (Department for

Employment and Skills, DfES, 2006) may have been a reaction to CCE practices where children were seen to be left to their own devices (Hodson & Keating, 2007).

Child-centred practice (CCP) is a commonly used term to describe CCE in the Australian preschool context (Aldwinckle, 2001; Danby 1996; Fleer, 1995; Kable, 2001). Child-centred practice is recognised within early childhood education as a practice where teachers carefully prepare the environment to foster children's play and learning and teachers make developmental observations and assessments of children (Danby, 1996; MacNaughton, 2003b; Walkerdine, 1998). It is these features, social practices and particular sets of language practices that make CCP a recognisable discourse in Australian early childhood education. A rationale underpinning CCP is for early childhood teachers encourage and challenge children in order for them to develop (Danby, 1996). The individualised model of childhood stemming from CD knowledge is represented in five features that Burman (2008) outlines as central tenets of CCP: "readiness, choice, needs, play, and discovery" (p. 263). The CCP discourse is recognisable in early childhood education through these tenets; therefore each is discussed in turn.

The CCP concept of *readiness* is where the adult determines when an individual child will be developmentally ready to learn (Burman, 2008; CACE, 1967). This notion rests on adult interpretations of children's maturation and perceived ability to learn. In the Australian context, children's developmental readiness is often described in terms of preschool children being ready (or not) for formal schooling. School readiness is described as how to 'do' school, for example, children acting in ways that are consistent with school-like behaviour, such as listening attentively and being part of a larger group (Ailwood, 2003). As a result of the teacher decision making (in conjunction with the child's parents), the child is deemed ready or not ready for formal schooling the following year. The consequences of a child being categorised as not ready for formal schooling can result in the child repeating the preschool year. Early childhood teachers have input into decisions as to whether children are ready or not for school, therefore judging whether they are ready to learn certain skills and knowledge (Woodrow & Press, 2007).

The whole notion of what makes a child ready for school has been questioned. After reviewing numerous studies examining school readiness, Shepherd and Smith (1986) concluded that, due to the developmental bursts and inconsistencies experienced by children aged 4 to 5 years, among other reasons, it is not possible for adults to make accurate assessments of children's school readiness. Even when school readiness tests indicate that a child was not developmentally ready for school, studies have shown that repeating a school year did not necessarily help students gain more academically than having additional assistance in their regular class (Shepard & Smith, 1986). Children always enter school with different interests, abilities, background knowledge and experiences and could not all adapt to one uniformed curriculum equally (Shepard & Smith, 1986). Subsequently, Shepard and Smith argued that changing the school entry age would not rectify the situation as a new underdeveloped group of children would emerge.

The second CCP concept, children's *choice*, is the process of meeting the individual interests of the child, and is underpinned by the view that the child dictates the timing and content of the learning process. The concept of children's choice within CCP refers to the child choosing an activity of interest (Burman, 2008). Choice time is "directed toward the individual interests of the child" (Burman, 2008, p. 263). The choice that the child makes is in contrast to the teacher directing the child's learning, where the teacher chooses a task or activity for the whole class. Children's choice of activity and play evolved as an alternative to teacher-directed approaches to learning and focuses on the child's personal choice, where there is freedom from adult authority (Ryan, 2005; Walkerdine, 1998).

The terms *choice* and *children's choice* are frequently used in the USA (Ryan, 2005). Within the Australian context, children's choice as part of CCP is evident, yet it is more common in policies for the term "children's interests" to be used instead of children's choice (DHS, 1996, p. 27; Victorian State Government, 1998, p. 21). The CCP of teachers basing curriculum content on children's interests is contained as a directive in the *Children's Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998, p. 21). When researching children's interests as a catalyst for planning with gifted preschoolers within a Victorian context, A. Grant (2004)

argued that early childhood teachers have an expectation that they should always follow children's interests, even though the teachers themselves expressed uncertainty about how to do this and recommended further discussion and clarification around the notion of "a curriculum based on children's interests" (p. 68).

Children's *needs* are the third central component of CCP and is conceptualised by adults by identifying children's individual needs through developmental observations (Ailwood, 2003; Burman, 2008). Adults are "trained to observe the play of young children in ways to identify a child's individual needs...[and are] supported by a plethora of props such as developmental checklists and developmentally appropriate toys and equipment" (Ailwood, 2003, p. 296). This leads to the practice of adults determining children's developmental needs, according to the emotional, social, physical and cognitive domains.

Play is a CCP concept where children are viewed as becoming autonomous in their selection of play materials. The notion of play within CCP is voluntary and self-directed, with children learning via their own curiosity (Burman, 2008; Froebel, 1912). The meaning of free-play in early childhood education has various functions associated with it and it contributes to shared understandings those in early childhood education hold of CCP. Typically, the autonomy of children is viewed as an important feature of free-play as it is seen to foster curiosity, confidence and competence as well as learning about independence (Burman, 2008; Froebel, 1912). Play "underpins learning and development, and that both can be seen in play; therefore, play should provide evidence of children's progress and achievements" (Wood, 2010, p. 13). However, it is the "DAP version of play that remain[s] dominant in practice" in the Australian context (Ailwood, 2003, p. 296).

The fifth central tenet of CCP is *discovery*, where children learn through their own discoveries within a play environment (Burman, 2008; Rousseau, 1974). The teacher role in CCP is to set up the play environment so children can explore concepts at their own pace (Ryan, 2005). The idea being that as part of CCP children learn through both play and discovery. All five of the central tenets of CCP put forward by Burman (2008), are recognisable in early childhood education and

represent the CCP discourse. To further illustrate the way CCP is constructed in early childhood education, a brief discussion is provided about how CCP is apparent in Victorian policy documents.

The influence of the CCP discourse is apparent in features within Victorian policy documents, policies that were current at the time of data collection in 2004. Both the mandated regulations enforced by Victorian state law, the *Children's Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998) and the *Children's Services Act* (Victorian State Government, 1996) are influenced by the CCP discourse. The CCP discourse is apparent by the use of directives where teachers are advised to base their programs on "children's developmental needs, interests and experiences" and account for "individual differences" of children (Victorian State Government, 1998, p. 21). Similarly, the *Children's Services Act* grants a licence based on proprietors ensuring "children's developmental needs are met" (Victorian State Government, 1996, p. 13). The *Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide* (Department of Human Services [DHS], 2004a) supports a program that is "child-initiated and based on a play approach that encourages exploration, questioning, discovery, creativity and problem solving" (p. 25) and the *Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria* (DHS, 2002) endorses learning experiences which meet "individual children's stages of development, their needs and interests" (p. 23). All four Victorian policy documents contain the CCP discourse, evident from applying Gee's (2011) description of discourse, where a discourse encompasses word patterns, shared understandings and beliefs.

The CCP discourse is recognisable through the distinct features discussed above, and its influences on TDM in early childhood education. For example, CCP influences TDM, particularly in practices where: (i) children's are expected to learn through discovery, and; (ii) the teacher's role is to identify children's interests and developmental needs. Each point is discussed in turn.

The CCP discourse influences TDM, particularly through the notion stemming from Piaget's (1953, 1959) theory of children learning through discovery. A distinguishing feature is in the form of play-based learning, where children are

expected to learn through discovery with adults facilitating their learning (Langford, 2010; Wood, 2007). One difficulty is that not all children are equal in their discovering ability (Brooker, 2002, 2005; Burman, 2008; Cannella, 1997; Ryan, 2005). Some children may not have the social skills required to learn independently through the process of discovery (Cortazar & Herreros, 2010). For example, children from higher socio-economic backgrounds might more easily adapt to the autonomous learning experienced through the process of discovery, rather than children from less advantaged backgrounds (Burman, 2008). Some children could have difficulty adapting to learning that takes place through discovery due to culturally accepted and normalised behaviours of what constitutes appropriate learning demeanours; learning demeanours that are not necessarily part of every child's early life skills and experience (Brooker, 2002, 2005; Cannella, 1997). For example, Brooker's (2002, 2005) study within an English reception classroom found that a teacher reported that learning in a CCP context was due to children learning through exploring their environment rather than through directly teaching concepts and skills. According to Brooker, the hands-off teaching approach disadvantaged children without the 'correct' learning dispositions that came with being part of the dominant culture. Children from diverse cultures were expected to find 'the knowledge' in a culturally different environment from their own. Children from families who were not familiar with dominant cultural educational values were at a disadvantage to their peers, as the sociocultural practices of the dominant cultural group were unknown to them (Brooker, 2002, 2005).

The second way the CCP discourse influences TDM is through the practice of teachers observing and planning for children's needs and interests (Fleer, 1995; Kable, 2001). Observing and documenting information about children for the purpose of planning activities is "one of the central tenets of approaches to early childhood curricula and teaching" (Grieshaber, Halliwell, Hatch & Walsh, 2000, p. 42). Within CCP, domains of children's development, (physical, cognitive, social, and emotional) are observed and planned for (Farquhar & Fleer, 2007). Pre-school teachers in a Queensland study indicated how important CCP is by stating that they

“focused on the importance of observation, play, scaffolding, learning and providing choice [for children]” (Kable, 2001, p. 327). Teachers in Kable’s study noted that:

I offer children choices and provide open-ended materials. My role is to support children as they learn through play and real life experiences. I build the curriculum on observations of how children interact. ... The need for flexibility ... is recognised.

I have a child-focused curriculum where adults challenge children in order to promote each child’s individual development. ... It is important too, that the curriculum relates to children’s experiences and interests and capacity for understanding. (p. 327)

Kable’s (2001) study found that early childhood teachers understand their role to identify children’s needs and interests.

The implication of CCP for TDM is that a focus on childhood as determined largely by maturational factors, along with the adult taking the “moral authority”, defines the needs of young children (Burman, 2008, p. 73). This practice has consequences for TDM. For example, the process of determining children’s needs involves teachers identifying children’s developmental deficits and determining educational consequences based on this interpretation (Walkerdine, 1998). Within CCP, children’s choices are identified and compromised by adult-created learning and developmental objectives (unknown to the child) aimed to encourage children to pursue a particular activity for the sake of their developmental progress (Jordan, 2004). Ideas for learning activities are derived from a combination of teacher observations of an individual child, and allowing children to take the lead with their learning (Fleer, 1995). This practice can be misleading and, at times deceptive, due to the child not knowing the information that adults are privy to. Jordan’s (2004) summary helps to clarify this pedagogical arrangement:

While the topic of discussion and the planned activities may have arisen from the adult’s observations of the child’s interest, the child actually has little control and her/his thinking is heard only in the context of the adult’s interest in extending it to meet the pre-set achievement objective. The adult

is likely to be doing most of the organisation, with the child working hard to understand what is in the teacher's head and contributing wherever possible.
(p. 37)

The notion of teacher as facilitator within CCP is apparent through the teacher role of identifying and planning for children's needs and interests. Such practices are particular to CCP discourse in early childhood education.

2.4.3 Developmentally appropriate practice.

Developmentally appropriate practice operates as a foundation for practice for teachers in this study. This section provides a brief overview of the origins and meaning of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and shows how DAP functions as a discourse affecting TDM.

Originating in the USA, DAP has influenced Australian early childhood education for almost thirty years (Burton & Lyons, 2000; Farquhar & Flear, 2007; Flear, 1995; S. Grant, 1999; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Press & Hayes, 2000; Woodrow & Brennan, 2000). Building on from principles contained in CCP, DAP (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) has become the "field's signature pedagogy" (Ryan & Goffin, 2008, p. 386). Key theories underpinning DAP stem from child development, particularly knowledge that endorses universal growth and development milestones for all children (Woodhead, 1997). Originating in the late 1980s, DAP was first conceptualised as part of a position paper for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the USA. The purpose of the position paper was for early childhood program accreditation, which was a response to pushed-down formal, didactic teaching and an overly academic curriculum in early childhood education (Bredekamp, 1991; New, 1992). Bredekamp and Copple (1997) noted a "growing trend toward more formal, academic instruction of young children" (p. v) and were concerned by the inappropriateness of this for young children. In addition, early childhood education was seen to lack a distinctive knowledge base (Powell, 1994), requiring something different to that of curriculum content areas experienced in primary school education (Charlesworth, 1998). Moreover DAP was developed to

minimise trends where children were exposed to content and learning that was too advanced (Graue, 2008).

The first edition of the DAP guidelines was developed in response to a perceived overly academic curriculum in early childhood education (Bredekamp, 1987). It was significant in terms of its effect on the early childhood education sector, with some referring to it as “the Bible” (New & Mallory, 1994, p. 2) which indicated its high status and effect on thinking and practice in early childhood education. The first edition of the DAP guidelines advocated two dimensions of appropriate practice, where practitioners were prompted to take into consideration children’s age and individual development abilities when planning learning activities. In the early 1990s, critiques of the theoretical underpinnings of DAP, along with the omission of diversity and culture, emerged (Fleer, 1995; Lubeck, 1998a; Mallory & New, 1994). The second edition of the DAP guidelines (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) identified some of these concerns and recognised culturally appropriate practice.

Both the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) categories featured in the first DAP guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987) and remained in the second edition (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). In the second edition of the guidelines, DAP is characterised by the way early childhood educators make their pedagogical decisions. For example, DAP recommends teachers to take into account child development knowledge, children’s “strengths, interests and needs” along with “knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live” when planning for children’s learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 36). Whereas in contrast, DIP refers to practices that are deemed “inappropriate”, whether “harmful to children”, “merely waste children’s time” or are “highly questionable” practices (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 123). The category of DIP is not part of the third edition of the DAP guidelines (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Instead, the term “in contrast” is used to help practitioners “see clearly the kinds of things that well intentional adults might do but are not likely to serve children well” (p. 75). This recent shift of terminology, from DIP to “in contrast” has recognized the way the label of DIP could potentially be limiting for

TDM. Copple and Bredekamp (2009) acknowledge “differences in culture can cause people to view the same practice quite differently, it seemed presumptuous to label a practice as ‘inappropriate’ simply because those who favour it may not be in the majority” (p. xi). The removal of DIP as a judgment of practice changes the DAP/DIP binary. This is an important issue for TDM as it removes some of the power from the dichotomous and polarising DAP and DIP labels used together.

The type of language used to describe young children’s behaviour in the DAP guidelines has shifted over time, showing how DAP as a discourse is constantly being made and remade. The first edition of the DAP guidelines described infant and toddlers as those who when in groups may be unable to share the same toy because they are “egocentric” and “toddlers are not yet able to understand how the concept of sharing” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 6). Similarly, in the second edition of the DAP guidelines it used deficit language to describe children, stating that children have “limited attention spans” and are “egocentric” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 33). In the third edition of the DAP guidelines (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), language used to describe children is more positive and enabling. For example, young children are described as needing to “work very hard to understand social rules and get things right” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, pp. 65-66).

DAP as a dominant discourse.

This section argues that DAP is a dominant discourse in early childhood education due to it being based on shared values, assumptions, and practices, and its longevity and prevalence in early childhood education.

Developmentally appropriate practice adopts two central themes, one being that children develop in predictable ways and the other being that each child is unique and develops individually (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Lubeck, 1994). These themes have been adopted from the CCP discourse, where the central belief is that children should be treated as individuals who are able to develop in gradual and natural ways through discovery, with the teacher’s role to be receptive to the nature of the child (Darling, 1994). In this study, the DAP discourse is referred to rather than CCP, due to the frequent use of DAP in the Australian

context (Farquhar & Flear, 2007) and DAP incorporates features of CCP. A few years after the first edition of the DAP guidelines was published in 1987 (Bredekamp, 1987), DAP terms and concepts were apparent in early childhood literature (Elkind, 1989; Oakes & Caruso, 1990; Snider & Fu, 1990). Recognisable through common words, assumptions, values, and beliefs (Gee, 2011), DAP is the practice of teachers meeting the developmental needs of young children through an individual and age-appropriate approach, doing away with subject areas as a basis for curriculum (Bredekamp, 1991; New, 1992). The DAP discourse has become dominant due to its expansive reproduction of social practices, giving legitimacy to certain values and interests (Marcuse, 1964; McLaren, 2003). For example, the DAP approach maintains that curricula should be matched to the child's emerging intellectual abilities and curricula materials to be introduced only after the child has demonstrated the "mental ability needed to master them" (Elkind, 1989, p. 114). These underpinning beliefs are apparent since the first edition through to the third edition of the DAP guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), spanning over 20 years.

Developmentally appropriate practice is recognisable as a discourse due to practices where children's developmental appropriateness is measured by matching children's individual developmental levels and the activity generated by the teacher in response to the child's developmental need (Hoffman, 2000). Within the DAP approach, teaching is informed by children and their developmental needs (Graue, 2008). This practice is particular to early childhood education and distinguishes the pedagogy from formal schooling approaches. Such particular DAP values and assumptions highlight shared values and group interests (Marcuse, 1964; McLaren, 2003), which affirms its status as a discourse. As part of a further illustration of how the values, assumptions and practices of DAP are particular to the DAP discourse, I will discuss two main assumptions underpinning DAP. These are: (i) DAP constructs children as either developed or not-yet developed and assumes a universal view of children, and; (ii) DAP assumes a universal view of teacher practice. Each is discussed in turn.

First, DAP constructs children as either developed or not-yet-developed, at times positioning children as not capable. Labels such as “egocentric toddlers” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 6), children “at-risk” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 13) are commonly used in the first DAP guidelines (Lubeck, 1996), with three year-old children categorised as having “limited attention spans” in the second edition of the DAP guidelines (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 33). In DAP, children are viewed through a developmental lens and categorised by their age, by so called “widely held [developmental] expectation[s]” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 105). Moreover, the first edition of the DAP guidelines describe children’s development in terms of “normal development age range” (p. 4), indicating that there is a ‘normal’ development range based on children’s age. Children’s fine-motor, gross motor, language and communication, social and emotional, developmental expectations, provided in the second edition of the DAP guidelines, comprise specific indicators and expectations for all children across each year, from birth until eight years of age (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). In effect, child development indicators in DAP operate as a hierarchical categorisation of children’s maturation both generalizing and oversimplifying children’s capabilities (Burman, 2008; Lubeck, 1996). Such simplified categorisations assume children progress through normative developmental stages which orientate teachers to think about children in deficit terms (Lubeck, 1998a).

Developmentally appropriate practice assumes a universal view of children, as a consensus view is presented in DAP about how children’s development unfolds. Furthermore, DAP assumes a universal view of the child through viewing CD as a unidirectional maturational progression rather than a holistic view of children operating within a particular sociocultural context (Ludlow & Berkeley, 1994). For example, the first edition of the DAP guidelines speaks of a “normal developmental age range[s]” for all children (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 5), and goes on to provide information for practitioners about the type of behaviours and development that is expected of children in three age groups; infants and toddlers, three to five year olds, and six to eight year olds. As part of discourse, DAP sets out behaviours that are deemed normal and abnormal development in children (Bloch & Popkewitz,

2001). One difficulty with the concept of a universal view of children, where all children are deemed to develop in sequential and predictable ways, is that it does not take into account differing cultural interpretations of development (Bowman & Stott, 1994; New, 1994), or their socioeconomic status (Burman, 2008). Universal features apparent in the DAP discourse advocate that all children can be classified as developing “normally”, or by implication, *not* developing normally (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 5).

Drawing on the CD discourse that is based predominantly on studies of white, middle class American children, the first DAP guidelines were criticised for not adequately encompassing cultural and linguistically diverse populations (New, 1994). The problem with understanding children’s development as happening in a unidirectional fashion is that this interpretation presumes the correct representation of development. A universal view of the child emphasises conservative ideas and perspectives, with educators prone to fall into the role of being cultural gatekeeper (MacNaughton, 2003b). Furthermore, in practice terms, a DAP interpretation creates “binary divisions between adults children, focusing on developmental endpoints and promoting ethnocentric concepts of development” (S. Grant, 1999, p. 11). However, the second and third editions of the DAP guidelines have begun to address cultural dimensions of pedagogy as well as acknowledging that children develop in “uneven ways” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 22).

Further, universality in DAP is apparent in terms of teacher practice. Developmentally appropriate practice appears as knowledge early childhood practitioners *must* acknowledge when making decisions in the second edition of the DAP guidelines (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The DAP guidelines state that “in all aspects of their work with children, early childhood practitioners must consider these three areas of knowledge...” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 9). The type of language used here, positions certain areas of knowledge as non-negotiable. For example, “all aspects of their [practitioners] work” and “[practitioners] must consider”, with both statements potentially having wide-ranging effects on practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 9). Developmentally appropriate practice suggests that there is only one correct way practitioners can think about “making decisions”,

and that is: “age-related characteristics that permits general predictions about what experiences are likely to promote children’s learning and development”, “what is known about each child as an individual” and “what is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, pp. 9-10). Each practice consideration put forward in the second edition of the DAP guidelines is presented as the only way for practitioners to view their practice, illustrating the potential dominance and legitimation of DAP. To further illustrate how DAP functions as a dominant discourse, the way in which TDM is described in DAP is now discussed.

DAP and teacher decision making.

Teacher decision making in DAP is described in particular ways in terms of ‘correct’ practice and child-centredness: “the correct way to teach young children is not to lecture or verbally instruct them” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 52). Showing CCP tenets, the role of teachers in DAP was “to prepare the environment for children to learn through active exploration” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 54). The teacher role in DAP, outlined in the first DAP guidelines, was predominantly child-centred, with teachers discouraged from verbally instructing children and instead, setting up an environment where children were to “learn through active exploration” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 52). In the second edition of the DAP guidelines, TDM was outlined as a practice where teachers were to “integrate the many dimensions of their knowledge base” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 33), including:

They [teachers] must know about child development and the implications of this knowledge for how to teach, the content of the curriculum-what to teach and when-how to assess what children have learned, and how to adapt curriculum and instruction to children’s individual strengths, needs, and interests (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 33).

Even though teachers were to “integrate the many dimensions of their knowledge base”, the focus was on teachers understanding CD knowledge and using it to inform reaching decisions (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 33). In her deconstruction of the 1987 and 1997 editions of the DAP guidelines, S. Grant (1999) argues that theories stemming from both Piaget and Vygotsky have been

appropriated in order to provide foundations for early childhood curriculum. Even though not intended for education, Piagetian and Vygotskian child development theories that underpin DAP principles are appropriated as educational discourses.

Developmentally appropriate practice influences early childhood pedagogy in different ways. One such way is viewing children through the CD discourse, as discussed above. Another way is through reinforcing certain teaching practices. For example, in the first edition of the DAP guidelines it encouraged teachers to identify with practice that is either deemed good or bad, either developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) or developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001). Understandings of DAP and DIP have affected TDM with preschool teachers “equating the overt teaching of content with developmentally inappropriate practice” (Lobman & Ryan, 2007, p. 377). Teaching decisions based on the DAP discourse are centred on what a teacher knows from CD “theory and literature about how children develop and learn” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 10). An “effective teacher” within DAP is someone who thinks about “what children of the age and developmental status represented in the group [of children] are typically like” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 10).

At the core of DAP assumptions is the acceptance of the notion that teacher belief-practice relationships can be measured objectively to determine whether teaching practices are DAP or DIP (Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb & Gheith, 2010; Hegde & Cassidy, 2009). The underlining assumption is that DAP is an approach to strive towards, as the better understanding teachers have of DAP, the better the educational and development outcomes will be for children. Consequently, DAP can reduce teaching options and dismiss other ways of educating children, reinforcing the idea that the developmentally appropriate teacher provides the most correct form of teaching (Ryan & Oschner, 1999).

Developmentally appropriate practice has maintained its prevalence as a particular type of practice and has been the focus of a number of studies conducted into TDM in early childhood education since the release of the first edition of the DAP guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987). Many studies focused on the effectiveness of DAP through exploring teacher beliefs about DAP. Some studies investigated the

effects of DAP on outcomes for children (c.f. Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, DeWolf, Ray, Manuel, & Fleege, 1993; Burts, Hart, Charlesworth & Kirk, 1990; Frede, & Barnett, 1992; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 1999) and others measured teacher beliefs and practice to ascertain how developmentally appropriate they were (Bryant, Clifford & Peisner, 1991; Charlesworth, Burts, & Hart, 1994; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts & Hernandez, 1991; Charlesworth, Hart, Hurts, Thomasson, Mosley & Fleege 1993; Snider & Fu, 1990; Stipek & Byler, 1997).

Twenty one studies of a total of 31 where early childhood teachers were participants, had a DAP focus. Many of the 21 studies legitimated DAP as a preferred pedagogy (see Table A.10, Appendix A for a list of the 21 DAP studies). The objective in many of the 21 DAP oriented studies (for example, Charlesworth et al. 1991, 1993; Chen, 1997; Snider & Fu, 1990) was to ultimately improve practice by finding out more about teacher beliefs about DAP. The underlining assumption within many of these studies was that DAP was an approach to strive towards, and the better understanding teachers had of DAP, the better the educational and development outcomes would be for children.

Some of the first and most significant TDM studies focusing on DAP and teacher beliefs were conducted by Charlesworth et al. (1991) and Charlesworth et al. (1993). Both these studies investigated kindergarten teacher beliefs and practices about DAP in the USA. The main aim of the latter study was to build on from the former and investigate kindergarten teacher beliefs and practices about DAP though using a revised questionnaire and observational checklist. Notably, Charlesworth et al. (1993) argued that their classroom observation checklist appeared to be “a useful instrument for rating the degree of developmentally appropriate/inappropriate practice in kindergarten classrooms through first hand examinations of the classroom environment and activities” (p. 273). These two studies (Charlesworth et al. 1991; Charlesworth et al. 1993) had a significant impact upon further studies. The influence of DAP in early childhood education is evident in several international studies have applied DAP research instruments, the *Teacher Questionnaire*, *Teacher Beliefs Scale (TBS)*, *Instructional Activities Scale (IAS)* or *Primary Teacher Questionnaire* developed by Charlesworth et al., (1991) and

Charlesworth et al. (1993) to their own local context (see Figure 2.4). Each study examined early childhood pedagogy and teacher beliefs, and applied DAP and DIP to categorise teaching practice.

The reason for illustrating international DAP studies in Figure 2.4 is to highlight the significant effect DAP has had on research into early childhood TDM. The DAP-focused studies show how prevalent DAP is as a discourse in early childhood education. Figure 2.4 illustrates how researchers have endorsed the DAP approach as common sense knowledge, particularly in an international context. Developmentally appropriate practice has sustained its influence in Westernised early childhood education contexts for the past twenty years or so, and more recently has extended to an international context. Apparent from the studies listed in Figure 2.4 is the way the DAP discourse has been reproduced in diverse contents. Developmentally appropriate practice has been the focus or finding of TDM studies in countries such as the UK (Walsh, McGuinness, Sproule & Trew, 2010), Australia (Edwards, 2003), Greece (Doliopoulou, 1996); China, Taiwan, Korea and Turkey (McMullen, Elicker, Wang, Erdiller, Lee, Lin, & Sun, 2005), Korea (Kim, J., Kim, S-Y., & Maslak, 2005), India (Hegde & Cassidy, 2009) and Jordan (Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb & Gheith, 2010).

As an endorsement of DAP, Hegde and Cassidy (2009) in an Indian context, maintain that DAP can be viewed as a “minimum foundation for quality” in any country, including India (p. 367). In another example taken from a study that used the DAP research instruments, and showed support for the applicability of DAP outside the USA, McMullen et al. (2005) argue that DAP can accommodate difference in many countries:

Regardless of the wisdom of exporting U.S. [USA] defined notions of quality or best practice in curriculum to other cultures and contexts, developmentally appropriate practices has and continues to influence early childhood education and care beyond the U.S.’s borders. For many countries outside the U.S., whether fully industrialized nations such as Taiwan and Korea, or rapidly developing nations such as China and Turkey, the challenge may be one of how to maintain what makes them unique in terms

of their curricular beliefs and practices while integrated beliefs from outside that make sense or are congruent with local professional values. (p. 463)

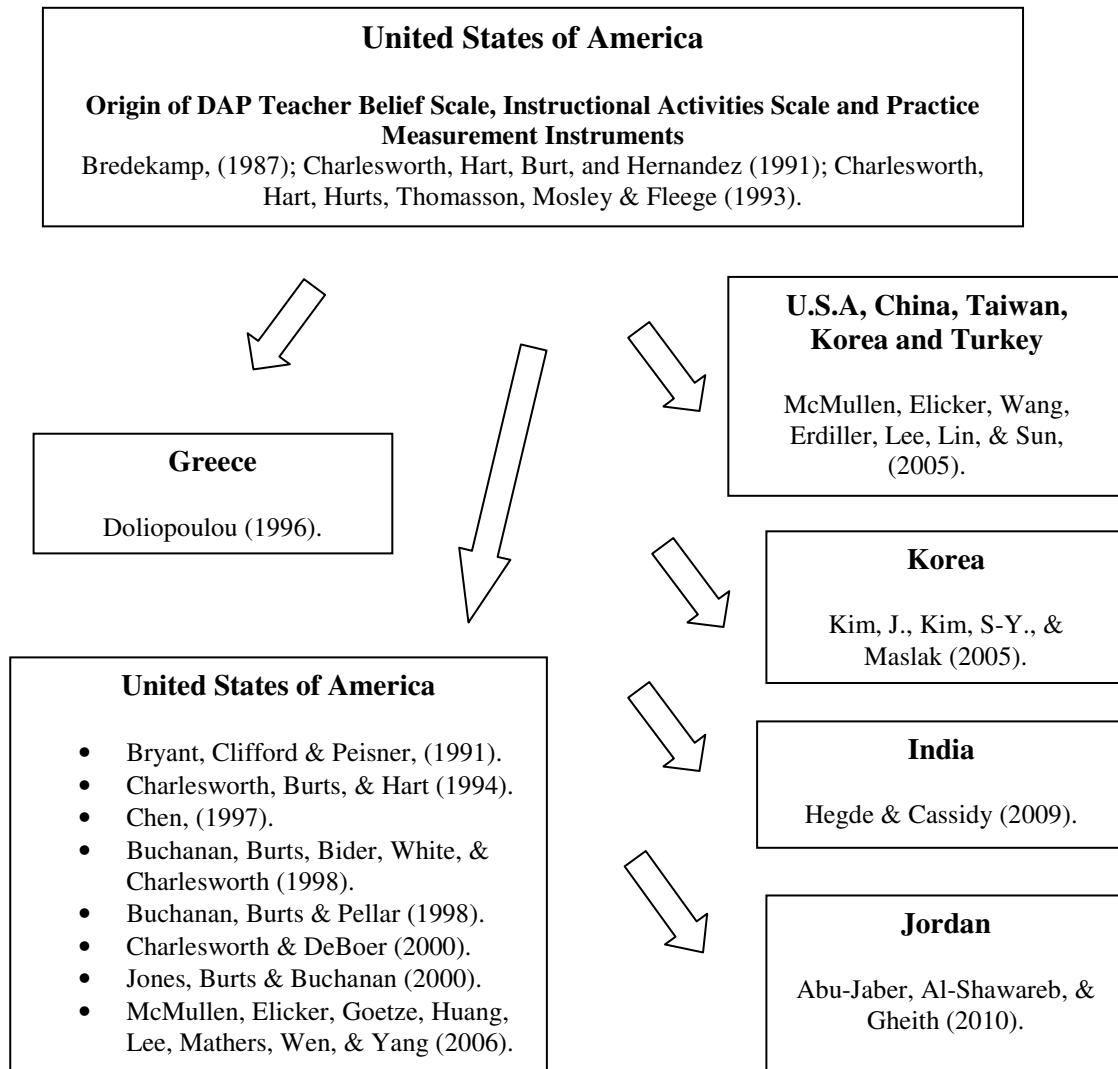


Figure 2.4 International studies measuring teacher beliefs about DAP modelled on instruments developed by Bredekamp (1987), Charlesworth et al. (1991), and Charlesworth et al. (1993).

Two studies investigated TDM and DAP without the initial research aim to specifically focus on DAP. In Australia, Edwards (2003, 2005b) investigated 12

early childhood teachers' conceptions of curriculum. She sought "subjective interpretations held by individuals [teachers]" and conducted open-ended interviews with participants (Edwards, 2005b, p. 27). The aim of the comparative case study was to investigate teacher "conceptions of curriculum with the intention of identifying the basis on which these conceptions were constructed" (p. 27). Early childhood teacher perceptions of curriculum were categorised into four dimensions:

- (1) The observation of children's development;
- (2) A reflection of children's interests and developmental potential;
- (3) The beliefs, values and religious affiliations of the educator; and
- (4) The influence of the management structure governing a setting.

Edwards (2005b) argued that the four dimensions are characteristic of DAP and child-centred ways of teaching in the early childhood context. The findings from Edwards (2003, 2005b) confirm that child-centred practices and DAP influence TDM in Victoria, the Australian state where this study has been conducted.

The focus of the Hsieh (2004) study was different from studies that set out to focus on DAP as her study sought to ascertain which practices were neither DAP or DIP, and to find out which practices were culturally specific to Taiwan (p. 316). Hsieh found that TDM practices in Taiwan are complex and culturally complex, and therefore should not be reduced to either DAP or DIP categorisations. This finding suggests that further studies should question DAP as a construct as Hsieh has done, by not limiting studies to the investigation of the effectiveness of DAP.

This section has illustrated that DAP is central to TDM in diverse international early childhood education contexts. Moreover, DAP is put forward as the "minimum foundation for quality [in an Indian context]" (Hegde & Cassidy, 2009, p. 837) and in many other countries. The centrality of the DAP discourse for TDM is also evident when Graue (2008) confirms how integral the CD discourse is to early childhood education. She says, "the metaphor that serves as its [DAP's] engine-development is so encompassing that it is simultaneously a theoretical frame and the foundation and outcome of practice" (p. 443). In this one sentence Graue sums up the significance of the CD, CCP, and DAP discourses as essential knowledge for early childhood education: they are *the* body of knowledge, *the*

theoretical frame, and *the* outcomes of practice. Teacher decision making in early childhood education is significantly affected by the discourse of DAP, as it informs, positions and legitimizes certain knowledge, and as a consequence, excludes other forms of knowledge.

In summary, DAP operates as a dominant discourse in early childhood education. This has been shown by the prevalence of DAP characteristics and underpinning values and assumptions, along with its longevity as a discourse operating within early childhood education. A narrowing pedagogical effect of the DAP discourse is evident within studies that sought to view practice as either DAP or DIP. In this way, other ways to view teacher practice were not possible because of the framing and limiting effects of the discourse. In the pro-DAP studies discussed above, other ways of understanding early childhood educational practice have been dismissed, excluded, or are invisible. These are issues that all require further investigation in this study. Next, the ways that early childhood TDM can operate and function outside the discourses of CD, CCP and DAP are discussed.

Postdevelopmentalism: The rise of alternative informants for early childhood education.

As part of a critical study, the process of examination of hegemony is twofold: to highlight unequal power relations and to open up space for alternative theoretical approaches. This section provides a brief overview of alternatives to the child development inspired practices of CCP and DAP discourses. Alternative informants and pedagogies are emerging under the banner of postdevelopmental theories and practices, and these are beginning to reconfigure early childhood educational discourse (Blaise, 2005; Edwards & Nuttall, 2009; Nolan & Kilderry, 2010). Alternative practices stemming from pedagogies of hope (Freire & Freire, 2004) and engaged pedagogies (hooks, 2003) are changing the dialogue about the purpose of teaching. These practices, where curriculum is seen as having the potential to transform society, are becoming evident in literature about early childhood education (MacNaughton, 2003; O'Brien, 2000). Alternative perspectives to that of developmentalism, stemming from postmodern, poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial perspectives, are disrupting definitions of CCP and DAP. For example,

reconceptualist academics and educators (Bloch, 1992; Cannella, 1997; Canella & Viruru, 2004; Dahlberg et al., 2007; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Lubeck, 1998a, 1998b; O'Brien, 2000; Silin, 1995; Soto & Swadener, 2002) have used alternative theories to argue that the early childhood field revitalise its knowledge base to ensure a more inclusive and socially relevant pedagogy rather than an over-reliance on CD. There are alternatives to CD knowledge informing early childhood education within literature. The CD discourse is not the only informant available for TDM in early childhood education as alternative theories underpinning practice are becoming evident. As illustrated above, the CD, CCP, and DAP discourses operate as a preferred discourses within early childhood education, affecting TDM. It has become difficult to think outside the CD discourse in early childhood education as it has become an important foundation for TDM. The CCP and DAP discourses are firmly embedded within early childhood education and make it difficult for teachers to think and practise outside of these discourses. Teacher decision making in early childhood education is significantly affected by the discourse of CD, as it informs, positions and legitimizes certain knowledge, and excludes other forms of knowledge. The next section (2.4.4) identifies and discusses the effects of another discourse on early childhood TDM, the discourse of accountability.

2.4.4 Accountability.

Teacher decision making in the Australian early childhood education context is affected by the accountability discourse. Accountability in an educational context refers to how effective schools and early childhood settings are at improving the performance of children and teachers (Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002). A set of measurable standards that allow comparison across sites is often enlisted (Bullough, Clark, & Patterson, 2003). In early childhood education accountabilities in the form of regulations and policies set minimum standards for practice and include: quality in teaching and learning, maintaining the safety and welfare of children, setting minimum teacher and practitioner qualifications, and regulation of child and staff ratios (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007).

Teacher accountability, a form of accountability relevant to this study, stems from a managerialist discourse that includes viewing teaching in terms of its

outcomes and adherence to being efficient and effective (Slee, Weiner & Tomlinson, 1998; Welch, 1998). Teacher accountability includes concepts such as competitiveness and performance (Osgood, 2006a). Mechanisms of teacher accountability have expanded in the Australian early childhood education context in the past decade. An increase in teacher accountabilities in the Australian early childhood education context over the past fourteen years or so has meant that accountability affects TDM. The increase in regulations and policies is partly due to national and state governments prioritising better learning outcomes for children in Australia in recent years (Woodrow, 2008).

The accountability discourse is identified through its features and particular social practices revealed through everyday language (Fairclough, 2001b). In the early childhood education context, the accountability discourse is evident through the proliferation of policies, regulations and curriculum framework documents that affect teachers. Increased early childhood teacher accountabilities are evident with the increase of Australian Government regulations and policies in the last decade. The *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System Handbook (QIAS)* (National Childcare Accreditation Council, NCAC, 2001) was the first regulating policy to include outcomes statements detailing children's learning at a national level in Australian early childhood education (Grieshaber, 2000). The QIAS changed the Australian early childhood policy landscape as child care benefit funding for parents was linked to the quality of a long day care setting. This meant that for the first time early childhood teachers were accountable to national outcome statements, linking their practice with child care funding. The NCAC (2001) maintained that:

The Australian QIAS is unique on an international scale as it is the first quality assurance program for child care services in the world to be linked to child care funding through legislation and to be funded and supported by a federal government. (p. 3)

One effect of the introduction of the QIAS (NCAC, 2001) was the way it changed curricula practices, where curriculum was shaped by the 52 QIAS standards rather than solely relying on the professional knowledge and skills of teachers (Grieshaber, 2000).

In the same year the QIAS (NCAC, 2001) was launched, teaching standards were introduced in Western Australia in 2001. These competencies measured teacher performance (Martin, 2001). This meant that teachers in early childhood were required to meet particular standards, standards focusing on their practice. Also in 2001, South Australia introduced an outcomes-based curriculum framework, *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework* (Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2001). Shortly after the *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework* was released, the Tasmanian the *Essential Learnings Framework 1* (Department of Education Tasmania, 2002) came into effect. In contrast to teaching standards and curricula developments in other Australian states, Victorian preschool teachers were guided by developmental learning outcomes in the Victorian non-mandated quality document, the *Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist* (DHS, 1996).

Since 2004, changes have occurred with regard to national accountability of preschool programs. For example, in 2009, the first national quality standards framework; *National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care* (COAG, 2009a) governing centre based long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and preschool settings was developed. Until 2009, the *Australian Quality Improvement and Accreditation System* (QIAS) (NCAC, 2001) was the single national framework monitoring quality within one section of the early childhood sector, long day care provision. The new national quality standards framework (COAG, 2009a) has set quality criteria for areas such as “staff-to-child ratios, educator qualifications and health and safety”, along with guidelines provided for “interactions with children, partnerships with families, stimulating environments and programs and service management” (p. 9). Up until 2009 staff-to-child ratios and teacher and practitioner qualifications were regulated at the state level.

Early childhood teacher practice is accountable through state and federal mandated curriculum framework documents, quality assurance measures, licensing policies and various regulations. Therefore, research findings from empirical studies, particularly where teacher practice is focused upon, are reviewed.

The focus is on Australian studies conducted five years prior to, and six years following when data collection for this study occurred and includes research relating to TDM and accountability in the preschool context (see Figure 2.5). Studies from countries other than Australia are not included in this analysis due to each country's policy context operating and being governed differently.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the range of studies clustered into six main research areas: 'teachers' responses to reform and professional accountability', 'child observation, regulation, and accountability in early childhood education', 'teachers' making sense of a new curriculum framework', 'the impact of regulatory environments on professional practice' and 'early childhood teachers coping with educational change'. No listed studies were conducted in the state of Victoria, so it

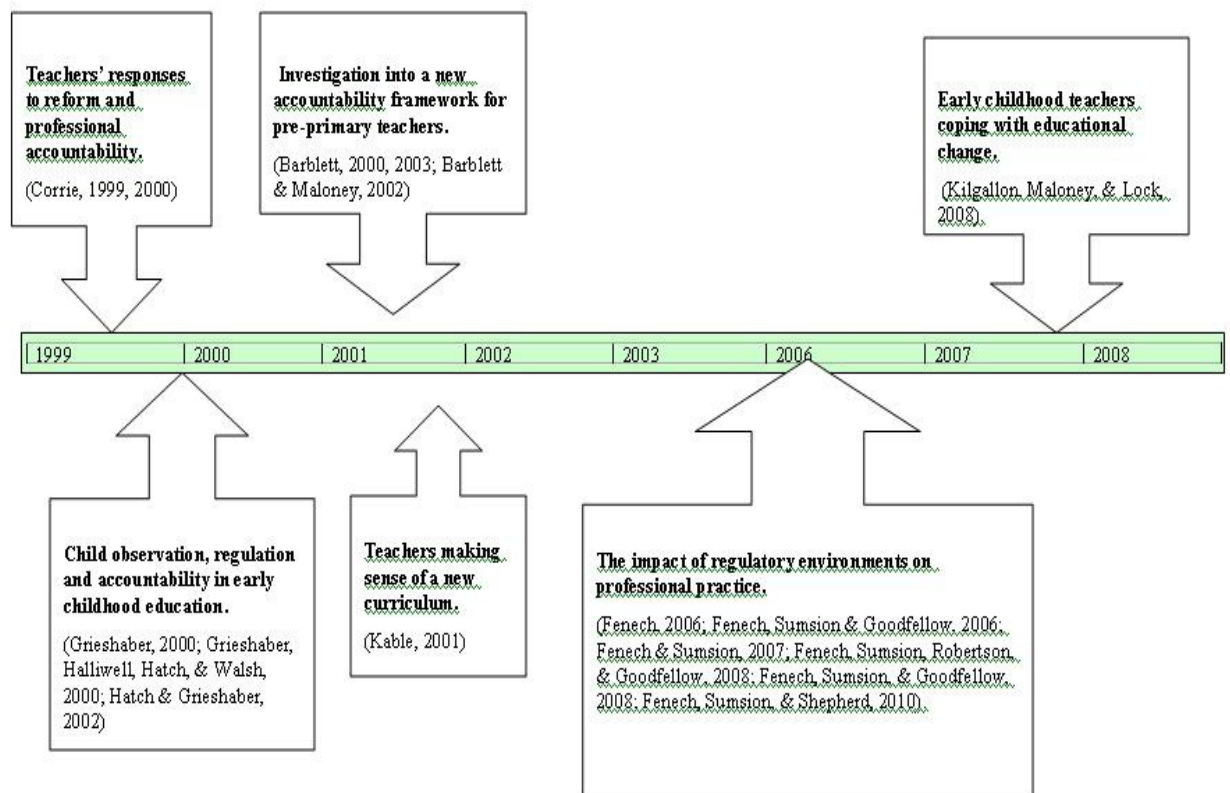


Figure 2.5 Australian studies investigating the impact of the accountability discourse on early childhood teacher decision making during 1999 to 2010.

is not known specifically how the accountability discourse has affected early childhood TDM in Victoria, the site for this research study.

The literature on teacher accountability is categorised into four key areas: (i) professionalizing early childhood teachers' work; (ii) increasing teacher performativity; (iii) undermining teachers' professional autonomy; and (iv) teacher resistance (Figure 2.6). Analysis investigates how the accountability discourse has affected TDM in the Australian early childhood context.

The first example of how early childhood TDM is affected by the accountability discourse provided here is through teachers gaining confidence in their work. In 2000, Barblett (2000) showed how the development of an accountability framework in the form of teacher competencies, designed specifically for pre-primary (preschool) teachers, could be beneficial for early childhood teachers' practice and self confidence. The use of teacher competencies assisted teachers in Barblett's (2000) Western Australian study to explain their work to others "in a way that was clear and valued" (p. 1). This is a positive outcome of the effects of the accountability discourse as teachers in early childhood have traditionally had difficulty in having their work respected and valued (Kable, 2001). One effect of the introduction of teacher competencies on TDM was that teachers had to account for their practice for the first time with some teachers feeling "threatened" and others "uncertain" about the new accountabilities (Barblett, 2000, p. 279).

In another instance of early childhood teachers gaining professional confidence as a consequence of new regulations, Kable (2001) found that some early childhood teachers used the *Queensland Pre-school Curriculum Guidelines* (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998) to help professionalize their work. In particular, early childhood teachers in Kable's study saw the curriculum document as "providing government endorsement for their child-centred philosophies and practices" (p. 327). Other teachers in Kable's study thought that it helped make their teaching practice more accountable. Her study showed that teachers create their own meanings of curriculum texts, and that policies can assist

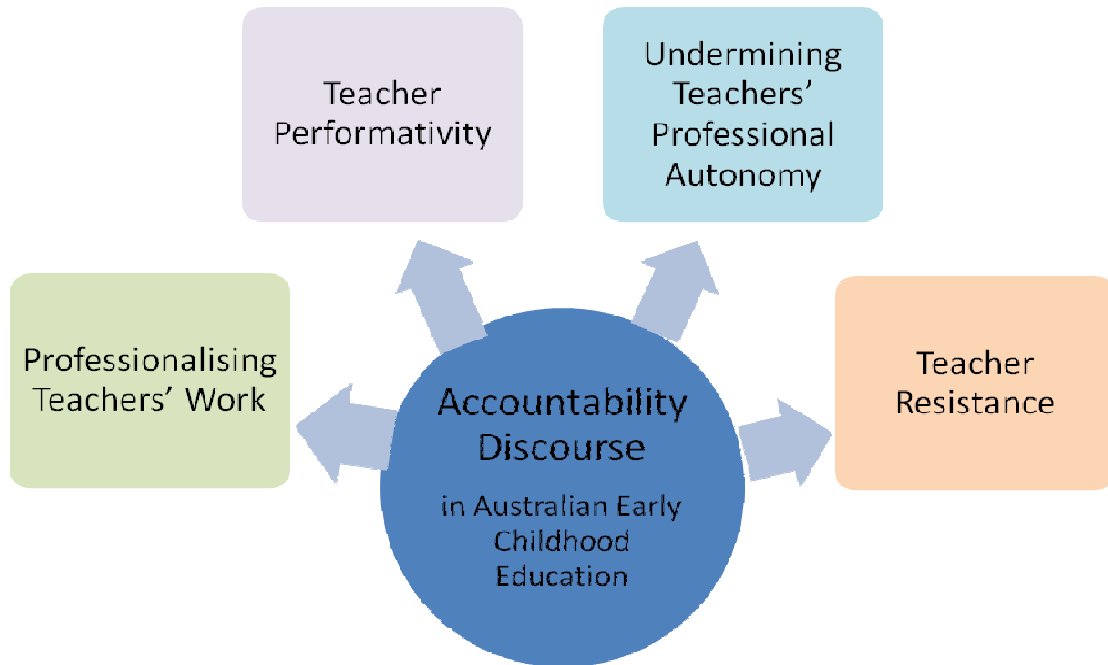


Figure 2.6. Effects of the accountability discourse on teacher decision making in the Australian early childhood context.

in professionalizing and supporting their work. Similarly, 66 of the 89 preschool teachers interviewed in Barblett and Maloney’s (2002) study stated that their new framework, the *Western Australian Teacher Competency Framework*, (Department of Education Western Australia, 2001) was a positive initiative and had benefits for their teaching. The benefits, according to the preschool teachers who were interviewed, were that the teaching framework enhanced the local community’s view of the early childhood profession, assisting teachers with articulating and explaining their role. These findings show that early childhood TDM can be affected by the accountability discourse in different ways. Teacher accountability can endorse teachers’ practice (Kable, 2001) or make teachers feel “uncertain” about their practice (Barblett, 2000, p. 279).

Teacher performativity is the second way the accountability discourse has had an impact on early childhood TDM. Performativity in educational contexts is visible where performance-related practices, such as teaching and learning, are

regulated through measurable criteria (Ball, 1994, 2003; Lyotard, 1984). Teacher performativity focuses on individual performance; whether it is the performance of children in the shape of learning and developmental outcomes or the performance of teachers, as measured by teaching competencies, appraisals and quality criteria (Ball, 2003, 2006). Performativity regulates teaching by employing “judgments, comparisons...as means of control, attrition and change” (Ball, 2003, p. 216). Performativity and performative related tasks and duties, is one way to make teacher accountability visible. For example, in early childhood education in Australia, teachers are subject to “surveillance via spot checks, licensing visits and validation processes” (Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008, p. 41). Thus, teacher decision making is affected by performativity by the way in which teachers’ work is scrutinised and measured against performance criteria and through the time spent achieving this task.

Performance criteria coerce teachers into an accountability discourse, one which is focused on outcomes, achievement and performance, where teachers have to “prove” the quality of their teaching practice (Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008, p. 41). Consequently teachers can be positioned as a “potential problem” (Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008, p. 41). In addition, early childhood teachers claim that accountabilities can “threaten quality standards of care” due to the excessive time spent on completing paperwork and adhering to licensing regulations (Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008, p. 43). When teachers’ work is measured by performance-related indicators and outcomes they can feel that their work is being policed, so their relationships with external bodies can become based on fear and suspicion (Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008). In summary, performativity, as part of the accountability discourse affects early childhood TDM through its ability to change and shape teachers’ practice based on their of performance. Teachers can find themselves measuring their teaching practice against outside expectations, potentially leading to feeling uncertain about their technical knowledge base (Barblett, 2000).

The third way the accountability discourse has affected TDM is by undermining teacher professional autonomy. Teachers can feel threatened and de-

professionalized, and find their values challenged or displaced by the accountability discourse (Barblett, 2000; Maloney & Barblett, 2002). By regulating and standardising curricula, teachers' autonomy in decision making can be undermined (Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson & Goodfellow, 2008). For example, in Western Australia there is evidence of policies altering and displacing teachers with curricula decision making. In one primary school, the principal insisted that early childhood teachers use the same format for reporting children's progress to parents as primary teachers, which resulted in teachers assessing preschool children in primary curriculum subject areas (Corrie, 2000). The policy change expected the early childhood teachers to adapt and change practice to be less child-centred. Teacher professional autonomy was undermined in this situation as their professional judgment was disregarded. The implications of a policy change such as this one are that sometimes policy directives do not account for the specialist nature of early childhood teaching. For example, Barblett (2000) found that a top-down policy of accountability for early childhood teachers in the form of working towards a whole school development plan had failed. In this case, the school system that had framed and defined accountability did not adequately take into account the specialist nature of pre-primary (preschool) teacher work. Barblett (2000) found that a clearer definition of the concept of accountability and accountability policies is required for the pre-primary (preschool) sector and that before it can be successful, policy needs to be "meaningful to all stakeholders and grounded in the reality of the [pre-primary] teacher's work" (p. 279).

Another change in teacher practice can be seen in the following example where an increase in teacher accountability altered the way early childhood teachers' observed children (Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002). For example, Hatch (in a Northern American context) and Grieshaber (2002) (in an Australian context), found that standards and accountability measures and policies were changing the way in which child observation was carried out by preschool teachers in both countries. Hatch and Grieshaber argue that, instead of child observations being used as an informant for curriculum development, observations were becoming more focused on assessing children's academic deficiencies with the primary aim of monitoring

children's academic progress. This change of practice led teachers to feel pressured and less valued as professionals due to policies prescribing the type and nature of child observations that were required. A consequence of such prescription arising from standards-based accountability was that teachers felt de-professionalized in their own teaching environment.

More recent research investigating early childhood practitioner satisfaction with regulatory requirements in New South Wales (Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson, & Goodfellow, 2008) found that increased accountability did affect early childhood practice, leading to "considerable dissatisfaction" among practitioners (p. 1). Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson and Goodfellow (2008) point out that "the more experience an early childhood professional has, the more dissatisfied they are with the regulatory environment" (p. 11). In this instance teacher professional autonomy was undermined due to the extent of changes made to the regulatory environment and how government policy had changed practice without the early childhood professional having input or control.

The fourth way that TDM is affected by the accountability discourse is through teachers showing resistance. For example, not all teachers and practitioners comply with new accountabilities. Teachers can choose to be either compliant or resistant to new policies and practices brought about by new accountability measures (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007). This section illustrates ways in which early childhood teachers have resisted new accountabilities.

Early childhood teachers have shown that they can navigate their own way through educational reform and policy driven curricula agendas using their own professional judgment. At times teachers have exercised resistance. For example, in Grieshaber, Halliwell, Hatch and Walsh's (2000) study, Shauna, a participant teacher in the study, was a vocal critic of written observations of children that were required as part of the *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)* (NCAC, 2001) policy. Shauna believed that teachers recorded observations of children to please supervisors, rather than for any other reason. Shauna explained: "observations are often done just to satisfy supervisors and accreditation requirements, implying that teachers just 'play the game' of child observation" (p.

49). Her account highlights a contradiction of practice: on the one hand she knew that she must comply with the national QIAS policy that involved observing children; but at the same time expressed dissatisfaction with the way teachers carried out this task to satisfy others. The contradiction experienced by Shauna highlights the ways that teachers will fulfil tasks to account for their practice, yet not agree with the practice itself.

Other Australian studies demonstrate teacher resistance to regulations and policies. Fenech and Sumsion (2007) found that early childhood teachers engaged in strategic resistance to regulations in two ways: (i) by positioning regulation as an ally to resist perceived threats to their teaching and practice; and (ii) by engaging in strategic resistance. The type of resistance strategies employed included teachers articulating other ways of approaching the situation or practice, using complaint procedures, resisting interpretations of certain features of the regulation itself, and knowing when to take the issue further. The findings illustrate that although regulation can be seen as constraining and repressive, teachers are capable of employing various resistance strategies. The use of resistance strategies illustrate that teachers are not necessarily compliant with regulation.

In a more recent Australian study conducted by Fenech, Sumsion and Shepherd (2010), early childhood teachers developed their own version of the concept of quality and created their own truths about what constituted good practice. The study showed early childhood teachers' capacity to reject "prevailing discourses that threaten to narrow the parameters of professional practice and quality in ECE [early childhood education]" (p. 97). Teachers transcended discourses through the use of various resistance strategies, such as exercising their right to deconstruct standardised technical practices and to think and act differently. Even though the teachers understood the importance of meeting the standards of regulation, as active professionals they refused to accept practices that were reduced to "measurable, auditable practices" (Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd, 2010, p. 98). Instead, the teachers explained that their "practice and pedagogy and what we [the teachers in the study] think and do is 'untickable' (Maggie, Focus Group 2)" (p. 98). By stating that their practice was 'untickable' the teachers refused to have their work reduced

to being ‘ticked and crossed off’. Consequently, the teachers exercised their professional knowledge to question and transcend expectations of the regulative environment and engage in strategic resistance.

All three studies (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Fenech et al., 2010; Grieshaber et al., 2000) illustrate how the accountability discourse positions early childhood TDM and demonstrates teacher resistance in action. This section has shown how TDM in Australian early childhood education has been affected by the discourse of accountability. It has been argued that accountability is a discourse that has infiltrated the language of Australian early childhood TDM. It has shown that Australian early childhood TDM has been affected by the accountability discourse in four ways: (i) professionalizing early childhood teachers’ work; (ii) teacher performativity; (iii) undermining teachers’ professional autonomy; and (iv) teacher resistance. The ways in which teachers react to accounting for their practice is varied. Moreover, as no Australian studies listed were conducted in the state of Victoria, little is known about how the accountability discourse has affected early childhood TDM in the state.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has revealed four contextual factors affecting teacher decision making (TDM) in early childhood education: (i) initial teacher education; (ii) the ideology and identity of the individual teacher; (iii) policy context; and (iv) the type of setting and localised context the teacher work. In addition, it argued that there are four discourses affecting TDM in early childhood education, identified as: (i) child development (CD); child-centred practice (CCP); (iii) developmentally appropriate practice (DAP); and (iv) accountability. Through the application of Fairclough (2001b, 2003) and Gee’s (2011) definitions of discourse, a case was made for each of the four discourses affecting TDM in early childhood education. For example, the CD discourse, concerned with the developmental stages of children, including their biological, social, emotional and cognitive growth (Berk, 2003; Doherty & Hughes; Kaplan, 2000; Santrock, 2004), was found to influence TDM. Child-centred practice, influenced by CD, was proposed as a discourse in its own right. The influence of the CCP discourse in Australian literature and policy documents was

illustrated in the chapter, showing the prominence of this discourse in early childhood education. In addition, it was shown that developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) is affecting TDM and was illustrated through the analysis of literature. The fourth discourse identified as affecting TDM in early childhood education was accountability. Accountability was found to have infiltrated the language of Australian early childhood TDM and positioned the ways in which teachers' practice. Furthermore, TDM in Australian early childhood education has been affected by the accountability discourse in four ways: (i) it has professionalized early childhood teachers' work; (ii) it has affected teacher performativity; (iii) it has undermined teachers' professional autonomy; and (iv) there is evidence of teacher resistance.

Early childhood TDM requires closer scrutiny to understand the main influences that affect the pedagogic processes and practice (Stephen, 2010). Early childhood teacher understandings of curriculum and pedagogy at the preschool level have not been explored as extensively as in other sectors of education (Wood & Bennett, 2001). This review illustrated how empirical research considering TDM in the early childhood education context is limited. Moreover, as none of the Australian accountability studies analysed have been conducted in the state of Victoria, little is known about how the accountability discourse affects early childhood TDM in the state of Victoria. To address the lack of research into TDM in the Australian early childhood education context, and the lack of research into the Victorian early childhood policy context, this study undertakes a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of teacher decision making in the Victorian preschool context. The next chapter outlines critical theory, the theoretical framework used in the study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses critical theory as a theoretical platform for the study. Critical theory enables the identification and questioning of discourses evident within teacher decision making (TDM). Through its analytic ability to uncover taken-for-granted beliefs, critical theory is used to identify and critically examine early childhood policies and TDM.

Chapter 3 is divided into the eight sections. Section 3.1 provides a brief historical overview of critical theory and how it provides theoretical underpinning. The second section (3.2) explains the meaning of discourse and how it is used in the study. The concepts of ideology and self-reference are discussed in Section 3.3; dominance, power, hegemony and counter-hegemony are explained Section 3.4. The application of critical theory to educational contexts is discussed in Section 3.5, with Section 3.6 providing insight into how critical theory is used to understand teacher decision making. Section 3.7 provides examples from research showing how drawing on critical theories to investigate early childhood educational practices can benefit early childhood education by generating new ways of considering practice. A discussion about the limitations of critical theory is provided in Section 3.7 and the chapter concludes with a short summary (3.8).

3.1 Critical Theory and this Study

Critical theory can reveal how social relationships operate and uncover common and dominant understandings. Critical theory stems from the work of predominately German, French, and Italian thinkers and includes foundational concepts about democracy that emerged from ancient Greece (Phillips, 2000). Embracing important concepts from the members of the Institute for Social Research (*Das Institute für Sozialforschung*), commonly referred to as ‘The Frankfurt School’ [1923-mid 1930s], critical theory endeavours to highlight inequalities experienced in society (Phillips, 2000).

Rather than focusing on class struggles that occur within oppressive political economies, critical theory differs from orthodox Marxist theory in that it centres on how subjectivities are constituted as part of everyday social practices (Giroux, 2003). Marxist theory emphasised the division of labour where the ruling class were

able to produce ruling ideas, and working class people were not privileged with controlling ideas or production (Marx & Engels, 1992). By refashioning and rejecting deterministic notions of Marxist class struggle, political economy, and historical inevitability, Frankfurt school theorists Horkheimer (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979), Adorno (Adorno, 1973; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979), Marcuse (1964) and Habermas (1973) were able to provide insight into hegemonic practices of domination (Giroux, 2001). Hegemony, a key concept for the study, is the process of the reproduction of knowledge, values, ideologies, morals, and norms and is explained in more detail in Section 3.4 (Gramsci, 1971).

Gramsci's (1971) work in particular offers insight into the critical assessment of communication, specifically the concepts of objectivity, hegemony and counter-hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Holub, 1992). Antonio Gramsci, an Italian anti-fascist intellectual, was imprisoned by Mussolini in 1926 (Holub, 1992). Gramsci was an important figure in the Italian working class movement in the 1920s and added important ideas to critical theory (Holub, 1992). Writing his *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci, 1971) at the time of imprisonment, Gramsci provided insight into key critical concepts such as power, hegemony and dominance. Even though Gramsci's theories of ideology and democracy were similar to other Frankfurt school theorists, he may not have read the work of, nor met his Frankfurt counterparts (Holub, 1992).

Critical theory provides insights for this study through its ability to identify social and cultural dominance, and providing insights into ideology and subjectivity (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964). Investigating the notions of positivist ideology and subjectivity means that the context in which we live is viewed as a construction through interaction with others, within language, culture, place and time, which all influence how we gain meaning (McLaren, 1998). Positivist notions of neutrality and objectivity were questioned by several critical theorists, including Adorno and Horkheimer (1979), Gramsci (1971), Habermas (1973) and Marcuse (1964), who sought a moral social order that was different to the one they were experiencing. Basing its epistemological position on the notion that knowledge is a social construction, rather than predetermined, this study aims to

examine the conditions underlying social relationships with the purpose of illuminating ideology through discourse.

3.2 Discourse and this Study

This section addresses the role that discourse plays in this study. It briefly traces the development of the concept of discourse derived Marcuse (1964) and moves onto Fairclough's (2001b, 2003) more recent definitions.

Critical theorists have long been interested and compelled by the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of language and discourse (Marcuse, 1964). The term 'discourse' is derived from the Latin word *discursus* meaning to run to and fro (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). This definition suggests that discourses move "back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world" (Rogers et al. 2005, p. 369). Whereas Marcuse (1964) defined discourse as the dialectical dimension of language; the meanings beyond the surface level and the functional meanings of words equip critical theorists to find the contradictions and historical dimensions of discourse. The concept of power is at the forefront of how critical theorists understand discourse. They pursue the ways in which language and discourse position people, and how they can be contradictory and self-validating (Marcuse, 1964). Discourse then, is vital to all aspects of social life as it reveals ways in which social practices function ideologically (J. Walsh, 2008). As this study uses Fairclough's (2001b, 2003) approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA), it is now discussed.

Discourse, according to Fairclough (2001b), is a social practice, and can reveal how language operates in various aspects of social life. Even though Fairclough is not from the Frankfurt school of critical theorists, his definition of discourse is used as it underpins his approach to CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003). Viewing discourse from Fairclough's perspective highlights how language can represent particular ideologies, therefore uncovering power and domination (Fairclough, 2001b). Fairclough's notion of discourse is drawn from linguistic theories and systemic functional linguistics from Halliday (1985) and others, along with the social theory of discourse evolving from the work of Foucault (1972).

For example, Fairclough's notion of discourse as a social practice draws from Foucault's (1972) understanding of discourse as a regulated practice. Foucault understood discourse to be where social constructions of knowledge are apparent and the ways in which social practices are structured. Drawing on Foucault's understanding of discourse to analyse social and cultural phenomena, Fairclough (2001b) was able to piece together and strengthen his theory of discourse. Fairclough (1992) separates Foucault's use of discourse to that of his own by arguing that Foucault was concerned with specific discourses related to medicine, economics and psychiatry, whereas his version of discourse draws from a wide interpretation of textually interpreted discourse. By combining the analysis of social and cultural elements with textual analysis meant that Fairclough could examine discourse from linguistic and social perspectives.

Discourse as a concept is crucial for this study as it can reveal common language used by people in different social contexts. Common language, according to Fairclough (2001b) is "centrally involved with power and...[a] social practice determined by social structures" (p. 14). Different types of language and social practices make up discourse. For example, language is one part of discourse, either in a written or spoken form. Examining discourse use within text allows for an investigation into social interaction, production and interpretation of social practice (Fairclough, 2001b).

Fairclough (2001a) describes dominance in discourse in terms of the order of discourse, and how the social structuring of discourse can lend itself to sustain domination through being dominant or mainstream. He suggests that dominance can become apparent in hegemonic struggles where certain discourses can be legitimized as common sense understandings. For example, common sense understandings can be viewed through implicit assumptions and expectations that are part of everyday life (Fairclough, 2003). In an educational context, common sense understandings can be implicit within the ideological foundations of a particular curriculum (Apple, 2004). Therefore, insights into commonsense understandings of curricula can be gained through the critical analysis of discourse.

Significant for this study is the way in which discourse can highlight types of knowledge that may be privileged along with corresponding concepts, values and beliefs, otherwise known as legitimized knowledge (Gramsci, 1971). With an interest in how dominant ideas and understandings are played out in the context of preschool curriculum, this study identifies and examines how discourses and ideologies influence and shape teacher decision making. As well as representing the world, discourses are also projective, conveying “possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). The objective of tracing dominant discourses through the data is to illuminate and question the assumptions on which discourses rest. (Sandra Taylor, 2004). By examining ideologies in action, this study endeavours to distil key discourses in action; discourses that are promoted and espoused, which affect and position teacher decision making.

3.3 Ideology and Self-reference

The notion of ideology and self-reference and how it provides theoretical foundations for this study is discussed in this section. Ideology is the “science of ideas” and “the analysis and origin of ideas” (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 375-376). An ideology, according to Gramsci (1971), can be evident within a system of ideas. The Gramscian view maintains that ideologies should be analysed historically, particularly in terms of the philosophy of praxis or the relationship between human will and economic structure. Relevant to this study is the way in which ideology, as a set of values and beliefs, or practices, can be revealed through the study of discourses. For example, the concept of ideology can be used to critically examine teacher decision making, with the participant’s ideology revealed through interview discourse.

Also useful is Althusser’s (1971) notion of ideology. According to Althusser (1971), ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (p. 36) and it “always exists in an apparatus, and its practice” (p. 40). Building on Gramsci’s theory of ideology, Althusser (1971) viewed ideological practice through particular institutions that he called *Ideological State Apparatuses* (ISAs). The institutions Althusser (1971) refers to include

religious organisations, schools and places of education, the family, legal and political systems, trade unions and the media (press, radio and television). The function of an ISA is unified through its ideology and is evident through dominant ideology (Althusser, 1971). This is particularly the case in educational contexts. Althusser argues that educational apparatuses are in fact the “dominant ISA in [contemporary] capitalist social formations” and hardly anyone recognises the important role schools play (Althusser, 1971, p. 28). His argument here is that schools take:

Children from every class in infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most ‘vulnerable’, squeezed between the family State apparatus and the educational State apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of ‘know-how’ wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy). (Althusser, 1971, p. 29)

Again, stating the significance of the potential effects of educational apparatuses, Althusser argues that “no other ISA has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven” (Althusser, 1971, p. 30). The site of the school along with the family, according to Althusser, is now more significant than the role that the church and family play in shaping ideology. It is the educational apparatus that appears ideologically neutral and operates as “indispensable-useful and even beneficial for our contemporaries as the Church was ‘natural’, indispensable and generous for our ancestors a few centuries ago” (Althusser, 1971, p. 31).

Althusser’s (1971) concept of educational apparatuses is useful as it provides insight into critiquing dominant ideologies and the important role that educational contexts play in society.

More recently, Fairclough (2003) defined the concept of ideology as encompassing representations of the world where ideologies shape social relations. Ideologies are “representations which can be shown to contribute to social relations of power and domination...[and] they can be associated with discourses”

(Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). At the centre of Fairclough's (2001b) explanation about the concept of ideology are the critical theory concepts of language and power, their interrelationships and how people are positioned. When discussing the notions of "ideological common sense" and "ideological diversity", Fairclough (2001b) refers to the ways in which a person can detect their own ideology through what they hold to be common sense (p. 71). His intention for CDA as a distinct method of discourse analysis was to ensure that it could do the critical and ideological work required (Fairclough, 2001b; Rogers et al., 2005). Fairclough's theoretical position draws extensively from critical theory (for example: Althusser, 1971; Habermas, 1973; Gramsci, 1971) and aims to unite discourse analysis methods with critical and social theories (Rogers et al., 2005). Fairclough's theoretical positioning is complementary to the concepts from critical theory used in this study. A further discussion about CDA is provided in Section 4.1, Chapter 4.

Ideologies can be revealed through common sense beliefs or implicit assumptions, and identified by their meaning within discourse (Fairclough, 2001b). An example of an ideology within early childhood education might be a teacher belief that young children learn best through child-centred practice, such as through play and self-discovery (Burman, 2008; Entwistle, 1970). A further discussion about ideology and its relationship to teacher decision making and this study is found in Section 3.7. In summary, ideologies are sets of practices and bodies of ideas that can be revealed through constructed language meanings within discourse (Gramsci, 1971).

An important feature of critical theory is the understanding of one's own point of self-reference, and what shapes one's own ideology and belief system. One's own point of self-reference reveals the power of social practice and human knowledge, both as a product of and force in the shaping of social reality (Giroux, 2001). Consistent with this understanding, Section 4.5 provides a discussion about reflexivity, the process where research is informed and strengthened by me as researcher being self-reflexive (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Rogers et al., 2005).

3.4 Dominance, Power, Hegemony, and Counter-hegemony

The concepts of dominance, power and hegemony are pertinent to this study as they can unlock understandings about everyday policies, practices, and teacher understandings, revealing conditions within particular discourses. Dominance (Gramsci, 1971, p. 55) is linked to the notion of leadership with its meaning derived from the Italian term *dirigere* meaning to direct, lead and rule, which does not translate directly into English. Dominance is not about physical force, but rather exhibited through ideological hegemony within society's cultural institutions, such as schools, the government, religion, and mass media (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci understood power as a dynamic process that it closely linked with the concept of dominance. From a Gramscian view (Gramsci, 1971), dominance is exercised when power is evident. This type of power is not about one group dominating another in an overt way; instead it can be domination with people's consent in either a passive or active way (Golding, 1992). Therefore Gramsci's notion of power was enacted through both force and consent, with power remaining insignificant unless it was institutionalised (Golding, 1992). The effect of institutionalised power, according to Gramsci, was both the "product and process of politics" and manifested and revealed itself in the process of hegemony (Golding, 1992, p. 105). Gramsci's theory of dominance and power, linked with hegemony, is useful as together these concepts can reveal insights into common sense decisions teachers at the preschool level are making.

By revealing dominance within ideological dimensions of society (where understandings, ideas and knowledge are apparent), power becomes apparent in the facts and conditions revealed within particular discourse (Marcuse, 1964). In its obvious form, dominance within education can be enacted as teacher power and authority over students and the control of knowledge taught (Giroux, 1997). In a more subtle form, power and dominance can be evident in the teaching context itself, within underpinning ideologies evident in curriculum content and in the practical decisions made by teachers. Power can reside with all social actors (Fairclough, 2001b) in an educational context. In an early childhood context, social actors include teachers, practitioners, management, parents, and children. As

discussed in Chapter 5, power in an educational context can be apparent in various forms of control - whether curriculum, management, governance, structures, or policy (Ball, 1994). Closely linked to power and dominance is the concept of hegemony, which is now discussed.

Hegemony is a key concept for the study as it reveals both domination and power. Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony refers to the systems of practices, meanings, and values that legitimize the dominant society's institutional arrangements and interest. Hegemony is the way that "political society," or the state via government and state institutions such as the army, police, schools, and religion act as the "dominant group's 'deputies'" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). It is through the dominant group's functioning that social hegemony is evident (Gramsci, 1971). Understanding that consent was never entirely positive or negative, Gramsci took the view that hegemony was underscored by the notion of consent and domination. This meant that consent was not simply the force of the ruling group, but rather consent was "subjectively constituted" (Golding, 1992, p. 107). Useful for this study is the way in which Gramsci's view of hegemony can reveal dominant discourses in action. For example, hegemonic discourse can be seen within government policies, curriculum, standards, accreditation processes and via the allocation of funds, and in relation to this study, through the examination of policy documents and teacher understandings (J. Walsh, 2008).

Counter-hegemonic notions are evident by looking to see which knowledge and practices are relegated to the sidelines, and may be the antithesis of dominant discourses and hegemonic practices. However, illuminating counter-hegemony in a Gramscian sense, in the form of resistance, is problematic as "identities and representational forms of the dominated are formed through an engagement with the hegemonic projects of the power bloc" (Jones, 2006, p. 76). Therefore, counter-hegemony is part of the hegemonic process, the reproduction of knowledge, values, ideologies, morals, and norms (Gramsci, 1971), and is dependent on one's own understanding of the manifestation of power evident in the form of an ideological struggle (Golding, 1992).

The concepts of emancipation and emancipatory intent are what separate critical theory from a critical view. Critical theorists view transcendence beyond the current situation as a type of freedom, or emancipation (Marcuse, 1964).

Emancipatory intent positions itself as wanting to change the status quo or have an empowering potential (R. Smith, 1993). The concept of counter-hegemony is significant for the study so that episodes of counter-hegemony can be identified and counter-hegemonic thinking and ways of practising can be made apparent.

3.5 Applying Critical Theory to Education

Critical theory assists this study with the identification of hegemony, illuminating the social practices that constitute early childhood teacher decision making discourse. Critical theory seeks a critical awareness of the taken-for-granted discourses and practices, and to aspire to think in counter-hegemonic ways (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Marcuse, 1964). The commitment of critical theory to emancipatory ideals (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Marcuse, 1964) enables this study to consider critical possibilities, therefore advancing thinking about teacher decision making in early childhood education.

In addition to using the ideas of Frankfurt school theorists (Adorno, 1973; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Marcuse 1964), the study draws on the work of contemporary theorists applying critical theory to education; namely, American critical pedagogues such as Apple (2004), Giroux (1988, 2003), and McLaren (2003), along with Australian academics who have used critical theory to analyse education (c.f. Gale, 1999; Luke, 1995; R. Smith, 1993; Sandra Taylor, 1997; Thomas, 2005b). The work from these contemporary theorists has been used to inform the theoretical framework of the study due to the particular nature of their critiques of education. More specifically, Apple (2004), Giroux (1988, 2003), and McLaren's (2003) work have provided detailed critical examinations of curriculum, hegemony, and ideology in educational contexts. Each has used critical theory to inform their own construction of critical pedagogy, all of which provide useful insights into the social worlds of power and privilege in education. Furthermore, the study acknowledges Australian academics Arthur and Sawyer (2009) and Woodrow and Press (2007) who have drawn upon critical theory to examine early childhood

education. There are benefits of applying critical theory to teacher decision making in early childhood education and these benefits are explained below in Section 3.6.

In this study, early childhood educational settings are viewed as “cultural sites that embody conflicting political values, histories, and practices” (Giroux, 2003, p. 52). With this view in mind, there are two concepts that require explanation. The first discusses power and hegemony in educational discourse, the second explains how counter-hegemony and critical possibilities can be applied to educational contexts.

Power within a contemporary educational discourse might be political, economic or cultural and reveal itself within the rules, policies and regulations, the syllabus, the hidden curriculum (embodying all the school expectations) and how these understandings are reinforced (Apple, 2004). Power links agency and structure to situations, and power determines how social relations are organised within places of education (Giroux, 1988). As a set of social practices, the concept of power has the potential to produce social forms whereby unequal modes of subjectivities and experiences are constructed and produced (Giroux, 1997). For example, assumptions are often made with regard to the neutrality of curriculum (Apple, 2004). Curriculum is inextricably linked to “social class, culture, gender and power” (McLaren, 2003, p. 88). In this way, curriculum can be studied from a political and cultural standpoint, where curriculum and teaching are forms of cultural politics (Giroux, 1988) and educational settings are “cultural terrain[s] characterized by varying degrees of accommodation, contestation, and resistance” (McLaren, 2003, p. 88). Another example of how social practices can position people is through the construction of policy in education, where the type of language used can legitimize certain practices (Thomas, 2005b).

Curriculum and pedagogy are seen as ideologically laden and potentially perpetuating dominant values (McLaren, 2003). The task of exposing ideologies and dominant discourses is an important part of the aim of the study, particularly with regard to finding out what influences teacher decision making. Contemporary critical theories (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2003, McLaren, 2003) can assist with this task as it focuses on the conditions behind social reproduction. For example, from a

critical view, a hidden curriculum (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001), that is, all unseen and embedded values stemming from the curriculum, can contain “ideologies and interests embedded in the message systems, codes, and routines that characterize daily classroom life” (Giroux, 2001, p. 72). The notion of the hidden curriculum is of interest for the study as once identified, discourses and ideologies embedded can be questioned and disrupted.

Important for this study is the notion that the political, cultural and social reproduction of the dominant culture can manifest itself in teachers’ ideology. Teacher ideology can embody dominant knowledge and views and “how individuals and groups produce, negotiate, modify, or resist them” (Giroux, 1988, p. 5). To investigate how power and dominance positions teacher decision making and legitimizes certain thoughts and practices, social practices will be critically analysed using discourse (Fairclough, 2001b). That is, sets of language practices found in common sense assumptions will be the focus of CDA. Early childhood settings are sites of potential cultural, political, and economic reproduction (Apple, 2004; Woodrow & Press, 2007).

In educational contexts, hegemony can give legitimacy to certain social practices and not to others (McLaren, 2003). Hegemony is the action undertaken by the dominant social group to reproduce economic, political and social power (Giroux, 1997). The concept of hegemony in educational discourse legitimizes certain knowledge and practice. What is required is a systematic way of asking probing questions, such as, what knowledge is privileged, whose knowledge is it and what space does it occupy? (Apple, 2004). In this study, this is achieved by conducting a CDA investigating hegemony in operation. By illuminating and questioning the position of dominance and the associated values as acceptable, right and natural, this study questions some of the foundations of teacher decision making raised by participants and policy analysis (Apple, 2004; Gibson, 1986). To identify and expose features of hegemony, this study provides insight into dominant influences, through discourse, on teacher decision making in the early childhood context.

Counter-hegemony turns hegemony on its head so that the conditions that were initially identified as hegemonic are identified and changed to become more equitable and democratic (Apple, 2004). One of the aims of the study is to illuminate counter-hegemony as theoretical possibilities. It does this by using a contemporary version of Marcuse's (1964) concept of emancipation. For example, contemporary critical researchers, such as Apple (2004) and Giroux (1988), use the notion of critical possibilities as one way to transcend dominant educational discourse in current times. Critical possibilities as a concept has a purpose beyond critiquing, as it aims to promote the language of possibility where new intellectual spaces are opened for educators to rethink pedagogical practice (Giroux, 1988). The empowering potential of critical possibilities comes about when notions of possibility are explored and subsequent opportunities are investigated. Critical research itself is a "form of conviction research...designed not just to explain or *understand* social reality, but to *change* it" (author's italics) (R. Smith, 1993, p. 77).

The process of critical possibilities involves common sense meanings being critiqued, unravelled and let go, allowing for new meanings and practices to be established. The concept of critical possibility is not an unachievable utopian ideal, which the notion of emancipation implies. Instead, critical possibilities can function practically by bringing new ways of thinking and theorising within education, and new ways to reconceptualise practice (Giroux, 1997). Next, research examples using critical theory in early childhood education are discussed.

3.6 Critical Theory and Teacher Decision Making

Critical theory is applied in this study to investigate teacher decision making. An interest in how dominant ideas and understandings are played out in the preschool curriculum context means that this study engages with how such discourses influence and shape teacher decision making. It focuses on discourses and ideologies that influence teacher decision making.

Critical theory has much to offer as an alternative to positivist and interpretative perspectives that have dominated early childhood educational research (cf. Bloch, 1992; Bloch & Popkewitz, 2001; Cannella, 1997, 2005; Dockett & Sumsion, 2004; Kessler, 2001; Kilderry, Nolan & Noble, 2004; Soto & Swadener,

2002). Critical theories have been used to examine early childhood teaching practices and curricula issues (c.f. Arthur & Sawyer, 2009; Bloch & Popkewitz, 2000; Kessler & Hauser, 2000; Woodrow & Press, 2007). For example, early childhood researchers have explored complex educational issues and asked probing questions such as, “Why is the field of early childhood education clinging to outdated, outmoded paradigms?” and “Are there other ways of framing early childhood education?” (Soto, 2000, p. 201).

There are three main benefits critical theory brings to understanding teacher decision making in early childhood education. One advantage is to bring awareness of salient issues within early childhood education by highlighting so-called objective perspectives and truths (Gramsci, 1971; Jipson, 2001). By doing this, critical theory identifies ideologies and ascertains whose interests are being served (Gramsci, 1971). Critical theory unearths the foundations of understandings and practices within educational processes and discourse to reveal dominant structures, discontinuities, contradictions and tensions (Giroux, 2001; Wink, 2000). The approach of revealing such dominant structures links with the aims of this study.

Critical theory views curriculum and pedagogy as revealing ideologies in action, and it questions the view that this knowledge is neutral. Early childhood educational contexts are more than sites of objective instruction; instead they can be places that uphold democratic values and social practices, or not (Giroux, 2001). An examination of the type of curricula decisions made by early childhood teachers at the preschool level can delineate ideologies and hegemony operating within discourse.

The second benefit critical theory brings to this study is to break with taken-for-granted assumptions and to resist dominant and disempowering discourses (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964; Woodrow, 1999). Critical theory is a useful theoretical platform for critiquing early childhood education as a whole, as it uncovers and disrupts ‘official knowledge’ (Apple, 2004; Bernstein, 1996; Kessler, 2001; Luke, 1995). Official knowledge, or common practices in educational contexts, is often not visible to those operating within educational contexts, “particularly those silenced by dominant social institutions

that tend to privilege a particular analysis, reading position, or practice” (Luke, 1995, p. 19).

Denaturalizing everyday language through the analysis of discourse makes it possible to make sense of the social construction of the early childhood curricula context where certain practices are commonplace. The type of critique critical theory brings to this study enables an interrogation and disruption of legitimized and dominant discourses. This study aims to question the prominence of dominant discourse, apparent through its ability to sustain dominance (Fairclough, 2001) operating in teacher decision making in early childhood education.

It has been illustrated in the early childhood context that concepts from critical theory can challenge grand narratives that reveal the purpose, agendas and content of certain curricular discourses (Cannella, 2005; Kessler, 2001). For example, in an Australian early childhood context, Arthur and Sawyer’s (2009) study used critical theory (Giroux, 1997) to consider other ways preschool boys located in a disadvantaged community in New South Wales could be educated. Building in Giroux’s notions of democracy, agency, education, and hope, the case study detailed the ways in which the teachers, families and children were involved in critical engagement to improve education. The study illustrated ways in which dominant discourses could be resisted and how new ways to work could be established.

The third benefit of critical theory for this study is the emancipatory or transformative aspect of critical theories (Giroux, 1997; Gramsci, 1971), a process of reconceptualising practice and imagining possibilities outside dominant paradigms (Woodrow, 1999). Research that engages critical theory aims to “empower teachers [and all stakeholders] at the level of political consciousness...to promote a more profound skepticism of the routine, common-sense understandings and practices of education” (R. Smith, 1993, p. 80). In one example of imagining possibilities of other ways of thinking and acting, in an article Woodrow and Press (2007) repositioned the child within an Australian policy context and viewed early childhood education as a site for the practice of democracy. They provided a discussion about how early childhood education could be re-envisioned within a

project of democracy, and subsequently discussed some of the other ways children's citizenship could be envisaged. The critical positioning within the studies outlined above provides examples of research in early childhood education that has questioned dominant perspectives. Significant for this study, critical theories enable analytical thinking about teacher decision making and questioning of common practices.

3.7 Limitations of Critical Theory

Limitations are inherent in theoretical frameworks and it is important to declare what these limitations might be so that they can be addressed. The limitation of critical theory addressed in this section is that it is claimed to be overly optimistic with its ambitions (Ellsworth, 1989).

Critical theory is seen by some to be overly optimistic, particularly in its claims of emancipation through ideological critique. For example, from a feminist perspective, Ellsworth (1989) argued that critical theory was over-zealous in the sense that one could not be sure that the emancipatory intent of critical theory was not subject to the same distortions from which it claimed to be free. In their defence, those who use critical theory recognise that no research methods are objective, including critical theory (Bloch, 1992). From a feminist reading, Lather (1995) argued that there was no place to be found where an innocent discourse of liberation existed. Emancipatory intent, Lather maintained, was paradoxical in the sense that it gave agency to the critical theorist (often male) rather than to the disadvantaged of whom they spoke.

Taking these arguments into account, it is recognised that all theoretical perspectives have limitations. This study draws on relevant aspects of critical theory to unearth discourses in action within the arena of early childhood teacher decision making. It does not strive to be universal in its claims as it is undertaken in a local context at a particular point in time, providing an analysis of three teachers' perspectives of their decision making along with a critical examination of key policies.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the general aims of critical theory and outlined relationships between critical theory, early childhood education, and the objectives of the study. It proposed that critical theory is a useful theoretical platform for the study, and illustrated how identifying and questioning the role of discourse within teacher decision making can provide critical knowledge. Key concepts were explained and the chapter outlined three main benefits critical theory brings to the study. Furthermore, the chapter argued that critical theory is a useful theoretical framework as it has the ability to question taken-for-granted understandings within early childhood teacher decision making and policy discourse.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design and methodology for this study. Section 4.1 outlines the methodological approach taken, critical discourse analysis (CDA). Details are provided about how CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) was used to identify the main influences on teacher decision making. Section 4.2 explains the analytic framework which draws from Fairclough's (2001b, 2003) CDA method. The discussion outlines how interview transcripts and policy documents are described, interpreted, and explained (Fairclough, 2001b). Data collection methods are outlined in Section 4.3, including how participants were selected, how interviews were conducted and how key policy documents were selected. Background information is provided on the three participants and their early childhood settings. Section 4.4 discusses issues of reliability and validity. Reflexivity is explained in Section 4.5 and ethics is discussed in Section 4.6. Limitations of CDA and the design are raised in Section 4.7, and Section 4.8 concludes the chapter.

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

This study uses Fairclough's (2001b, 2003) approach to critical discourse analysis. This section provides an overview of the definition, purpose, and application of CDA to the study. Critical discourse analysis is concerned with social relations and language, and the types of patterns apparent in language. Language plays a significant role within the study and CDA, as it is entwined in social practices and power in many ways, and is dialectically interconnected with many aspects of social life (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2001). For example, Wodak (2001) claims that:

Language indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not derive from language, but language can also be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term. (p. 11)

Therefore, language plays an important role in distilling information about social life. Through the analysis of discourse, language and their interrelationships, CDA will provide insight into teacher social practices (Fairclough, 2003). Social practices are "articulations of different types of social element[s] which are associated with

particular areas of social life - the social practice of classroom teaching,...for example” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 25).

The role of CDA is to investigate aspects of language in teacher and policy discourse, to examine the part that language plays in producing and reproducing social relations (particularly power and domination), along with the connections between these relations (Fairclough, 2001b). The process of CDA includes closely examining language through texts, looking for patterns in language use and investigating the inter-relationships within the discursive environment (Fairclough, 1995; Stephanie Taylor, 2001).

Critical discourse analysis is more than a linguistic method of analysis, it is a “transdisciplinary method of analysis” (Thomas, 2005b, p. 23), one where social changes can be considered (Fairclough, 2003). In this way, Fairclough’s (2001b, 2003) method of CDA is a sophisticated means to research communication, culture and societal beliefs (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). It is particularly suited for critical policy analysis as it enables a detailed investigation of the discursive relations between language and other social processes, including how language operates within power relations (Sandra Taylor, 2004). It differs from other CDA methods primarily because discourse is viewed as constituted as well as constitutive, whereby discourse itself reproduces and changes knowledge, identities, and social practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). What also separates CDA from other forms of discourse analysis is the way it can challenge (re)production and dominance in discourse (Fairclough, 2001a; Van Dijk, 2001).

In the study, dominance is described as social power, power that can perpetuate social inequalities; including political inequalities and those of class, culture, ethnicity, race, and gender (Van Dijk, 2001). Sandra Taylor (2004) argues that CDA is most beneficial as a form of policy analysis within education as it “allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes, and of how language works within power relations” (p. 436). For example, CDA is used to identify dominant influences on early childhood teacher decision making. It is also used to explore how dominant discourses are produced, legitimized and contested (Fairclough, 2001b; Gramsci, 1971).

Due to its connections with critical theory, CDA is suited to addressing notions of dominance, privilege, and hegemonic functions found in policy and discourse (Fairclough, 2001b; Gramsci, 1971). The type of CDA used in this study draws on Gramsci's notion of hegemony to analyse power relations, with domination viewed as a social practice that can occur with consent rather than coercion (Chouliaraki, & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001b). In this way, CDA is capable of highlighting dominant discourses that are operating, is able to show how these discourses position teacher thinking and practice, and can identify how relations of domination and social inequity are sustained (Fairclough, 2001). Critical discourse analysis can operate in both a constructive and critical way (Luke, 1995). It can be constructive in that it provides insight into social practices and it can be critical in the sense that it can interrupt everyday conversation and practice and bring issues of dominance and power into the open (Fairclough, 2001a; Luke, 1995).

To study both language and power, CDA views social life as a series of practices within networks of practice bound together by social relations that encompass power (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Social practices encompass three main features, these being: practices are "forms of production of social life"; they are situated "within networks of relationships to other practices", and they have a "reflective dimension" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 22). Identifying and analysing networks of relationships and how they connect to other practices are the ways in which critical discourse analysts capture dynamics of power relations, both internal and external (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Critical discourse analysis probes power relationships among individuals, social structures, and institutions (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 2001). A social problem is investigated through the linguistic aspect of discourse in CDA, hence its approach commences with the descriptive stage (first stage) where linguistic features of a text are described (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003). The second stage interprets social interactions and the third CDA stage draws on social theories to explain the social conditions (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003). The three stages are outlined in more detail in Section 4.2.

Critical discourse analysis uses both micro analysis (including linguistic, semiotic and different forms of linguistic analysis) and macro analytic tools to describe how social formations and relations of power can be constructed (Fairclough, 2003; Luke, 2002). It aims to better understand “how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 203). As a method, CDA assists by uncovering the beneficial and detrimental effects of dominant discourses (Fairclough, 1995) on teacher decision making in the preschool context. A key concept of CDA is that discourse is considered to be data (Wetherall, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). The way that this study uses discourse as data is now explained.

4.1.1 Using discourse as data.

Discourse, in the form of data, identifies types of knowledge that may be privileged along with corresponding concepts, values, and beliefs that might be legitimized through such privileging (Fairclough, 2003; Gramsci, 1971). Through everyday language, discourse reveals meanings beyond the surface level and the functional meanings of words (Marcuse, 1964). Discourse assists with explaining the relationships among discursive practices (in this study the data consists of teacher interview transcripts and policies) to show how they are interconnected with other aspects of life (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse can illustrate “non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and, domination and in ideology” (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 229). Discourses are more than ways of representing commonalities and stability; they are also based on dialectical relationships between the discourse and other elements of social life (Fairclough, 2003). The dynamic nature of discourse is recognised, where discourses are continually shifting and boundaries are ever-changing (Gee, 2011). Discourses are identifiable through words and concepts within texts that are specific to that particular context or field of knowledge (Fairclough, 2003; Luke, 1995). Moreover discourses are not neat and predictable, and power and dominance are not always imposed from above (Van Dijk, 2001). This can make the task of investigating discourse a difficult one.

Investigating how discourses are manifested and (re)produced in early childhood curricula environments reveals how teachers deal with these influences in their curricular decisions. More importantly, CDA will provide insight into how teachers make connections between texts, texts being the “language ‘product’ of discursive processes, whether it be written or spoken language”, and social processes (Fairclough, 1995, p. 96). These connections may not always be obvious to the people who produce and interpret those texts (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, CDA is a useful method to identify, describe and capture the discursive nature of discourse in this study of three preschool teachers and their policy context.

Notably, other studies using CDA and discourse as data in the context of preschool education have not been found. In their review of CDA studies undertaken in education, Rogers et al. (2005) commented that studies examining issues with elementary (primary) education or with children aged less than 10 years constituted about 15% of the studies reviewed. Their review of 46 theoretical and empirical articles found no studies conducted in a preschool context using CDA; however there were four studies that took place in a primary school context that used CDA. Thus, this study is unusual because it adopts CDA to investigate discourse in three early childhood education contexts.

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis: Data Analysis Technique

As discussed in Chapter 3, Fairclough’s approach to CDA draws heavily from critical theory, which in turn shapes the discourse analysis method used. His approach to CDA is well-placed with CT, as the aim of providing insights into power through the analysis of language, is consistent with the intentions of critical theory. Fairclough’s (1995, 2003) work informs the technical approach of CDA. His 1995 work provides more in-depth systems for analysing discourse than does his later work (2003), but Fairclough’s 1995 work is necessary for the analytic method adopted. Detailed theoretical understandings of the concepts of language and power, in relation to discourse and how social relations are affected, are outlined in Fairclough’s 2001b work. Therefore, Fairclough’s 1995, 2001b and 2003 work guides the approach to CDA. The steps of analysis taken are:

1. *Description*, which is concerned with formal properties of the text, including vocabulary, grammar and textual structures;
2. *Interpretation*, which is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction, and;
3. *Explanation*, which is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context. (Adapted from Fairclough, 2001b, pp. 21-22)

Within CDA, discourse can be captured at the micro, meso, and macro levels. At the micro level, relational values of vocabulary and expression in text are analysed. At the meso level social interaction is analysed, and at the macro level, ideology and the effects of dominance in a particular context are analysed. The three-staged CDA process undertaken is outlined in Table 4.1. The research questions guiding the CDA are: What influences early childhood teachers' curricula decision making? To explore this question further, two sub questions guided this study:

1. How do dominant discourses position early childhood teacher decision making?
2. How are curriculum content and pedagogy described and represented in key Victorian early childhood policy documents in 2004, prior to the introduction of mandated curricula frameworks?

4.2.1 Description of texts.

The first step of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) identifies and describes the language features present within the text. The description stage of CDA focuses on vocabulary, grammar and textual structures with the aim of seeing what is present in the text and the “discourse type(s) the text is drawing from” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 92). Addressing the questions in the description stage (outlined in Table 4.1) enabled a description of the texts, i.e., interview transcript data and key policies. Adding to the background information for the CDA was the identification of four discourses found in the literature

Table 4.1 Stages of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (adapted from Fairclough, 2001b, 2003).

Stage 1: Description of Texts	Stage 2: Interpretation of Texts	Stage 3: Explanation of Texts
<p><i>Vocabulary</i></p> <p>(i) What experiential values do words have? What classification schemes are drawn upon? Are there words which are ideologically contested?</p> <p>(ii) What relational values do words have?</p> <p>(iii) What expressive values do words have?</p> <p>(iv) What metaphors are used?</p>	<p><i>Discourse Type</i></p> <p>(i) What dominant discourses are participants in this context drawing on?</p> <p>(ii) How does dominant discourse operate?</p>	<p><i>Social Determinants</i></p> <p>(i) What power relations at situational, institutional and societal levels help shape the discourse?</p> <p>(ii) How are dominant discourses represented and reproduced in key early childhood policies?</p> <p>(iii) How is dominant discourse influencing and positioning early childhood teacher decision making?</p>
<p><i>Grammar</i></p> <p>(i) What experiential values do grammatical features have?</p> <p>(ii) What relational values do grammatical features have?</p> <p>(iii) What expressive values do grammatical features have? For example, are there important features of expressive modality?</p>	<p><i>Presuppositions</i></p> <p>(i) Identify propositional assumptions through universal statements within the data.</p>	<p><i>Ideologies</i></p> <p>(i) What elements of discourse have an ideological character?</p> <p>(ii) What are the ideological effects of dominant discourse/s in this context?</p>
<p><i>Textual Structures</i></p> <p>(i) What large scale structures does the text have?</p>	<p><i>Context</i></p> <p>(i) What discourses are marginalised, silenced, and excluded from the text?</p>	<p><i>Effects</i></p> <p>(i) How is discourse positioned in relation to struggles at the situational, institutional, and societal levels?</p> <p>(ii) How is dominant discourse positioning other curricular discourses?</p> <p>(iii) How is discourse normative?</p> <p>(iv) How does dominant discourse preserve hegemony?</p> <p>(v) What curricula practices are being reproduced and legitimized?</p> <p>(vi) Are participants resistant to or compliant with dominant discourse?</p> <p>(vii) Who is privileged and who is disadvantaged by dominant discourse in this context?</p> <p>(viii) What is counter-hegemony in this context?</p>

(Chapter 2), child development (2.4.1), child-centred practice (2.4.2), developmentally appropriate practice (2.4.3) and accountability (2.4.4). These discourses provided some insight into dominant discourses operating in the Australian early childhood education context.

As part of the CDA description stage (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003), the experiential value of words play a part in the way they represent ideas coded in vocabulary. It is the ideological significance of words that are the focus at this point, in particular, the way words co-occur and how words are ideologically contested. Collocations are “distinctive patterns of co-occurrence or collocation between keywords and other such words” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 6). Collocations reveal the experiential value words have. The reason for identifying collocations is to examine how frequently cited words and terms within discourses could be used in different ways (Fairclough, 2003). To do this, patterns of co-occurrence of words in texts were examined by identifying which words “most frequently proceed and follow any word in focus” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 131).

One way to describe modes of grammar is through modality. Modality is a significant concept within CDA as it is able to highlight both the “relational and expressive values in grammar” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 105). The reason for considering modality is to access “speaker or writer authority” to find out their “representations of authority” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 105). Modality is evident in relational words such as “can, will, may, must, would and should or obviously, evidently...usually, often, always”, and these words reveal values people hold through their levels of commitment (Fairclough, 2003, p.168). Modality, in the forms of epistemic modality and deontic modality are devices used in the study to examine power and authority through the analysis of language and discourse (Fairclough, 2003). Epistemic modality is evident in statements of fact and truth or obligation, whereas deontic modality is where necessity and obligation are apparent (Fairclough, 2003; Thomas, 2005b). The relational value of words in the description stage (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) considers the way in which words are selected by the language user; for example, how words produce social relations between people (Fairclough, 2001b).

Expressive values of words are also ideologically significant as they can reveal the way people express themselves, “drawing on classification schemes which are in part systems of evaluation, and ...contrasting schemes embodying different values in different discourse types” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 98). Metaphors are another aspect of vocabulary analysed as part of the description stage. Metaphors reveal the different ways in which people describe events and experiences (Fairclough, 2001b). Of importance is the way teachers refer to one experience compared to another experience, and the type of language they chose to use.

Part of analysing grammar involves focusing on the experiential values, relational values, and expressive values. Three modes of a sentence are featured in Fairclough’s description stage, these being: declarative, grammatical question, and imperative. All three modes contribute to positioning people in different ways (Fairclough, 2001b). The type of use of pronouns within texts can be analysed to ascertain how people use inclusive pronouns, such as “we” and “you” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 106).

Becoming familiar with the data started from the transcription phase, where each audio recording was played several times to transcribe the interview data into its written form. Readings of the text were conducted several times to begin to describe the features of discourse types. Discourses were distinguished by features of vocabulary and grammar and by both the ways in which they represent language and “by their relationship to other social elements” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129). For example, discourses in texts are identified by the main “themes they represent and by the “particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129).

As part of the description phase of the CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003), initial textual analysis was conducted on each of the teacher’s interview transcripts. It involved identifying and describing vocabulary and discourse types evident in the interview transcripts. I familiarised myself with the interview transcript data by closely reading all the interview data several times to gain a sense of the participant’s (teachers) understandings of curriculum, and potential influences on

their decision making. As this analysis was occurring, it was evident early on that terms from the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) discourse were present to a large extent and curriculum terms were present to a lesser extent. To investigate this observation further, a search was undertaken of terms that comprise DAP and curriculum in the interview transcripts using the 'find' feature in word processing software to ascertain their frequency. This initial analysis encompassed references to DAP and curriculum if the searched terms were apparent. At this stage in the process it did not cater for any references made to a particular discourse if the concept was not named.

Terms from DAP and curriculum were highlighted in different colours on the hard copy of the interview transcripts, and transcript segments were located out in a new document for analytic purposes. The search for terms associated with developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) included: development/al/ally, developmental areas/domains, developmental observations, children's developmental needs, and references made to social, emotional, cognitive, or physical (fine and gross motor) development, and developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), children's developmental needs, children's needs, children's interests, choice, readiness, play, and discovery. Curriculum terms were derived from the 2004 Victorian Key Learning Areas (KLAs), including the arts, English, health and physical education, languages other than English, mathematics, science, studies of society and environment, and technology (DET, Victoria, 2004). Curriculum terms searched for included: literacy, numeracy, maths, science, technology, social science, physical education, health, art, creativity, and music. Art and creativity terms searched for in the interview data included: art, craft, creativity, draw, drawing, paint, painting, and collage. Literacy terms searched for in the interview data included: literacy, language, literature, reading, writing, alphabet, book/s, letter/s, phonic/s, story, stories, and Letterland. Music terms searched for in the interview data included: (to) sing, singing, song/s, and instrument/s. A full list of curricula terms searched for is provided in Table B.9 (Appendix B).

Discourses were examined through the examination of the frequency of citations, textual features, and prominence of "main themes" apparent in the text

(Fairclough, 2003, p. 129). Words and terms used frequently are listed in Tables B.8 and B.9 (Appendix B). Segments of discourse related to curricula decision making were examined across both sets of data, the interview transcripts and key policies. Not all linguistic analysis techniques that comprise CDA are used due to the specific focus and scope of the study. For example, there is a substantial range of linguistic features available to CDA, such as turn-taking and schemata (where modes of social behaviour are analysed) (Fairclough, 2001b), which are not used as they do not contribute to addressing the research questions.

The description stage of CDA connects with the next stages of the CDA process, interpretation of texts, (Section 4.2.2) and explanation of texts (Section 4.2.3).

4.2.2 Interpretation of texts.

The second stage of the critical discourse analysis focuses on participant understanding of texts and their context as well as the analyst's interpretation of texts (Fairclough, 2001b). This stage of analysis provides further understanding of how discourse operates within a particular context. The interpretation process is conducted through a close analysis of the text, examining how discourses are represented, intentionally and unintentionally. The process of interpreting text involved asking questions about discourse type, presuppositions, context and difference, and considering change that occurred in each text (Fairclough, 2001b). The questions asked of the text and features that are highlighted, such as propositional statements are listed in Table 4.1.

Interpreting discourse involved the examination of the situational context and the discourse type. For example, presuppositions were examined through propositional assumptions, evident through universal statements within the texts (Fairclough, 2001b). Presuppositions are “not properties of texts, they are an aspect of text producers' interpretations of intertextual context” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 127). A presupposition can take the form of a propositional assumption and can appear as fact. For example, a propositional assumption can be “asserted and established in one part of a text, and then presupposed” in the rest of the text (Fairclough, 1992, p. 121). One process conducted in the study was to search interview transcripts for statements made by teachers, identifying propositions such

as: I think, I believe, one must, one should statements along with metaphors such as ‘early teachers are like...’; and statements that were universal in their nature, for example, ‘all children need to play’. This process enabled an examination of common ways teachers described how decision making occurred. It helped to understand common ways the three teachers represented curricula decision making and how these understandings might be normalised (Fairclough, 2001b).

4.2.3 Explanation of texts.

The third stage of CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) explains the relationship between discursive processes and wider social processes. The purpose of this stage is to analyse social interaction “showing how it is determined by social structures” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 135). To explain social conditions and social change, this stage is used to “bring together linguistically-orientated discourse analysis and social and political thought relevant to discourse and language” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 62). The process of explanation involves understanding the contextual situation, for example, the types of discourse used within text and the differences and changes that occur throughout the interaction (Fairclough, 2001b).

Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; 2003) uses genre, orders of discourse, and discursivity in the explanation stage. Genre in CDA refers to a socially accepted way of using language when engaged in a particular social practice (Fairclough, 1995). For example, to understand genre in the context of this study, a teacher might have a particular style or mode, using particular language to teach a preschool class. Genre is where language, style, and activity type all become “conventionalized for particular categories of activity in particular types of social situation[s]” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 14). Another analytical device used in CDA is analysing discursivity in discourse. A discursive event is the way “text producers and interpreters draw upon the socially available resources that constitute the order of discourse” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 10). The concept of orders of discourse is used in CDA to depict the way discourses, genres, and styles comprise the “discoursal aspect of a network of social practices” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 220). Each of analytical devices used in CDA, discussed above, assist to explore the effects of power relations at the situational, institutional, and societal levels (Fairclough,

2001b). The relationship between discursive processes and wider social processes is examined through asking questions about social determinants, ideologies, and effects. The process used to analyse the data in Stage 3 was to systematically follow the steps and questions outlined in Table 4.1.

In summary, Section 4.2 explained the data analysis technique. It outlined the three-staged CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) technique, description, interpretation and explanation, used in the study. The next section explains how the data were collected for the study.

4.3 Data Collection

This section outlines how the data were collected, including how the participants and the key early childhood policy documents were selected, the timeline of the study and my role of researcher in data collection activities. The data sources were selected because of their ability to reveal insight into the discursive practices of early childhood teacher decision making, and how discourses may contribute to or hinder the reproduction of dominant discourses. The data were selected on their ability to answer the three research questions (Refer to Section 4.2. for research questions).

4.3.1 Participant selection and the Victorian early childhood context.

The three participants were early childhood teachers working at the preschool level (the year before formal schooling for children aged four to five years) within the state of Victoria. The preschool year was selected as a focus as, unlike primary and secondary schools at the time of data collection in 2004, preschools in Victoria did not have a state-mandated curriculum framework to govern curricula decisions. Across the country at this time, preschool education was undergoing rapid curricula change (Walker, 2004). In addition to stand-alone kindergartens, policy changes meant that state-funded preschool programs have been located within school settings since 1998 (Department of Education Victoria, 1998).

Early childhood teachers working within a Victorian State-funded preschool program for children aged four to five years were invited to participate in this study. Letters were sent to approximately 20 different schools, preschools and child-care centres across Melbourne, inviting qualified early childhood teachers to participate

(Refer to Appendix A for Expression of Interest letter). Purposeful sampling (Silverman, 2006) was used as the aim was to illustrate the influences informing teacher decision making. The intention of purposeful sampling is to carefully select a particular case or example, based on aim of the study to illustrate a particular practice or feature (Silverman, 2006). The sample size in this study was deliberately kept small as the intention was to gather insightful data from a series of in-depth interviews, where issues could be explored at length.

The main criteria for participant selection were for teachers to have early childhood qualifications and be teaching at the preschool level within Victoria. Participants were invited to participate in a series of interviews and needed to be interested in talking at length about early childhood curricular issues. The aim was to include a participant from each of the three main Victorian preschool contexts: a stand-alone sessional kindergarten (not attached to a school or child care centre); a state-funded preschool program operating within a long day care setting; and a preschool located in a school context. The rationale for selecting three preschool teachers from three different preschool sites was to show a range of curricular influences across each educational site. Each site had its own history and embedded ideologies affecting teacher decision making (Press & Hayes, 2000; Walker, 2004). The preschool sites selected were not representative of all Victorian preschool programs or of teacher decision making.

Three female teachers expressed interest in participating in the study. Once an early childhood teacher from each preschool site had accepted the invitation to participate, consent forms were signed by the participating teachers and their managers. I made contact with all three participants via telephone to arrange the interviews. It was at that point I clarified the interview process and the scope of their participation. In the case of two participants, group employer managers signed consent forms as participating teachers reported directly to the managers. Relevant government departments were approached before any data were collected. The Department of Human Services (DHS) Victoria and the Department of Education and Training (DET) Victoria, both State governing departments in 2004, were contacted to ensure permission was granted. The DHS did not grant prior consent,

but required notification once the study was completed (Email Correspondence, Appendix A.7). The DET confirmed that they did not oversee non-government schools in relation to research activities as it was the individual school's concern (Email Correspondence, Appendix A.8). Queensland University of Technology Human Research and Ethics Committee approval to interview participants was granted (QUT Reference Number 3339H, Email Correspondence, Appendix A.9).

4.3.2 Participants and early childhood settings.

This section provides a brief description of the participants' professional background, an overview of each of the settings and the management structure of each setting. The descriptions of each of the three settings are taken from my field notes. Pseudonyms are used for all three participants and sites. The participants were Christiana, Lily, and Ruth each is now discussed in turn to provide a brief description of their professional experience and their preschool settings.

Christiana was in her early twenties and a recent graduate of a four year early childhood teaching degree that entitled her to teach children from birth to five years. She was a beginning teacher and had been appointed to her first preschool teaching position a couple of months before the interviews took place, at a long day care setting. Christiana was employed by Winter Court Childcare Centre which was located in a suburban area of Melbourne. Winter Court Childcare Centre was owned by the local council and was under the management of a local non-profit group employer, *Care-for-Children*.

Winter Court Childcare Centre was a purpose-built long day care setting with a long corridor down the middle of the building, with all children's rooms running off it. Next to the infants room, there was a toddlers' room (children from 2 to 3 years) and the kindergarten room (children from 3 to 5 years), where Christiana taught. There were usually 23 or so children aged 3 to 5 years who attended the preschool program. The coordinator of Winter Court Childcare had an office near the entrance of the centre and at the end of one corridor was a staff room. There was a sectioned-off outdoor yard (garden) for each age group of children. Indoors, the kindergarten room had an area for tables and chairs, a construction area, an art area, a mat area located in the corner for group times and play, and bed bases and

pillows were stored alongside the wall as children had a rest time each day (A.K., Fieldnotes, August 2004).

Lily, an experienced child care worker, began her career in maternity hospitals and then moved into long day care settings, which was followed by teaching within a sessional kindergarten. Lily completed a Diploma in Child Care Studies (four years part-time) at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and had worked as an assistant coordinator at a child care centre for several years. Lily stopped full-time work for a number of years to raise her own children and returned to part-time study and completed an early childhood teaching degree, qualifying her to teach children from birth to five years of age (preschool age). Lily was in her second year of preschool teaching at the time the interviews were conducted. She was teaching and directing a sessional (stand-alone) state government funded kindergarten, Green Street Kindergarten, in suburban Melbourne. Green Street Kindergarten was over 40 years old and was established by the Victorian state government, which owned the building. A local non-profit group employer, Care-for-Children, managed Green Street Kindergarten along with several other State-funded kindergartens and child care centres across the region. Care-for-Children employed Lily and other kindergarten staff. A parent-run committee was responsible for overseeing the kindergarten's daily needs. A local council maintained the building and grounds, whereas its operation was regulated by the Department of Human Services, Victoria.

The classroom in Green Street Kindergarten was a large open space divided by waist-high book shelves, child-sized tables, and painting easels. In one area of the kindergarten there was a painting and art area, in another area a home corner and construction building area with blocks, and a reading corner and writing table were located in a separate area. Outdoors, the garden contained a large covered sandpit, a digging patch, climbing equipment, a cubby house in the centre of the yard, a set of swings and a shed (A.K., Fieldnotes, June 2004).

Ruth had over 30 years teaching experience and was educated at an interstate university. Her degree qualified her to teach children from birth to 8 years, which includes the first few years of primary school education in Victoria. Ruth directed

an early learning centre that was part of an independent school, Hillbridge Grammar School in suburban Melbourne. Ruth divided her time between teaching and managing. Hillbridge Grammar School was located on-site at a primary and secondary school and Ruth reported directly to the school principal and school council.

The Early Learning Centre at Hillbridge Grammar School was located in a building separate from the rest of the school and comprised several rooms that accommodated the two pre-preparatory (preschool) classes and two kindergarten groups of children aged three and four years. The early learning centre was part of a school that was well resourced, with many attractive play and learning areas set up for the children. There was a 'writing and literacy' area with books and puppets, a construction area, a computer for children's use and an office play area. The early learning program at Hillbridge Grammar School offered all children specialist classes for music, languages, physical education and library sessions (A.K., Fieldnotes, October 2004).

4.3.3 Data collection timeframe.

The data for the study were collected during 2004. The key early childhood policy documents gathered in 2004 were current policies guiding Victorian preschool settings. However, there were some follow-up discussions and correspondence with the teachers that took place in 2005. The data collection time frame for each teacher was originally intended to occur during one Victorian school term (approximately 11 weeks). This allowed Term 2 for data collection at Winter Court Childcare Centre, Term 3 for Green Street Kindergarten, and Term 4 for Hillbridge Grammar School. The original intention was for teacher interviews to be held fortnightly to coincide with the teachers' allocated planning time. This approach would have enabled me to examine a complete subset of data and be completely immersed with one participant at a time. However, the sequencing of the interviews did not work out exactly as intended, as described in Section 4.3.4.

Classroom practice was not observed as the focus was teachers' accounts of, and understanding of, curricular influences. However, I did spend some initial time in participants' preschool classrooms informally observing the context. These times

were made apparent to the families of the preschool children via a notice sent to all parents (Parent Information Notice, Appendix A6).

4.3.4 Semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1988; Silverman, 2006) were used to gather data from teacher participants. Interviews were scheduled across the duration of a Victorian school term (approximately 11 weeks), enabling me to get to know participants and establish trust. This timeframe allowed for complex issues to be explored at length and revisited if required. Each teacher was interviewed at least three times for a minimum of four hours in total. A total of 21 hours of interview transcripts were collected and transcribed; 11 hours of interviews with Lily, 6 hours with Christiana and 4 hours with Ruth. The reason for the difference in interview hours was the teachers' preference for more or less interview time along with my decision to determine the point when I thought that the interview questions had been adequately addressed. For example, Christiana had a preference for fewer interview sessions, due to her teaching commitments, yet was prepared to talk for over two hours in one session. Once Christiana responded to all the interview questions, and her responses began to repeat information gathered in earlier interviews, the sessions came to an end. This was similar for Ruth. Ruth was busy managing and teaching in her setting and agreed to five interviews initially, although this changed as the interview sessions unfolded. When the interview questions were addressed, we both agreed that the information required had been provided. As a past undergraduate student of mine some years before, Lily was comfortable discussing curricula issues with me. It took five interviews sessions before all the questions were adequately addressed. Interviewing was chosen as I considered it the best way to elicit early childhood teachers' responses to preschool curriculum issues. Interviews were considered to be interactional events, co-produced between the interviewee and interviewer, where both draw on everyday understandings (Silverman, 2006). Interviewees are not seen as "passive vessels of answers", but rather active participants with multiple identities bringing their own biases and subjectivities (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 152). Therefore, interviews are "inter-subjective" occasions where the transcription is the product of a co-constructed

event (Kvale, 1996, p. 45). Interview questions asked by the interviewer (me) were not seen as “neutral invitations to speak”; instead they were viewed as shaping the interviewees’ categories of talk (Baker, 2004, p. 163). An interview is a form of encounter, one where people negotiate and interpret information (Schostak, 2006). With this in mind, to provide scope for participants to talk about their decision making and related issues, semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1988; Silverman, 2006) were used. Semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1988; Silverman, 2006) allowed for both prepared questions to be asked and questions arising from participant responses. The technique of semi-structured interviewing allowed me to do some probing of topics arising during interviews, as well as elicit information using pre-prepared questions that were consistent with the aims of the study (Silverman, 2006). Interviews were not “an open and dominance-free dialogue between egalitarian partners, but a specific hierarchical and instrumental form of conversation” (Kvale, 2005, p. 485). For example, my positioning as a former early childhood teacher, and as an academic in early childhood education, was considered during the interviewing process. I acknowledge that as an early childhood academic I bring certain preconceived understandings and constructions about the topics to be discussed in interviews, along with awareness of subjectivities and any power privileges my professional ‘positionality’ (Osgood, 2006a, p. 193) afforded me. My positionality, including my professional experience, gender, age, and socio-economic background as a researcher affects data collection activities (Stephanie Taylor, 2001). Relationships of power are present in all data collection activities, regardless of efforts to reduce them (Pillow, 2010). Hence, the interview transcripts were treated more as accounts rather than as reports, where accounts are a form of interviewees accounting for their understanding of a particular topic (Baker, 2004). Reports, as descriptions of interview transcripts, is not useful here as reports and ‘reporting’ conjure up elements of ‘truth’, particularly in the ways the terms contain assumptions about interviewing being dominance-free and factual (Kvale, 2005).

During the interview process I was aware, as researcher and interviewer, to minimise leading questions as these can elicit responses that are biased (Kvale, 1996). However, qualitative interviewing can lend itself to deliberately use leading

questions, depending on the purpose of the research, as such questioning can lead the topic in different directions that are worthwhile (Kvale, 1996). To ensure that the interviewing questioning process was made explicit, interviewer questions and comments that precede a participant's response are recorded and analysed.

The interview questions were guided by the following broad research questions:

- From where do you take curricula guidance? (RQ1)
- What theories or practices influence your curricula decision making? (RQ1, RQ2)
- What views or theories influence your decision making and has your position changed over time? (RQ1)

A list of guiding questions was prepared in advance (see Appendix B: Initial Participant Interview Questions) and a set of questions was developed later for a series of three interviews (Appendix B: Participant Interview Questions for Three Interviews). The interview questions were kept simple and brief (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were structured so that introductory and process questions and general questions about the topic under investigation (Kvale, 1996) were asked in Interview one, with more specific questions about influences on early childhood teachers' curricula decision making asked in Interviews two and three. The time between interviews was spent developing insightful interview questions focusing on the important issues raised by each participant at the previous interview. Between each interview I listened to each interview and transcribed them, and typed out any field notes as background information. The teachers talked about how they conceptualised and what influenced their teaching decisions. The meaning participants gave to their teaching actions provided a key to understanding their curricula decisions.

Appropriate questioning protocols were taken into account when interviewing. These included being an active-listener, asking for clarification from participants if the response was not clear, not jumping to conclusions, avoiding personal prejudices, and taking time to listen to what participants were saying (Seidman, 1991). During each interview, responses were confirmed by asking cross-

checking questions to ensure participants' perspectives were clearly recorded and consistent with their other responses (Minichiello et al., 1995). I was aware that questions were framed within my professional 'positionality' (Osgood, 2006a, p.193). This meant that I was aware of my own point of self-reference and how I helped to shape meaning. The following is an example of how meaning was shaped through the type of questions asked. In Excerpt 7.12 (Chapter 7), my questions may have affected Christiana's response. Asking Christiana '*What do you think the role of observing is in preschool?*' (Line 1) implied that the practice of observing young children is part of preschool practice and similarly, asking '*How much precedence do you think that you should give to observing?*' (Lines 1-2) showed that I placed some importance on this practice. Even though Christiana's statements in Excerpt 7.12 suggest she showed commitment to the DAP approach, I shaped understandings about DAP through the questions that I asked during the interviews.

Preschool sites are busy places and often teachers are also managers of the preschool, responsible for all administrative functions as well as teaching responsibilities. Such demanding work environments and commitments were taken into account when planning the interview schedule. Benefits for participants were that they could engage in dialogue about their curriculum practice and potentially further their pedagogical thinking with a critical colleague. Talking about and sharing teaching experiences as part of a critical reflection process can assist transformation of teaching practice (Church, 1998).

As part of my professional responsibility as researcher, I maintained ethical protocols. As an interviewer I was responsive to how my ethical conduct affected all parts of the interview process (Kvale, 1996; Schostak, 2006). In particular, there were three main ethical issues that I was aware of when interviewing; participant consent, confidentiality, and the consequences of the interviews (Kvale, 1996). Participant consent was discussed in Sub-section 4.3.1, and confidentiality and consequences of the interviews are now discussed.

Before the interviews commenced, participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained, and that I would not intentionally misrepresent them or their teaching practice (Kvale, 1996). I explained that a pseudonym would

be used instead of their first names, and the name of the early childhood setting where they worked would be referred to by a pseudonym. To ensure ethical interviewing practices, participant views were represented in a fair way, for example, by focusing on each participant's meaning, and ensuring that the consequences of the interviews were considered (Kvale, 1996; Schostak, 2006). For example, participants were assured that I would focus on the teacher decision making issues being investigated in the study and not take their comments out of context. Initially, it was envisaged that the three preschool teachers would be interviewed five or so times over the duration of one school term (over 11 weeks) allowing for an introductory interview, where I talked about research and the participants could ask questions about the study. The follow-up interviews would provide time for the issues raised by each participant to be explored, planning documents to be collected, emerging issues or themes to be uncovered, issues to be reflected upon and time for a final concluding interview. The actual interview schedule is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

When organising interviews, I found that all teachers' schedules were busy. Lily and Ruth both managed and were responsible for their settings, as well as overseeing their own preschool programs. However, taking into consideration the benefits the experience of talking about practice can bring, such as providing an opportunity to critically reflect on teaching (Church, 1998), it was decided that a minimum of three interviews would be conducted with each participant. Lily participated in five interviews, Christiana in three interviews, and Ruth participated in four interviews (Refer Appendix B: Interview Schedule). Christiana was a newly qualified teacher and was busy settling into her teaching role. To ensure interviews were useful and informative for both parties, I attempted to minimise repetition and be clear about the purpose of each interview.

Five face-to-face interviews were conducted with Lily over a six-month period, due to Lily rescheduling interviews. Two additional telephone conversations were held after interviews two and four, with hand-written notes taken. This exceeded the anticipated interview time provided for Lily, that of one school term consisting of approximately 11 weeks. Acknowledging that a series of interviews with different

participants about the same phenomenon will give rise to individual understandings and meaning (Baker, 2004), it was decided to continue with the interviews over the six month period as the interview data was enriched by further discussion with Lily. Lily’s interview time totalled 11 hours, with 10 hours of audio records that were transcribed. My previous teacher-student relationship with Lily meant that she was very comfortable discussing curricula issues with me. Because there was degree of familiarity between Lily and me, therefore I needed to be aware of the potential effect the previous relationship may have on the interviews. Knowing that I was not striving to achieve a “dominance-free dialogue between egalitarian partners” (Kvale, 2005, p. 485) in the interviews, but instead hold conversations where power and positionality (Osgood, 2006a) are present, I recognised the potential implications that may arise from my previous teacher-student relationship with Lily.

Interview Schedule:		
Interview 1	Week 2	Initial introductory interview
Interview 2	Week 4	Main research questions addressed
Interview 3	Week 6	Clarification of emerging issues
Interview 4	Week 8	Further clarification of emerging issues
Interview 5	Week 10	Concluding interview

Figure 4.1. Interview schedule.

Christiana was not known to me before the interviews Christiana participated in three lengthy interviews, resulting in six-and-a-half hours of audio recorded interview time. The initial goal of five interviews was amended to three as two interviews were rescheduled due to Christiana’s heavy teaching workload. Christiana preferred to spend additional time in each interview rather than create additional interviews. Therefore, Interviews 2 and 3 lasted 2 hours or more. Ruth, who was not known to me before the interviews, participated in three one-hour audio-recorded interviews over a two-month period. Notes were also taken from one other informal visit to the early learning centre (six months after the final

interview) to collect curriculum documentation. Three interviews amounted to an additional workload for Ruth as she had multiple preschool program responsibilities and several staff to manage.

The interviews were audio recorded, so that raw data could be examined closely and so that all discussions were preserved for further analysis (Merriam, 1988). Audio-records can be replayed and are useful as a record of the sequence of the interview (Silverman, 2006). Verbatim transcripts were typed for each interview and became interview transcript data. Useful transcription symbols were taken from Silverman (2006) and are listed in Appendix B. The task of transcribing verbatim enabled me to get close to the data and to have insight into each participant's understandings. To assist with the analysis process, key issues were highlighted at the time of the interview in the form of a written summary. These background notes provided additional information for clarification purposes, if needed. Data were transcribed soon after the interview so that participant responses were preserved as close to the interview time as possible. An excerpt from transcribed interview notes for each participant is located in Appendix B.

Participants were encouraged to use the time between the interviews to reflect critically and share their reflections in following interviews. This method proved to be beneficial as there were several occasions when participants made notes between interviews and used relevant curricula-related documents in the next interview. For example, Christiana shared her written personal philosophy and examples of observation and planning formats on one occasion, and Lily noted topic areas she wished to discuss at the next interview.

During the second and third interviews I provided both Lily and Christiana (Ruth had a copy) with a copy of the newly released *Beliefs and Understandings: A conversation about a curriculum framework* (Australian Early Childhood Association, Victorian Branch, Fell et al., 2003), with the intention that we could discuss the issues raised within this document. This ended up being very useful as Christiana provided a detailed verbal analysis of the document.

4.3.5 Curricula documents.

To assist with investigating influences on teacher decision making, curricula documents were provided by each teacher and some documents were gathered by me as researcher. The reason for the collection of curricula documents, such as program planning documents, centre policy documents and other relevant curricular artefacts, was that they could potentially be useful information to contextualise teachers' descriptions about curricula processes in the interviews (refer to Table 4.2 Curricula-Related Information).

These data were collected to provide background information about each teacher's setting, with a particular interest in the setting, teaching philosophies, mission statements and planning documentation. Curricula-related documents provided by the teachers were not considered texts to be analysed, yet were consulted during analysis as background information. The rationale for this was that curricula documents were to supplement teacher interview data, providing further understanding about points raised by teachers. All curricula-related documents collected are listed in Table 4.2.

4.3.6 Selection of regulative and governance policies.

Early childhood regulative and governance policy documents played a pivotal role as data in this study. Official documents, such as policy documents, do not use everyday language and do not only provide descriptions of social actions, but rather are "active in creating and shaping" policies (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 61). Policy documents are intended for a particular audience, in this case early childhood practitioners and stakeholders. Policy documents "construct their own kinds of reality" (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 73), and can shape and construct professional identities (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2005). As part of the investigation into power relations within education policy, policies are viewed as including more than "neutral technical language", instead encompassing power relations (Ball, 1994, p. 48). This section (4.3.6.) explains how policy documents were selected.

Table 4.2 Curricula-Related Information

Teacher	Lily	Christiana	Ruth
Preschool	Green Street Kindergarten	Winter Court Childcare Centre	Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Centre
Setting	Stand-alone sessional kindergarten	Long day care centre	Independent primary and secondary school
Curricula-related documents provided by participants	Green Street Kindergarten weekly program plan (completed program)	Winter Court Childcare Centre weekly program plan (blank proforma)	Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Centre weekly program plan (blank proforma)
	Lily's personal teaching philosophy statement	Christiana's personal professional philosophy	Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Centre philosophy statement
	Green Street Kindergarten newsletter	Samples of child observation records	<i>Letterland</i> ® 'Child-Friendly' Phonics resource booklet
	Green Street Kindergarten transition report: kindergarten to prep. (blank proforma)	Christiana's university placement planning documents, including: individual plan; child summary; Piaget/Parten framework; group plan; half-day plan	
	Newspaper article about Green Street Kindergarten		
	<i>Letterland</i> ® 'Child-Friendly' Phonics resource booklet		
	Union newsletter article written by Lily		
Preschool related documents gathered by me as researcher	'Care-for-Children' group employer philosophy	'Care-for-Children' group employer philosophy	Newspaper article about independent schools in Victoria. Tuohy, W. (11.Oct 2004). Dollar dazzlers: The Pressure on Independent Schools to Show Parents What they get for their Money has never been greater' <i>The Age</i> . 'Early learning in independent schools: Guide to preschool programs' (AISV, 2003)

A set of key early childhood policy documents guiding Victorian teacher decision making with regards to curricula decision making at the preschool level were selected from:

- State curriculum documents
- State policy documents
- Commonwealth policy documents
- Setting (school, childcare centre and preschool) policy documents.

The policy document selection was not finalised until after the teacher interviews were conducted, at the end of 2004. This ensured that documents selected were based on key policy documents that affected teacher decision making. This process allowed time to further understand the role and function that each of the documents played for the participants.

A set of criteria was established to assist in the selection of the policy documents that would be used as data. The criteria for document selection were based on the aims of the study to investigate the main influences on teacher decision making with regard to curriculum within Victorian preschool settings. The criteria for selection of policy documents were:

- (i) The relevance and significance of the policy document to teacher decision making, in particular, documents that could influence teachers' curricula decisions;
- (ii) The applicability of the policy document to the Victorian preschool context, that is, the year before formal schooling;
- (iii) The currency of the document in 2004 (policies developed within the 10 year period, 1994-2004).

Some policy documents were eliminated due to being out of date (not within the 10 year period 1994-2004). These were the *Standards for Centre Based Long Day Care* (Department of Education, Skills and Training [DEST], 1993) and the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines* (DHS, 1991). In addition to being out-of-date, the *Early Childhood Curriculum Guidelines* (DHS, 1991) did not prescribe curricula content, so were not as relevant as the title suggests.

Table 4.3 Participants' Regulatory and Governance Context in 2004

Teacher	Lily	Christiana	Ruth
Preschool Name	Green Street Kindergarten	Winter Court Childcare Centre	Hillbridge Grammar School
Type	Sessional kindergarten	Long day care centre	Early learning centre
Provision	Stand-alone site offering education for children aged from 4 years of age with one separate group for children aged 3 years	Offering care and education for children from three months of age to five years. One preschool group for children aged 4 years	Located within an independent primary and secondary school. Offering care and education for children from three years of age through to 18 years
Regulator	Department of Human Services (DHS)	(DHS)	(DHS) and Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET)
Governing Body	Care-For-Children Local group employer	Care-for-Children Local group employer	School Principal
	In conjunction with the Voluntary Parent Committee	Centre Director	School Council
	Local council (for building and works)	Voluntary parent committee	
	Victorian State Government (owners of the centre's property and land)	Local council (for building and works)	
Regulations, Acts and Policies	Children's Services Regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998)	Children's Services Regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998)	Children's Services Regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998)
	Children's Services Act (Victorian State Government, 1996)	Children's Services Act (Victorian State Government, 1996)	Children's Services Act (Victorian State Government, 1996)
	Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a)	Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a)	Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a)
	Victorian Preschool Program: Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria (DHS, 2002)	Victorian Preschool Program: Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria (DHS, 2002)	Victorian Preschool Program: Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria (DHS, 2002)
Quality Improvement Policy Documents	Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist, (DHS, 1996)	Putting Children First: Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) Handbook (NCAC, 2001)	Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist, (DHS, 1996)
Setting Policies	Care-for-Children Group Employer's Philosophy	Care-for-Children Group Employer's Philosophy	Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Centre Philosophy

Other policy documents regulating preschool settings within Victoria that were excluded from analysis were the *Information Privacy Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000) and the *Health Records Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001). These policies were excluded as they did not contain curricula related information. The Victorian document, *Beliefs and Understandings: A Conversation about an Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (Australian Early Childhood Association, Victorian Branch, Fell et al. 2003) was excluded from analysis as it was not an official policy document, rather a preliminary discussion document.

The regulatory and governance context was different across the three settings, even though each setting offered the Victorian funded year of preschool education. Table 4.3 shows the complex policy arrangements affecting the delivery of preschool curriculum within the State of Victoria in 2004. The regulation, ownership and governance arrangements results in different business structures, lines of management, and key policies affecting each setting. More important for the study, each of the three teachers had different policies regulating their setting, depending on their context.

Key policies regulating teacher decision making were grouped together for analysis, depending on their function. The key policies are listed on Table 4.4. This categorisation enabled a detailed analysis of the policies within their respective groups. The three types of policy documents analysed included: regulative and governance policies, quality improvement policies, and early childhood setting policies. The process undertaken to identify curricula content from related regulations, policies, practices, requirements, principles and indicators across all four regulative and governance policy documents was to search for sections relating to early childhood curriculum and program content. Policies included were those that regulated or guided teachers with curricula decision making, and could potentially affect curricula content. This categorisation included any policies pertaining to programming, syllabus, setting philosophy, curriculum and service provision for the education, learning and development of children. Policies that were excluded did not relate to teacher decision making, and did not include curriculum content.

Table 4.4 Key Policy Documents

Category	Title of Policy
Regulative and Governance Policies	(i) Children’s Services Act (Victorian State Government, 1996)
	(ii) Children’s Services Regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998)
	(iii) Victorian Preschool Program- Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria (DHS, 2002)
	(iv) Children’s Services Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a)
Quality Improvement Policies	(v) Putting Children First: Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) Handbook (NCAC, 2001)
	(vi) Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist (PQAC) (DHS, 1996)
Setting Policies	(vii) Care-For- Children, Group Employer Philosophy (2004)
	(viii) Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Philosophy (2004)

These policies focused on licensing and general operational regulations, staffing, facilities, security and safety guidelines, protective care, offences, compliance, funding, administration and relationships with children, families, staff interactions and managing quality processes. The criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of particular policies were guided by the information in the policy and whether it could assist with addressing Research Question 3: How are curriculum content and pedagogy described and represented in key Victorian early childhood policy documents in 2004, prior to the introduction of mandated curricula frameworks? In accordance with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001b; 2003), eight policies were selected but four the focus of analysis: the *Children’s Services Act* (Victorian State Government, 1996), the *Children’s Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998), the *Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria* (Department of Human Services [DHS], 2002), and the *Children’s Services Licensing and Operational Guide* (DHS, 2004a).

In summary, this section (4.3) has outlined how participants were selected, and provided some background information about the participants and the early childhood settings where they worked, the data collection timeframe, how the semi-structured interviews were conducted, curricula documents, and how the regulatory policies were selected. The next section (4.4) outlines how the study approached reliability and validity.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are essential components of a good research study. Each concept, reliability and validity is discussed, in turn. Reliability is where the method and tools used in the study to examine data is reliable (Stephanie Taylor, 2001). To seek reliability, the procedure, theoretical underpinnings, and the relevance of the data collected, were all cohesive. For example, an explanation of how the research questions were guided by critical theory was provided. Data collection and detailed analytic processes were described and explained. I was mindful of the particular reliability considerations necessary when conducting discourse analysis. For example, an important feature of reliability within discourse analysis research is the level of detail and quality of the transcription (Perakyla, 2004; Stephanie Taylor, 2001). The actual transcript should “work[s] as a form of validation because it is detailed enough and is able to capture what happened” (Stephanie Taylor, 2001, p. 323). The question of how much analysis was enough inevitably arose within the CDA (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). This question was dealt with by knowing when the analysis answered the research questions and met the aims of the study, and adequately captured what happened (Stephanie Taylor, 2001). The quality of the analysis remains with the analyst’s interpretation of the transcript and policy data (Dunne et al., 2005, p. 97). Therefore, to ensure analysis procedures were sound, the process was based on the following criteria:

- (i) The analysis should be based on a range of different textual features rather than just one feature;
- (ii) The analysis should be comprehensive. This does not mean that all aspects of the text have to be analysed in all available ways, which would be impossible in any case, but the questions posed

to the text should be answered fully and any textual features that conflict with the analysis should be accounted for;

- (iii) The analysis should be presented in a transparent way, allowing the reader, as far as possible, to ‘test’ the claims made.

(Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 173)

Validity ensures the study investigates what it says it has investigated (Kvale, 1996). It is about testing the truthfulness of analytic claims and assuring the accuracy of the interviews (Perakyla, 2004). The issue of validity depends on the experience of the researcher, the literature and the methods employed (Janesick, 1998). Within CDA, validity is not always “absolute and immutable” but researchers should be “open to new contexts and information which might cause the results to change” (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000, p. 164). Titscher et al. (2000) argue that open-endedness and intelligibility of data are vital for the analytic processes of interpretation and explanation within CDA; however, working within these conditions means that the process the analyst has taken must be explicit. The study strived to be credible by disclosing relevant procedures and intentions, including any main assumptions made to the participants. The fact that the study was critical was made clear to participants before the introductory interview by outlining that I would be critical about aspects influencing their practice, rather than take a critical view of their teaching. In the study, validity refers to ensuring a clear and consistent approach to research, in its methods and analysis, and ensuring claims made are reliable and accurate.

Generalizations within CDA take on different characteristics to those made within traditional, scientific studies. For example, the significance of the study’s findings rest with detailed discourse analysis work which brings about features that may be common to many different interactions and episodes (Stephanie Taylor, 2001). Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) is distinctive in its ability to make generalizations about data, as the technique examines discourse at the micro, meso, and macro levels. A feature of CDA is that empirical data is contextualised, with descriptive textual analysis taking place at the micro level (description of texts), an interpretation of data taking place at the meso level, and an

explanation of texts at the meso level (see Table 4.1 for more detail). Empirical data, such as recorded interviews and accompanying transcripts used in the study, are a useful form of data as they are a public record of a co-constructed event (Kvale, 1996). This public record allows others to access the raw data and to be able to follow the analytic moves made by me as researcher. For example, as a form of data collection, interviewing allows one to revisit the raw data (the recorded interviews and typed transcripts) to trace the steps taken during analysis, including the ways the data has been theorised and interrogated.

In this study, the number of policy documents analysed (4) and participants interviewed (3) are relatively small. As the participant size was small, it was not the intention to overstate findings from this select group of early childhood teachers. The study intended to conduct and provide a CDA of teacher decision making, being mindful of the three teachers' different educational contexts. The value of selecting three participants lies in the amount of detail and insight generated by each participant. It was envisaged that each participant would reveal a different curriculum decision making story, and how they were shaped and positioned by dominant discourse. The findings will be specific to the Victorian early childhood teaching context in 2004, yet at the same time will identify particular social practices that may exist and be relevant elsewhere (Stephanie Taylor, 2001). Rather than making generalisations from the study, ideas related to theoretical positioning, questioning, methods used, and particular features of teacher decision making may be applicable to other contexts where teachers are working with children aged 4-5 years. For example, the way in which power, authority, and accountability affect teacher decision making in other sectors and contexts holds relevance to those not only in early childhood education, but to teachers and policy makers in other contexts. Thus, the significance of the findings might be specific to a particular context, but the methods, theoretical questioning, and findings may be worthy of consideration due to their uniqueness, relevance and transferability to other contexts (Stephanie Taylor, 2001).

4.5 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a process whereby research is strengthened by the self-reflexive practices of the researcher (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Rogers et al., 2005). The concept of reflexivity assists with validity in that one's subject positioning is made apparent (Pillow, 2010). An essential feature of my role as researcher within CDA is to reflect critically on my own theoretical position, and to become more accountable for interpretations (Fairclough, 2001b; Gill, 1995). This includes "taking in the critical commentary of others on one's theoretical practice" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 67) to prevent "importing untheorised assumptions about society" (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 139). Knowing one's own point of self-reference, and what shapes one's ideology and belief systems, reveals the power of social practice and human knowledge, both a product of, and force in, shaping social reality (Giroux, 2001).

In line with CDA (Fairclough, 2001b), critical theory rejects positivist notions of objectivity and neutrality and is concerned with how researchers turn the framework back on themselves in the methodological and theoretical sense (Rogers et al., 2005). This activity requires a fine balance of researcher positioning, a positioning that can be responsive to others' social values, professional identity, relationships and ethical considerations (Giroux, 2004).

The CDA concept of members' resources (Fairclough, 1992, 2001b) is useful and is applied to my positioning as analyst. Being aware of my members' resources involves acknowledging ways in which my ideology, on which teacher decision making knowledge and practice is based, has been shaped by common sense assumptions and values shared by others in early childhood education. On first glance, common sense assumptions are just that, assumptions. However, according to Fairclough (2001b), common sense assumptions reveal ideologies that are particular to specific contexts. Therefore, common sense assumptions are "embedded in particular conventions" and can illustrate "familiar ways of behaving which take [these] relations and power differences for granted" (p. 2). Therefore, to ensure that I undertook a reflexive approach in the study, I critically considered the familiar understandings that I had of teacher decision making in early childhood

education. As part of this process of being a reflexive researcher, I aimed to make the research processes transparent and to critically question my research actions. For example, there is a commentary section in the interview transcript analysis revealing terms and concepts raised by me as the interviewer. These notes assisted me in knowing what terms and concepts I may have focused on in interviews.

As part of being a reflexive researcher, I have considered how the asymmetries of power may have an impact within in the interview process itself (Kvale, 2005). Drawing on Kvale's (2005) insights about the unspoken rules within interviews, where he suggests that the "interviewer's research project and knowledge interest set the agenda and rule the conversation" (p. 484). To demonstrate the process of reflexivity, I draw upon two interview extracts, one taken from an interview with Lily (Extract 6.1, Chapter 6), and the other from an interview with Christiana (Extract 7.12, Chapter 7).

Excerpt 6.1.

- 1 *Interviewer:* All right, let's talk planning. You were mentioning that writing
- 2 objectives was an issue. How do you do it [write objectives] at the moment?
- 3 *Lily:* Well, I try and observe (...) I just think that to get the overall picture of a
- 4 child, you have to do so many observations in so many areas. You just can't do it
- 5 [write enough developmental observations on each child]. I only have the children
- 6 for four hours [at a time, per three sessions per week] and when you have your
- 7 assistant [co-worker] who is needing help, you don't have a parent [helper] you
- 8 are trying to do everything, you have not got time to sit down and write obs
- 9 [observations]. (TL1:06-7)
- 10 (...) *Interviewer:* What do you class as developmental areas?
- 11 *Lily:* Well, social and emotional, language and fine motor, gross motor and the
- 12 cognitive...yeah, just those (TL1:08).

In Lines 1-2 (Excerpt 6.1) I ask Lily about how she writes objectives for her planning following on from a discussion about her planning. Within the question I link, and therefore normalise, the practice of planning and writing objectives (lines 1-2). When Lily's response moves away from answering my question about objectives and onto recoding observations, I make an assumption that Lily has referred to the practice of taking developmental observations of children, and ask her what she classes as developmental areas (Line 10). In this instance, my

members' resource positioning (Fairclough, 1992, 2001b) identifies me with insider knowledge (as a preschool teacher knowing that taking observations in this context means recording developmental observations of children), and it positions me as being swayed by common sense assumptions. In Lily's situation (Lines 3-9) she displays what Kvale (2005, p. 485) calls "counter control". This interviewee technique is where the interviewee deflects questions and sets about by deliberately not answering the question asked, for one reason or another.

As the interviewer, I assisted in legitimating the developmental practice of recording observations of children when I asked Christiana: "How much precedence do you think you should give to observing [children]?" (Lines 1-2, Excerpt 7.12).

Excerpt 7.12.

- 1 *Interviewer:* What do you think the role of observing is in preschool? How much
- 2 precedence do you think that you should give to observing?
- 3 *Christiana:* It [taking developmental observations] gives you an overview of that
- 4 child, that child's developmental areas. It allows you to notice, not notice more,
- 5 but have concrete evidence if there is an issue or a problem with that child and
- 6 you have to take that to the preschool field officer [children's services officer] or
- 7 something like that. It gives you that evidence. (TC2:26-27)

The question asked in Lines 1-2 (Excerpt 7.12) signals the importance of recording observations of children through asking the question, which adds to the common sense understanding Christiana holds. In the questions I ask as interviewer, I raise certain terms and concepts with the teachers, thereby revealing my members' resources (Fairclough, 1992, 2001b), the professional understandings from which I draw. Consequently, my professional understandings become apparent throughout the interviews. Engaging in reflexive practices can illustrate hidden agendas raised by interviewers (Kvale, 2005). For example, when I asked what it would mean for Lily if she did not record observations of children (Lines 1-2, Excerpt 6.1). I positioned myself as valuing this practice, and my question asking her to account for this practice suggests this.

The concept of reflexivity helps with understanding my positioning in data collection and analysis activities (Fairclough, 2001b). This means that I acknowledge my subjectivity in data collection activities; however, quite

importantly, I maintained a reflexive approach throughout the study by acknowledging that there are other ways to understand besides using the theoretical lens of CDA (Dunne et al., 2005).

Being reflexive, I considered who and what forms of knowledge were being privileged and sought to understand some of the complexities of doing qualitative analysis (Pillow, 2010). Pillow (2010) advocates that researchers should “continue to challenge the representations we come to [as analysts]” (p. 192) and not always end up with comfortable and convenient reflexions. A reflexive process is a means of uncovering the unfamiliar to engage in heightened criticality. A heightened sense of criticality within reflexivity draws from concepts from critical theory and CDA, and examines types of power relations that are perpetuated through the research process, and has an awareness of researcher self-reference and self-consciousness (Adorno, 1973; Fairclough, 2001b; Marcuse, 1964). This approach affords me the possibility of seeing the extent of my influence and the implications of my presence within the study (Danby, 1997).

My members’ resources (Fairclough, 1992, 2001b) positioning has had an effect upon the ways I undertook this study, a dilemma faced by many social researchers. However, my stance has been to engage in theoretical consistency by making visible, and by assessing potential consequences of, standpoints and positions (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

4.6 Ethical Conduct

Acknowledging my responsibilities to the educational research community was ensured by undertaking appropriate ethical conduct throughout the entire process of the study. I showed respect for: “people (participants), knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research, and academic freedom” (British Educational Research Association, [BERA], 2004, p. 5). At the forefront guiding my ethical conduct as a researcher was my responsibility to the participants. This included being aware of any detriment that may arise from participation (BERA, 2004) and letting participants know of any consequences or effects their involvement could bring (Bibby, 1997). I ensured participants were aware of their rights to withdraw at any time, their right to privacy and their identity being kept

anonymous (BERA, 2004). The research methods and the participants' contribution were explained to participants early in the study (BERA, 2004).

Ethical conduct when interviewing was maintained by being aware of researcher obligations of ensuring participant consent and confidentiality, and providing participants with necessary information about the consequences of the interviews (Kvale, 1996; Schostak, 2006). To maintain integrity and ethical conduct throughout the research process I adhered to relevant interviewing protocols. I was aware of my professional 'positionality' (Osgood, 2006a, p. 193) and the ways my constructions of TDM could affect the entire research process, including interviewing participants. Ways in which I ensured ethical conduct included an awareness of any subjectivities and power privileges my professional status afforded me, as discussed in Section 4.3.4.

It was my role as researcher to ensure that data were trustworthy and reliable, with methods that were fit for purpose (BERA, 2004). I was aware of data protection obligations and kept transcription records in a secure location, a locked file, and did not intentionally misrepresent participant views. Finally, I endeavoured to communicate findings in an honest and accurate way (BERA, 2004).

This study conformed to *Queensland University of Technology* ethical and legal requirements and was approved by the faculty and university ethical boards before any data were collected (Refer to Email correspondence in Appendix A.9). Throughout the research process I made every attempt to anticipate any negative outcomes before they arose (Stephanie Taylor, 2001), ensuring that the study did not compromise its ethical position in any way.

4.7 Limitations

As with all methods, CDA has limitations. Limitations can stem from the epistemological stance of the analyst, and the particular knowledge interest of the analyst as it is "oriented to problems, to power, to ideology, and so forth" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 66). Concerned with the variable quality of discourse analysis work, Antaki, Billig, Edwards, and Potter (2003) outlined shortcomings when conducting discourse analysis. They argued that discourse analysts can under-and over-analyse data through taking sides, over-quote to make

claims, or make the mistake of identifying features rather than analysing them properly.

Criticisms directed at CDA methods have pointed out that CDA does not pay enough attention to ethnographic contexts, especially when analysts isolate decontextualised texts, such as speeches, policy documents and excerpts of talk (Rogers et al., 2005). For example, being a method of analysing discourse, CDA focuses on what is said in text and does not pay attention to body language, physical gestures and so forth. This study does provide an explanation of the selection of data sources and it showed how the data fits into the wider context within the literature review.

Another limitation of CDA is the way it distinguishes between discursive practice and non-discursive practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) acknowledge Fairclough's CDA approach as sophisticated, but question how analysts can empirically show dialectical interplay in discursive practice. They argue that "how can one show exactly where and how the non-discursive moments influence and change the discursive moment-and vice versa?" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 89). Their suggestion to address this limitation is to show discursive practices across a number of texts, and to treat the distinction between discursive practices and non-discursive practices as an "analytical distinction, rather than an empirical one" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 90).

A further criticism of CDA is that interpretations are not necessarily universal (Dunne et al., 2005). Interpretations are subjective and depend on the analyst's theoretical position. Critical discourse analysis "does not itself advocate a particular understanding of a text, though it may advocate a particular explanation" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 67). However, this does not mean that one cannot put forward one's own reading of the text, ensuring that the data are not overly generalized and stay within the boundaries of the aims of the study.

There were limitations with the design of the study. Too few participants were selected and too many interviews with each participant were conducted. This aspect could be improved if the study were completed again. For example, I would increase the number of participants selected for interview and limit the number of

interviews. After a third interview with each participant I had gathered enough evidence to get a clear picture of curricula influences. Subsequent interviews became repetitive. The teachers clearly knew what influenced their decision making and this did not alter over the course of a school term (approximately 11 weeks). If more participants had been selected the data could have contributed to more comprehensive findings as they would have been based on a wider selection of responses.

In retrospect I would have changed how and when the critical examination of policy data was completed. For example, if key policy documents were analysed before the interviews were conducted with the participants, rather than analysis taking place at the same time as the interviews, some critical insights and findings arising from the policy analysis could have been addressed with participants. More specific and detailed questions about each of the policies and how these affected each teacher would have added to the depth of information provided. As it was, the interview questions were quite general in regard to how participants viewed key policies influencing their practice.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology. It described critical discourse analysis (CDA) and how it was conducted, and it described the data collection process. The chapter outlined how CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) guided data collection and the analysis method, and how the data and analysis addressed each of the research questions. The process of participant and policy document selection was explained along with how the semi-structured interviews were conducted. It also provided insight into how the study maintained reliability, validity, and reflexivity, and how it was guided by ethical protocols. Section 4.7 discussed the limitations of CDA and the limitations of the design. The next chapter reports on the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of policy texts.

Chapter 5: Power, Authority, and Accountability in Policy

In the absence of a mandated curriculum, one would expect early childhood teachers in Victoria in 2004 to be in a position of relative autonomy with regards to their curricula and pedagogical decisions. This would mean that, contrary to practices in Australian primary and secondary schools in 2004, where curriculum was regulated (DET, 2004), teachers in Victorian preschools would have pedagogical freedoms not influenced by readymade curriculum content. However, upon a close investigation, early childhood teacher decision making (TDM) was implicated by a range of discourses. To understand how discourse positions and affects teachers, this chapter conducts a critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) on the data, early childhood policies and teacher interviews. It investigates influences on TDM through the concepts of power, authority, and accountability. As outlined in the previous chapter, key policy documents were identified and categorised for analysis (see Section 4.3.6 and Table 4.3). The two data sources for the study, key policies and interview transcript data, are different types of texts (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Baker, 2004; Fairclough, 2003), with policy texts a formal public text, and interview data a co-construction of social interaction (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Baker, 2004). Crucial for this study is that both sets of texts are interrelated, connected by common social elements and discourse (Fairclough, 2003), in this case, teacher curricula decision making.

The role of policy as data is discussed in Section 5.1, which is followed by a discussion about forms of control (Section 5.2). As forms of control, power (5.2.1), authority (5.2.2), and accountability (5.2.3) are used to examine the conditions upon which teacher decision making in the early childhood context is influenced. Section 5.3 illustrates how developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) functions as curriculum. An examination of how teachers and teaching are constructed and represented in policy is the focus of Section 5.4. A chapter summary is provided in Section 5.5.

5.1 The Role of Policy

Defining policy is not a straightforward task as policy can be considered text, a discourse, and a process (Ball, 1994). Policy is, however, a type of “vehicle or

medium for carrying and transmitting a policy message” (Ozga, 2000, p. 33). Policy in education is viewed as incomplete interventions affecting practice, embodying particular meanings that espouse a certain amount of truth in that context (Ball, 1994). Incomplete interventions are used to describe policy as the process is never quite complete (Ball, 1994). Policies are constructed from discourses and ideologies that are discursively produced within particular contexts (Gale, 1999; Sandra Taylor, 1997) and are inherently heterodox with competing agendas, full of fragmentation and compromise (Ball, 1994). As policies do not operate as products that are “clear, or closed or complete” (Ball, 1994, p. 16), compromise, incompleteness, and dominance in policy all become matters to consider in critical policy analysis. Subsequently, critical policy analysis examines conditions in which policy is produced and asks, what ideas are dominant, why, and who is privileged? It does this through investigating the ways in which discourse operates with an interest on the “parameters and particulars temporarily (and strategically) settled by discourse(s) in dominance” (Gale, 1999, p. 405). Within the study, policies at the regulative and governance level, quality improvement policies and early childhood and school setting philosophical statements are categorised as policy.

Policy is more than a stagnant document. All social actors in policy have a role to play in enacting policy (Ball, 1994). Along with others, teachers are able to decide on how they interpret and enact policy and whether it is in ways that resonate with their own teaching practice. At any stage of policy, different interpretations will be held (Ball, 1994). Policy enactment is complex and relies on social actors’ “commitment, understanding, capability, resources, practical limitations, cooperation and (importantly) intertextual compatibility” (Ball, 1994, p. 19). Consequently, policies are not necessarily understood in the ways that were intended by policy authors, and it is likely that some teachers may misunderstand the original policy intentions (Ball, 1994).

As discourse and policies are inextricably linked, critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2003) is applied here to uncover power and authority affecting teacher decision making (TDM) within Victorian early childhood policies. Critical

discourse analysis views language and social practices as entwined, and dialectically interconnected with many aspects of social life (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2001). An aim of applying CDA as an analytical framework to examine policies is to “increase consciousness” about the role discourse and power play within a particular social context at a particular point in time (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 1).

5.2 Forms of Control

Forms of control are a way to closely examine the conditions upon which teacher decision making occurs in the early childhood context, and how it is influenced. This section (5.2) discusses forms of control affecting teacher decision making drawing on Ball’s (1994) three forms of control within educational contexts: curriculum, the market, and management. As this study is concerned with teacher decision making (TDM) and curriculum, it focuses on forms of control in relation to curriculum. Drawing on critical theory along with Ball’s forms of control, it critically analyses the way power, authority, and accountability is affecting teachers’ curriculum decision making, with the purpose of illuminating conditions that are otherwise concealed.

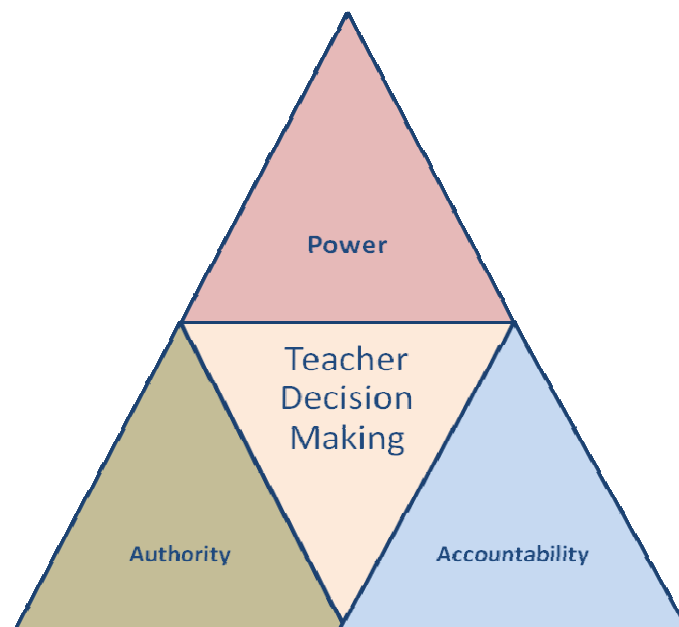


Figure 5.1. Teacher decision making, power, authority and accountability.

Ball's (1994) question, "Where are the teachers in all this?" (p. 62) provides a starting point for the examination of how forms of control within policies are influencing teachers' curriculum decisions. It assists in answering a CDA generated question posed in Table 4.1 (Chapter 4), which asks, what discourses are marginalised, silenced, and excluded from the text? As illustrated in Figure 5.1, this chapter is concerned with how early childhood teacher decision making is affected and positioned by power, authority, and accountability in Victoria in 2004.

To assist with the task of analysing how TDM is affected and positioned by power, authority, and accountability, Ball's (1994) matrix of power relations and teacher work has been used (Table 5.1). In this context, Ball's matrix has been completed with data specific to the Victorian early childhood education context in 2004. The *Early Childhood Teacher Decision Making: Matrix of Power Relations* (Table 5.1) is useful to identify different forms of control affecting TDM and provides a context for types of power potentially affecting TDM. The matrix of power relations (Table 5.1) illustrates power relations teachers are exposed to and are part of, namely curriculum, the state and market, and management. Each type of power relation has its own forms of control, ways of system steering, along with teacher positioning ('teacher as' row in Table 5.1).

The purpose of critically analysing discourse within policy is to gain understanding about power and authority, the conditions within which this occurs, and how discourse acts as a form of institutionalised or legitimised power (Gramsci, 1971; McLaren, 2003). This study aims to illustrate features of dominance and difference through the legitimisation of ideas and practices, and providing insight into power relations, authority, and accountability. Discourse is traced through interdiscursive links between the four policies analysed, providing a means to consider connections, dominance, and difference.

In the absence of a mandated early childhood curriculum, teachers in the Victorian preschool context in 2004 were guided by early childhood policies that contained varying levels of curricula guidance. As noted in the literature review, there are no empirical studies that have investigated the influence of early childhood policies and the role of accountability on early childhood TDM in the Victorian

Table 5.1 Early Childhood Teacher Decision Making: Matrix of Power Relations
(using Matrix of Power Relations and Teachers' Work, Ball, 1994, p. 49).

	Early Childhood Curriculum Policy Context	The State and Market	Management
<i>Forms of control</i>	regulations, conditions, and guidelines in policies	regulation governance accountability parental expectations inspection (DHS) quality improvement: QIAS (compulsory)	management type training employer parent committees
<i>System steering</i>	regulated practice in legal policies, the Act and the Regulations absence of mandated curriculum framework suggested practices in Licensing and Operational Guide (optional) provision requirements in Victorian Preschool Program Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria (optional)	quality improvement: PQAC (optional) parental expectations regulation	type of early childhood setting organisational management early childhood setting philosophy/school charter employer expectations
<i>Teacher as</i>	facilitator of children's development facilitator of children's learning carer policy implementer	facilitator of children's development accountable for practice educator carer	policy implementer resource accountable for practice

context. This study aims to fill that gap and critically analyse discourse in policy to ascertain how power, authority, and accountability constructs and positions TDM. It also recognises that TDM can disrupt and disregard policy. Explaining relationships between discursive processes and wider social processes is part of CDA (Fairclough, 2001b), so the next section considers the link between policy and power.

5.2.1 Power.

From a Gramscian (Gramsci, 1971) view, power is a dynamic process, closely linked with the concept of dominance. Power is exhibited through ideological hegemony within society (Gramsci, 1971). Power is not necessarily about one group dominating another; instead it can be domination with people's consent in either a passive or active way (Golding, 1992). Power in educational contexts is apparent through power relations people within social practices (Ball, 1994). Teachers in educational settings are both recipients of external power relations and actively give legitimacy to certain forms of knowledge and social practices (Apple, 2004). Both concepts of authority and accountability are linked to power.

In policy, power is evident in an ideological way, when common sense ideas are enshrined as universal practices (Fairclough, 2001b). In addition, manifestations of power in policy are not static, nor complete, and contain layers of complexities (Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 1994). Therefore, an analysis of discourse within policies provides a way of ascertaining how social practices are accounted for and how discourse operates discursively (Fairclough, 2001b). Critically analysing policy as text can contribute to understanding political agendas, privileged bodies of knowledge, and can bring both concealed and overt issues to the forefront (Bacchi, 2000). Issues "deemed unworthy of interest" within a particular policy are of particular interest for the CDA as such issues can reveal discourse marginalisation and silence (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49).

5.2.2 Authority.

Authority in education is evident through power relations people have. A person who holds authority with regard to a particular social practice is one who has "some kind of institutional authority" vested in them (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98). The

concept of authority in policy is connected with accountability and power. For example, discourse in policy can legitimate and give authority to some practices and people, but not to others.

5.2.3 Accountability.

Teacher accountability in education is how teachers account for their professional duties, through consumer, contract, performative or corporate accountabilities (Ranson, 2003). In education, teacher professional accountability requires teachers to be accountable to the state, the market, and management (Ball, 1994). Teacher accountability in early childhood education pertains to teacher performance and practice expectations. For example, early childhood teachers are accountable for the quality of the teaching and learning experiences, ensuring that practice meets policy expectations and regulation, and are to oversee all aspects of the environment – staffing, including child and staff ratios, and maintaining the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Osgood, 2006a). In this study, teacher accountability is viewed as obligation and expectation, and therefore is a type of power (Ball, 1994; Ranson, 2003). As a social practice, teacher accountability discourses are evident through various processes, values and artefacts, such as regulated policies, expectations of families of preschool children, or through an employer contract.

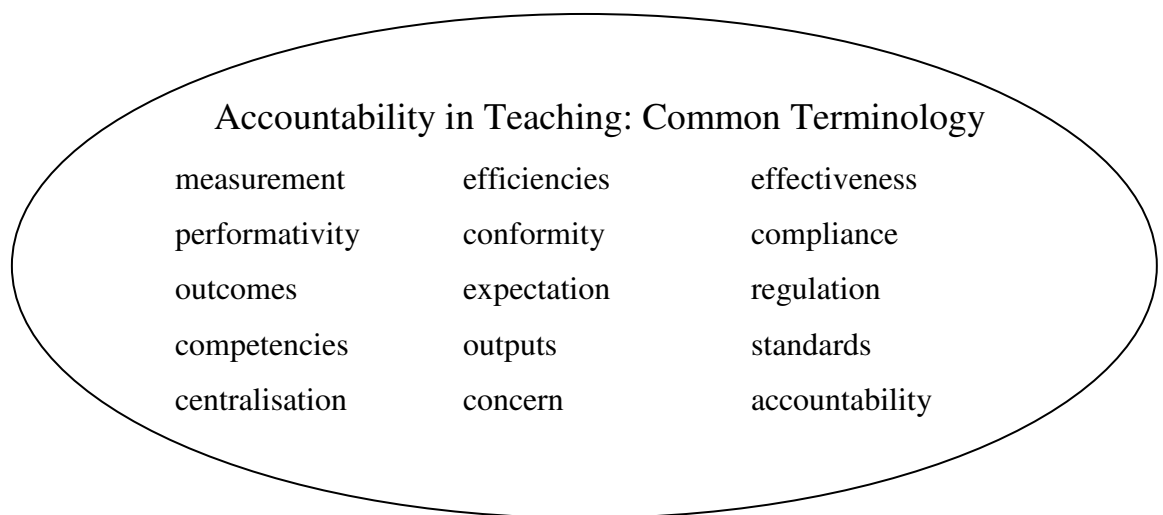


Figure 5.2. Accountability in teaching: Common terminology.

Accountability terms and concepts in education are distinct from other disciplines, as education discourses include terms specific to education, such as supporting students with learning, a focus on student achievement and learning outcomes. The terminology used to refer to accountability in teaching is derived from relevant literature and includes the terms listed in Figure 5.2.

5.3 Curriculum in Policy

Without a mandated curriculum, the Regulations and the Act were the policies guiding teacher decision making (TDM) about curriculum in the 2004 Victorian early childhood context, as they were government regulations enforced by Victorian state laws. Specific sections of the Regulations and the Act have been included for analysis because they relate to curriculum (See Table C.4, Appendix C for included sections).

Government regulations and acts of parliament “attempt to change behaviour by detailing how the regulated parties should act, and by imposing sanctions for non-compliance” (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria, 2007, p. 108). Therefore government regulations on how to behave and act in early childhood settings contain implicit practice directives. Two policies are now analysed: the *Children’s Services Act* (Victorian State Government, 1996) (hereafter referred to as ‘the Act’) and the *Children’s Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998) (hereafter referred to as ‘the Regulations’). The Act contains declarative statements and instructs proprietors of early childhood settings on the basis they will be granted a licence or not. The Act’s main curricula direction for early childhood teachers is found in *Division 2. Licensing (18/4) Grant or refusal of licence*. This section is reproduced in Extract 5.1:

Extract 5.1. The Children’s Services Act; Division 2. Licensing (18/4) Grant or refusal of licence.

- 1 18. Grant or refusal of licence
- 2 (4). A licence is granted subject to the condition that the children’s
- 3 service is operated in a way which ensures the safety of the children
- 4 being cared for or educated and that their developmental needs are
- 5 met and may be granted subject to any other conditions or restrictions

6 set out in the licence that are prescribed or that the Secretary imposes. (Victorian State Government, 1996, p. 13)

Curricula direction is apparent in lines 4-5 (Extract 5.1) where reference is made to children being “educated” and their “developmental needs are [to be] met”. Other than a single reference made to “ensure the safety of children who are being cared for and educated” (Extract 5.1, Lines 3-4), emphasis is given to curriculum guidance in the form of the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). For example, the DAP discourse is revealed through the statement “a licence is granted subject to...[children’s] developmental needs are [to be] met” (Lines 2-5). The section of the Act copied in Extract 5.1 does not refer to who will care and educate children; instead it states that a licence is granted subject to fulfilling that condition.

The CDA analytic device of searching for modality shows where authority and obligation are implied. Modality makers in the Act illustrate a commitment to a particular truth (Fairclough, 2003) in the form of social practices that ‘must’ happen if a licence is granted to a children’s service (Lines 1-6, Extract 5.1). Modality is expressed in the terms such as “refusal” (Line 1), “is granted” (Line 2), “is operated”, “which ensures” and “may be granted” (Line 5). The authority generated from such policy direction requires proprietors to “ensure” (Lines 3-5) children’s safety, care, education, and that developmental needs are met (Extract 5.1). This means that proprietors are given authority for curriculum and teachers are not mentioned.

To further understand the 2004 Victorian early childhood policy context, we turn to the Regulations (Part 6, Section 28) that provide guidelines for children’s programs:

Extract 5.2. Children’s Services Regulations: Part 6 (28) Children’s Programs.

- 1 Part 6- Children’s Programs
- 2 28. Educational or recreational programs
- 3 The proprietor must ensure that there is made available to all
- 4 children cared for or educated by the children’s service an
- 5 educational or recreational program that is:
- 6 a. based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of
- 7 each of the children cared for or educated by the service; and

8 b. sensitive to individual differences of those children. (Victorian State Government, 1998, p. 21)

Part 6 of the Regulations (Extract 5.2) contains declarative statements. Similar to the Act, the Regulations tell proprietors of early childhood settings the government's expectations of a children's program. The Regulations state that proprietors are the people responsible for ensuring educational or recreation programs, whereas the extract from the Act (5.1) does not directly state which people will ensure the children's service will operate in a certain way. These regulations are unusual as it is usually the role of teachers to ensure educational or recreation programs, and they are not mentioned. The implication for teachers is that they are not seen as responsible for ensuring educational or recreation programs in the Regulations.

The modality of the Regulations positions the Victorian State Government as the authority on regulating children's programs, with assumed guidance provided to early childhood teachers via setting proprietors. For example, modality terms and clauses identified in the Regulations (Extract 5.2) are: "must", (Line 3), "is made" (Line 3), and "based on" (Line 6), directed at proprietors. Deonic modality is where necessity and obligation are evident (Fairclough, 2003; Thomas, 2005b). Deonic modality is found in obligational statements and leaves little room for misinterpretation and is revealed in the statement "the proprietor must" (Line 3). Another form of modality, epistemic modality, is found in statements of fact and truth or obligation (Fairclough, 2003; Thomas, 2005b), and is evident in the statement that to care for or educate young children should be "based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each of the children cared for or educated by the service" (Lines 5-7). This means that with certainty, according to the Regulations, proprietors are obliged to care for and educate young children (Extract 5.2). The author's (Victorian State Government) commitment to children being 'educated' or 'cared for' is apparent along with the high level of certainty inherent in the expectation that 'all' children will be educated and cared for in particular ways.

The way an educational program should operate, according to the Regulations, is based on DAP. The DAP discourse is recognised through its central

themes of children developing in predictable ways, each child is unique and develops individually, and practitioners are to meet children's developmental needs (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The DAP discourse is evident in the Regulations where they state that programs should be sensitive to children's individual developmental differences. The extract contains words such as; "must", (Line 3) and "all children" (Lines 3-4) in relation to adults meeting children's developmental needs (Lines 5-7). Missing from this Extract (5.2) is any mention of who will carry out these practices, notably, teachers.

The Regulations provide more curricula guidance and direction than the Act. Both the Act and the Regulations state that a program should be based on the developmental needs of children (Lines 4-5, Extract 5.1, Line 6, Extract 5.2). However, the Regulations contain three further developmental components. These are: i) a program should be based on children's interests (Lines 6-7, Extract 5.2); ii) a program should be based on experiences of each child (Lines 6-7, Extract 5.2); and; iii) a program should be sensitive to the individual differences of children (Line 8, Extract 5.2). Both the Act and the Regulations contain curricula guidance that is developmentally based.

The type of curriculum content is not specified in Extract 5.2 or within the entire Regulations document. Significantly for TDM, directives from the Regulations provide little scope for teachers to practise in ways other than DAP. Also missing from the Regulations (Extract 5.2) is any notion of children being educated via curriculum content, or educated in ways other than through meeting children's developmental needs. The implications of this omission are that 'other' ways of practising are not endorsed or legitimized as legislated government policy. Thus, as a form of control the Regulations steer proprietors into developmental ways of thinking and practising.

Unlike the Act and the Regulations that were legally enforced documents, two policies analysed were not legally enforced. They are the *Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria* (Department of Human Services [DHS], 2002) (hereafter referred to as the 'Preschool Procedures and Funding policy'), and the *Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide* (DHS,

2004a), (hereafter referred to as the ‘Licensing and Operational Guide’). The three early childhood settings discussed in this study, Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Centre, Green Street Kindergarten, and Winter Court Childcare Centre, were required to be compliant with these policies to obtain licensing and funding from the Victorian State Government (DHS, 2002). At the teaching level, the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy and the Licensing and Operational Guide provided further guidance to supplement the Act and the Regulations (DHS, 2004b).

Sections of the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy and the Licensing and Operational Guide are analysed because of regulations that pertain to curriculum (See Table C.4, Appendix C for included sections). Extract 5.3 is taken from the programming section of the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy.

Extract 5.3. Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria: Programming.

- 1 Programming
- 2 Preschool agencies are required to ensure that the children’s service
- 3 develops, displays, implements and evaluates their educational program.
- 4 The program must:
- 5 Include a statement of the essential principles, values, processes and
- 6 practices of the service
- 7 Be planned, using observations of children and individual
- 8 children’s records to address the social, emotional, intellectual,
- 9 language, creative and physical needs of all children. This includes
- 10 strategies for implementation and evaluation.
- 11 Include planned learning experiences that meet individual children’s
- 12 stages of development, their needs and interests, and create goals and
- 13 values for the group.
- 14 Be sensitive to individual differences among children, recognising
- 15 the social and cultural diversity of parents, children and the
- 16 community; be gender inclusive and free from discrimination.
- 17 Be flexible and responsive to the needs of families and the local
- 18 community. (DHS, 2002, p. 23)

In Extract 5.3, author authority is evident when preschool agencies (“the incorporated organisation responsible for the organisation and management of the funded preschool service”, [DHS, 2002, p. 42]) are provided with specific directions about how to create and implement an educational program (Lines 2-13). The

declarative tone of the policy is set by the terms “are required” (Line 2) and “must” (Line 4), and leaves little conceptual space for the program to be conceptualised in other ways. The Preschool Procedures and Funding policy directs preschool agencies to ensure programs contain certain features, including “observations of children and individual records to address the social, emotional, intellectual, language, creative and physical needs of all children” (Lines 7-9). Furthermore, the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy states that learning experiences should meet “individual children’s stages of development, their needs and interests” (Lines 11-12). Features of the DAP discourse present in Extract 5.3 include practices where adults are to observe children in development areas, acknowledge that children progress through developmental stages and adults are to address children’s developmental needs and interests. Features of DAP are also recognisable in “being sensitive to individual differences among children” (Line 14). However, other discourses are apparent in Extract 5.3. Namely, there is recognition of social and cultural diversity of families, gender equity, and environments free from discrimination (Lines 15-16). These cultural inclusive and equity discourses provide alternatives to DAP, and in practice teachers may choose to give preference to any of these discourses.

The final policy to be analysed is the Licensing and Operational Guide. Three sub-sections of the Licensing and Operational Guide provide curricula guidance. The sub-sections comprise: Section 3.1.1 Ensuring that children’s developmental needs are met (Extract C.1, Appendix C), Section 3.1.2 Planning a children’s program (Extract C.2, Appendix C), and 3.1.5 Documenting a children’s program (Extract C.3, Appendix C). Sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.5 in the Licensing and Operational Guide (Extracts C.1, C.2, C.3, Appendix C) provide teachers with further details about how to implement a program for children and are meant to work in conjunction with the Policies and Procedures policy.

In addition to DAP discourse components outlined in the three policies discussed so far, the Licensing and Operational Guide introduces a whole section devoted to how to ensure that children’s developmental needs are met (Section 3.1.1, Extract C.1, Appendix C). The Licensing and Operational guide requires

teachers to develop programs that “build on [children’s] individual strengths” (Line 3, Extract C.1, Appendix C); are “child-initiated and based on a play approach that encourages exploration, questioning, discovery, creativity and problem solving” (Lines 7-8, Extract C.1, Appendix C); allow children to participate “at their own pace” (Line 9, Extract C.1, Appendix C), and that enable children to have access to a “variety of materials, equipment, and experiences that are open-ended” (Line 10, Extract C.1, Appendix C). Developmentally appropriate practice features are apparent in Extract 5.3; for example, each child develops individually, with planned learning experiences to be based on each child’s individual developmental needs (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Part of Section 3.1.1 of the Licensing and Operational Guide entitled, “Ensuring that children’s developmental needs are met” (Section 3.1.1, Extract C.1, Appendix C) is reproduced in Extract 5.4.

Extract 5.4.

- 20 A good children’s program requires:
- 21 A knowledge of child development.
- 22 An understanding of the individual child; the family, culture and social
- 23 context.
- 24 An effective partnership with parents or guardians.
- 25 The ability to translate knowledge about the child and children’s development into
- 26 planned opportunities for learning, and to make use of incidental learning
- 27 opportunities. (DHS, 2004a, p. 25)

Specific detail is provided in the Licensing and Operational Guide about what constitutes a “good program” (Extract 5.4). Two of the four points (Line 21, Lines 25-27) state what comprises a good program and are derived from the DAP discourse. According to the Licensing and Operational Guide to ensure a “good program”, a staff member (the guidelines do not mention which staff members Section 3 pertains to) should i) have knowledge of child development (Line 21, Extract 5.4) and ii) be able to “translate knowledge about the child and children’s development into planned opportunities for learning” (Lines 25-26, Extract 5.4). In addition, part of the third point detailing what constitutes a ‘good program’ staff members require an understanding of individual children (Line 22, Extract). This could also be interpreted as developmentally orientated as it comes under the

heading of Section 3.1.1 “Ensuring that children’s developmental needs are met” (Section 3.1.1, Extract C.1, Appendix C). These three statements from the Licensing and Operational Guide are very specific and identify what constitutes a “good children’s program” (Line 20, Extract 5.4), containing DAP features.

The Licensing and Operational Guide has gone beyond understandings of DAP identified within the Act, the Regulations and the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, to prescribe specific factors and practices associated with DAP. Policy directives require that proprietors (and may assume teachers) “must ensure” (Line 3, Extract 5.2) that educational practices are based on features from DAP. The reason the DAP discourse is emphasised and legitimized in the Act, the Regulations, the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, and the Licensing and Operational Guide, is now discussed.

Part of the CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) considers policy in its particular context (Sandra Taylor, 1997). Therefore, reasons why characteristics of DAP might have featured in the Victorian preschool policy contexts in 2004 to such an extent, are examined through literature available at the time. For example, as discussed in the literature review, prior to 2004 in the USA context and apparent in literature in the Australian context, DAP aimed to: i) counteract didactic teaching in early childhood education (Bredekamp, 1991); ii) guard against overly academic curriculum in early childhood education (New, 1992), and iii) create a distinctive knowledge base for early childhood education (Powell, 1994). The significance of each aim is now discussed.

In the USA DAP was seen as a form of protection against didactic teaching (Bredekamp, 1987, 1991), which and in 1987 was very much about responding to a “trend toward increased emphasis on formal instruction in academic skills” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 1). According to DAP formal instruction was an inappropriate pedagogy for young children. Developmentally appropriate practice was used to guard against an overly academic curriculum in early childhood education (New, 1992). In the local Victorian context, DAP was put forward as an alternative curriculum to that of primary education which focused on curriculum outcomes (Australian Early Childhood Association [AECA] Victorian Branch, Fell et al.

2003). The discussion document, *Beliefs and Understandings: A Conversation about an Early Childhood Curricula Framework* (AECA Victorian Branch, Fell et al., 2003) refers to the “early childhood view of curriculum” where “children are at the centre of learning...driven by children’s basic human needs: physical, psychological and social” (p. 5). This child-centred approach contrasts with an outcomes approach to curriculum, identified in the discussion document as including the “curriculum vocabulary of primary school teachers [which] does not provide an adequate framework for conceptualising the key ideas underpinning early childhood curriculum practice-and yet it is the dominant mode of communication about curriculum in policy-making circles” (AECA Victorian Branch, Fell et al., 2003, p. 7). The discussion document endorses DAP understandings, indicating that curriculum “emerges from children’s interests” (p. 11), “children learn best through play” (p. 11) and “curriculum decisions in early childhood education are based on systematic and careful observation of children....[based on] child development theory” (p. 16). Therefore, it seems that DAP may have influenced the Victorian early childhood policy context with the purpose of protecting preschool curriculum against being influenced by an overly academic curriculum and didactic teaching, and to distinguish itself from other sectors of education.

In summary, this section (5.3) has illustrated ways in which the four policies, the Act (Victorian State Government, 1996); the Regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998); Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, (DHS, 2002) and the Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a), have endorsed characteristics of DAP as the preferred curriculum. The DAP discourse is prevalent in all four policies, providing teachers with little choice but to practice in accordance with its practices. The central curricula role of teachers in all four policies (DHS, 2002, 2004a; Victorian State Government, 1996, 1998) is to take into consideration how each child develops individually, and to plan to meet children’s developmental needs. Such practices are fundamental practices of DAP (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

5.4 Policy and Teacher Invisibility

This section investigates how teachers are potentially positioned by four policy documents. The focus of analysis centres on concepts of authority, obligation, and constraint. The types of authority that teachers and other social actors hold in curriculum decision making, what they are obliged to do, and constraints placed on discourse, are the focus of the discussion.

The purpose of the four policies [the Act, (Victorian State Government, 1996); the Regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998); Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, (DHS, 2002) and the Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a)] is to provide information for key stakeholders in the form of legislation, minimal standards for licensing children's services, and to provide guidance on the delivery of preschool curriculum. As key stakeholders, one would expect teachers to be highly visible as social actors throughout the policies. The term 'teacher' is used only once across the four policies in reference to eligibility requirements for preschool funding in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy (DHS, 2002). Here it states that a preschool agency "must employ a qualified teacher holding an approved early childhood qualification" and that the "teacher must plan and deliver the preschool program at this funded location" (DHS, 2002, p. 5). Thus, to be eligible to receive preschool funding in Victoria in 2004, a qualified teacher was to be employed (DHS, 2002, p. 5). However, there is a noticeable absence of direct reference to teachers in the four policies. Other than this single reference, in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, the four policies imply the presence of teachers rather than explicitly referring to them as a defined category. Thus, early childhood teachers are invisible in three of the four policies analysed, and barely present in the remaining policy. To further understand the absence of teachers as social actors in policy, the concepts of authority, obligation, and constraint are examined (see Table 5.2). Table 5.2 was constructed to provide a summary of the four policies. Teacher authority is understood as teachers holding authority for their practice, with "some kind of institutional authority" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98) vested in them. Obligation is apparent when teachers are obliged to act or practice in

certain ways and constraint can control or constrain “the contributions of non-powerful participants” (Fairclough, 2001b, pp 38-39).

In both the Act and Regulations, duties that are normally considered the work of teachers, that of caring for and educating children, including curriculum design and implementation, are not directed to teachers, but rather to proprietors. In the Act, for instance, a licence is granted to a proprietor or licensee (person who holds a licence) (Victorian State Government, 1996) subject to ensuring children are “cared for or educated and that their developmental needs are met” (Lines 4-5, Extract 5.1). Implicit obligational meaning is a term used by Fairclough (1995) to mean that obligation is implied through discourse. Implicit obligational meaning is apparent in the Act where it states that a licence for a children’s service is granted to proprietors, subject to conditions being met (Lines 1-6, Extract 5.1). The implicit obligation in this statement is that people other than proprietors will care and educate children (Line 4, Extract 5.1, Section 5.3), most likely teachers, the people usually responsible for such duties (see DHS, 2002, p. 5).

The presence of proprietors and licensee is implied in Extract 5.1 (see Section 5.3) (taken from the Act), as they will be granted or refused a licence based on meeting certain conditions. Teachers are not named throughout the Act, yet are implicitly obliged as the group of social actors who will carry out the work of caring and educating children (Extract 5.1). Teachers are not only invisible in the Act, but they are accountable to proprietors and licensees for their curricula practice. Teachers may or may not be aware of their obligation as the Act indirectly implies that children will be educated and cared for, but it does not state who will do this (Extract 5.1). As the information in the column ‘The Act’ in Table 5.2 illustrates, teachers have no authority in the Act, they are implicitly obliged to care and educate children.

In a similar way, without directly referring to teachers, the Regulations outline how children should be cared for and educated “based on the[ir] developmental needs, interest and experiences” (Lines 3-8, Extract 5.2). In contrast to the Act, the Regulations name proprietors (not teachers) as those who are to “ensure” educational programs for children (Lines 3-8, Extract 5.2). By not naming

teachers as people responsible for curriculum planning, explicit obligation (Fairclough, 1995) has been avoided. The column ‘Regulations’ in Table 5.2 highlights that teachers lack authority in the Regulations, that teachers are implicitly obliged to care for and educate children, and that teacher curricula practice is constrained by lack of agency. The concept of agency, taken from a critical theory

Table 5.2 Teacher Authority, Obligation and Constraint across Policy.

	The Act	Regulations	Policy and Procedures	Licensing and Operational Guide
Teacher Authority	No direct authority given to teachers. Teachers not directly referred to in text (Victorian State Government, 1996).	No direct authority given to teachers. Teachers not directly referred to in text (Victorian State Government, 1998).	Authority for teachers to “plan, deliver the preschool program”. (DHS, 2002, p. 5). Some authority given to teachers in the single reference to teachers (DHS, 2002, p.5).	No direct authority given to teachers. Teachers not directly referred to in text (DHS, 2004a).
Teacher Obligation	Teachers implicitly obliged to meet licensing conditions (Victorian State Government, 1996).	Teachers implicitly obliged to meet regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998).	Teachers obliged to “plan, deliver the preschool program” (DHS, 2002, p. 5).	Teachers indirectly obliged to meet licensing conditions (DHS, 2004a).
Teacher Constraint	Teacher practice constrained by lack of agency (Victorian State Government, 1996).	Teacher practice constrained by lack of agency (Victorian State Government, 1998).	Teachers’ professional practice constrained by being inferred as part of generic “staff” category (DHS, 2002, p.23).	Teacher practice constrained by lack of agency (DHS, 2004a).

perspective, is where people are considered to be active as subjects with capacity for change (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Sawchuck, 2005). Consequently, the invisibility of teachers in the Act and the Regulations potentially diminishes teacher agency and their curricula decision making authority. Both these policies do not name the people who are intended to carry out the curricula practices, that is, the teachers. Teachers, as a professional group, are only referred to in reference to eligibility requirements for preschool funding in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy (DHS, 2002). To receive Victorian state government preschool funding, preschool agencies were required to hire qualified early childhood teachers (DHS, 2002). Thus, teacher practice can be constrained as teachers are not obliged or regarded by three policies as the professionals who are to plan curriculum for children.

Another key part of the role of early childhood teachers is to evaluate children's programs (DHS, 2004a). However, the role of teachers in program evaluation is implied in the Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a), rather than being directly stated (Extract C.2). Instead of being referred to directly, teacher presence is again implied, this time through the general category of "staff".

Section from Extract C.2, Appendix C: Children's Services, Licensing and Operational Guide.

Section 3.1.2 Planning a Children's Program.

28 Evaluating the program includes measuring the progress of individual children and
29 assessing whether the written program goals have been achieved. Evaluation is a
30 tool for staff to reflect on individual children's needs, the suitability of planned
31 experiences and strategies used. It is a vital part of the ongoing planning process.
(DHS, 2004a, pp. 25-26).

Several categories of social actors are named in the Licensing and Operational Guide, but not teachers (refer to full Extracts C.1, C.2, C.3 in Appendix C). These include staff (Line 30, Extract C.2, copied above), management (Line 3, Extract C.3, copied below), parents and guardians (Line 4, Extract C.3, copied below), children (Line 2, Extract C.1, Appendix C), and children's services officers (Line 21, Extract C.3, Appendix C). Naming some social actors by their work title and not others results in recognition of only those named. Teachers are not named in three policies (the Act, the Regulations, and the Licensing and Operational Guide) and are

therefore excluded in policy as those responsible for planning children's programs. The probable effect of teacher invisibility in the three policies may result in teachers having little or no agency. In contrast, it is likely that named social actors such as proprietors and other staff will hold some agency as they are referred to in the policies.

Not naming teachers in policy that guides curricula practice disregards the specialist qualifications of early childhood teachers. Teacher authority is not apparent because teachers are part of the definition of "staff," which includes "any person aged 15 years or more who is employed or has been employed or has been appointed or engaged to be responsible for the care or education of children by the children's service" (DHS, 2004a, p. 9). According to the Licensing and Operational Guide, the definition of staff can also include the proprietor, director, or qualified staff members, i.e., those who hold a minimum of a two year post secondary early childhood qualification (DHS, 2004a). The problem with the definition of "staff" members including qualified teachers, practitioners, and those who do not hold specialist early childhood qualifications, is that equal obligation and authority is given to all named social actors for curriculum planning.

Teacher authority is potentially affected by the way the practice of planning a preschool program is outlined in policy. For example, the Licensing and Operational Guide directs "staff" (Line 30, Extract C.2) on how to plan a program, making the assumption that all social actors require explicit direction with this practice. Even though the Licensing and Operational Guide is not a curriculum framework, it outlines the parameters of how to plan a program for children (DHS, 2004a). It does this through directing staff on how to measure the progress of individual children (Lines 29-31, Extract C.2). It is unlikely that early childhood teachers who hold specialist qualifications, skills and knowledge, would require an explanation outlining how to plan a children's program. The Licensing and Operational Guide implies that knowledge about planning a children's program is not known, suggesting that policy readers require explicit guidance; thus not recognising early childhood teacher specialist knowledge. Not only is early childhood teacher specialist knowledge not recognised, but the practice of

evaluating a program is narrowly defined, and all staff members are responsible for the practice.

Another role for early childhood teachers is to communicate effectively with families (of children), staff and management. For example, early childhood teachers are expected to work in partnership with families and maintain effective communication with staff (MacNaughton, 2003; NCAC, 2011). However, the reference made to staff in the Children’s Program section of the Licensing and Operational Guide (Line 3, Extract C.3) excludes teachers and practitioners as the policy directs an unknown social actor group to communicate effectively with staff and management. This reference suggests that the policy text is directed at teachers, although they are not named.

Section from Extract C.3, Appendix C: Children’s Services, Licensing and Operational Guide.

Section 3.1.5 Documenting a Child’s Program.

- 1 3.1.5 Documenting a child’s program
- 2 Documenting the program is important in communicating effectively with staff and
- 3 management and in effectively exchanging information with the children’s
- 4 parents/guardians. It also provides a basis for ensuring that planning and evaluation
- 5 of the children’s program occurs. (DHS, 2004a, p. 30).

Even though early childhood teachers are not mentioned directly in the Act, the Regulations, and the Licensing and Operational Guide, they are to play an active role as implementers of children’s programs. The obligation to plan children’s programs is made apparent in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy where it states that “the teacher must plan and deliver the preschool program at this funded location” (DHS, 2002, p. 5). Therefore, according to the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, the teacher’s role is to plan and deliver preschool programs, yet in the remainder of the policy teachers are not mentioned. Not naming teachers means that policies have avoided explicit obligation for teachers, therefore lessening their professional recognition. In addition, in the section where one would expect teachers to be referred to (Section 4: Service Provision Requirements: Programming), “preschool agencies” is the entity held responsible for planning (Lines 1-2 Extract 5.3). The single reference to teachers (in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy) in the section about preschool funding eligibility (DHS, 2002, p. 5), and not

in the programming section, suggests that there might be a reason for the avoidance of other references made to teachers. This issue is now considered.

One reason why teachers are invisible in three key policies (the Act, Regulations, and the Licensing and Operational Guide), and barely present in the fourth policy (Preschool Procedures and Funding policy), may be due to the working conditions and context at the time. For example, unless preschool funding was required in Victoria in 2004, management could employ practitioners who held a minimum of a two year child care qualification to be responsible for planning and implementing curriculum (DHS, 2002; Victorian State Government, 1998). Practitioners and teachers were encouraged and entitled to carry out the same planning duties, yet held different qualifications (Burton & Lyons, 2000; DHS, 2004a). Practitioners held a two-year qualification, and teachers a minimum of a three year university qualification (Burton & Lyons, 2000; Press & Hayes, 2000). In Victorian long day care early childhood settings, management could employ two year qualified practitioners who were less expensive to employ rather than three or four year university educated early childhood teachers (Burton & Lyons, 2000; Press & Hayes, 2000). Policies may not have delineated between different types of early childhood qualifications due to differing levels of salary for unqualified and qualified staff. Thus, there may have been financial and industrial issues at stake if teachers were to be distinguished from non-teacher staff in policy (Burton & Lyons, 2000).

Turning to how other social actors are positioned in the policies guiding early childhood curricula content in Victoria in 2004, proprietors are social actors bestowed with curriculum authority. Proprietors of early childhood children's settings in the Regulations and the Licensing and Operational Guide have explicit authority to oversee the implementation of curriculum. According to the Regulations, proprietors "must ensure" a children's program is "made available to all children" (Lines 3-4, Extract 5.2). Proprietors are to ensure children's programming regulations even though they may or may not hold early childhood teaching qualifications (Extract C.2). Thus, those who hold a licence to operate a children's service includes those who own, manage or "control" a service, and it is

these people who are to ensure children's programs follow regulations (DHS, 1996, 2004a, p. 8). Furthermore, the Licensing and Operational Guide states that it is the duty of proprietors to ensure children's programs are made "available to all children" and are based on the "developmental needs, interest and experiences of each child" (Lines 5-8, Extract C.2). The curricula role assigned to proprietors results in the use of their discretion as to whether curriculum is compliant with regulations or not. Consequently, proprietors are obliged and positioned with authority to ensure early childhood curriculum regulations are met in both the Regulations and the Licensing and Operational Guide.

The use of the term "preschool agencies" in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy (Line 2, Extract 5.3) is another way of contributing to teacher invisibility in policy. In this policy, preschool agencies are "incorporated organisation[s] responsible for the organisation and management of the funded preschool service" (DHS, 2002, p. 42). Preschool agencies, inclusive of proprietors, licensees and managers of children's services, are responsible for ensuring children's services programs, including the responsibility of "develop[ing], display[ing], implement[ing] and evaluat[ing] their educational program" (Lines 2-3, Extract 5.3). As a consequence of preschool agencies holding responsibility for quality, programming, parent participation, fees, and access and equity (DHS, 2002, pp. 23-24), the role of teachers is discursively constructed as redundant or obsolete. Teachers are invisible when it comes to responsibility for ensuring educational programs for children (Extract 5.3, DHS, 2002). For example, a teacher's main role according to the Preschool Procedures and Funding statement (mentioned early on in the document) is to "plan and deliver the preschool program" (DHS, 2002, p. 5). However, throughout the remainder of the policy, teachers are invisible, and are not included as a category in the glossary (DHS, 2002, pp. 42-43). A potential effect of teacher invisibility is that it potentially constrains practice. The ways that teacher practice may be constrained across the four policies is now examined.

Teacher practice may be affected by their invisibility of teachers in three policies (the Act, Regulations, and the Licensing and Operational Guide), through lack of recognition as curriculum professionals. As illustrated in Table 5.3, teacher

practice is potentially constrained in three ways: contents, relations, and subjects (Fairclough, 2001b). ‘The Act’ column and the ‘Regulations’ column in Table 5.3 are drawn from a diagram that depicts “constraints on discourse and structural effects” devised by Fairclough (2001b, p. 62), along with definitions of the three types of constraint (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 39). The ‘Policy and Procedure’ and ‘Licensing and Operational Guide’ columns of the table focus on teacher constraint and discourse effects in the four policies. Table 5.3 shows how contents constraint “what is said and done”; along with relations constraint, or the way people relate and are affected by discourse; and subject constraint, or the “subject positions people can occupy”, can control and constrain less powerful social actors (Fairclough, 2001b, pp. 38-39).

Content constraint is apparent by the lack of direct reference made to teachers in the three policies. The structural effects of contents constraint position teachers as invisible and lacking authority for curriculum. Avoidance of explicit reference to teachers may constrain teacher agency and teacher contribution to curricula decision making. The lack of reference to teachers leads to a lack of recognition of their “professional autonomy and judgement” (Ball, 1994, p. 49). Consequently, as a social group, they are rendered powerless and “agentless” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 155) when it comes to curriculum implementation and decision making, as they are not included as social actors responsible for curriculum practice.

Proprietors were entrusted with ensuring educational programs for children, with their role to oversee teacher practice, resulting in proprietors being more empowered than teachers (Table 5.4). Naming proprietors in policy, leads to awareness of their professional responsibilities, and by not naming teachers it leads to a lack of professional recognition and subsequent responsibilities. Thus, one person’s autonomy can become another person’s constraint (Ball, 1994). For example, proprietors were given permission and subsequent autonomy as the people responsible for curriculum, whereas teachers were not named, and hence, potentially constrained because of their lack of recognition. The implication of proprietors holding curriculum authority results in them having the potential “to impose and

Table 5.3 Constraints on Discourse and Structural Effect (Adapted from Fairclough, 2001b, p. 62)

Constraints	Structural Effects	Early Childhood Teacher Authority in Policies	Discoursal Effect
<i>Contents</i> (on what is said and done, Fairclough, 2001b, p. 39).	Knowledge and beliefs	Reference to teachers as social actors is absent in 3 policies. Teachers referred to in relation to preschool funding, which requires a qualified teacher in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy (DHS, 2002, p. 5)	Teachers invisible in policy.
		Teachers included in generic ‘staff’ category (Licensing and Operational Guide).	Diminished teacher agency.
<i>Relations</i> (the social relations people enter into in discourse, Fairclough, 2001b, p. 39).	Social relationships	Proprietors entrusted with ensuring children’s educational programs and are to oversee teachers’ practice (The Act, Regulations, Licensing and Operational Guide).	Lack of recognition for early childhood teachers’ specialist skills and knowledge as implementers of curriculum.
		Preschool agencies entrusted with ensuring children’s educational programs and are to oversee teachers’ practice (Preschool Procedures and Funding policy).	Teachers disempowered.
		Teachers’ curriculum decision making is accountable to proprietors and preschool agencies (The Act, Regulations, Licensing and Operational Guide, Preschool Procedures and Funding policy).	Proprietors empowered.
<i>Subjects</i> (the ‘subject positions’ people can occupy, Fairclough, 2001b, p. 39).	Social identities	Proprietors and preschool agencies are accountable for curriculum to DHS. “Staff” (DHS, 2004a, p. 26) are accountable for curriculum to proprietors and preschool agencies. Teachers are implied in staff member category.	Proprietors and preschool agencies hold authority over teachers for being responsible for curriculum.
			Teacher authority as curricula experts is minimal.

enforce constraints” on others (Fairclough, 2001, p. 52). Having authority for overseeing curriculum places proprietors in a “discoursal position of power” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 52), a power to enforce curriculum regulations. This also means that proprietors have access to curricula discourse in ways teachers do not, with discourse in policies “limit[ing] what can be talked about” (Bacchi, 2000, p. 49). Both contents and relations constraint (Table 5.3) will most likely impact upon teacher social identity (Fairclough, 2001b). These constraints can make teachers invisible in policy. Teacher agency is reduced because teachers are categorised as ‘staff’, and because others hold authority over teachers for overseeing curriculum. Avoiding reference to teachers as a distinct category of social actors denies recognition of their professional skills and knowledge, and therefore can diminish their identity as teachers. As noted in the literature review, teachers’ professional identity is continually being constructed and influenced by the educational context they work within, and can affect their curricula decision making (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Similar to the way early childhood teachers are not directly mentioned in policies as social actors responsible for curricula practice, Ball (1994) observed that teachers generally are “increasingly [positioned] an absent presence in the discourse of education policy, [as] an object rather than a subject of discourse” (p. 50). Ball’s notion of “absent presence” shows how teachers can be omitted from policy and not directly referred to in text, yet as illustrated above, authority in policy can still be exercised over those not named specifically. Early childhood teacher agency as curriculum experts is diminished through discourse, with constraints placed on teacher authority as curriculum implementers. The discoursal effect of the lack of recognition for teachers as curriculum experts in three policies (the Act, Regulations, and the Licensing and Operational Guide), and diminished agency in the fourth policy (Preschool Procedures and Funding policy), means that teachers hold little curricula agency in these policies; they are constructed as having low or no status, and consequently, they are disempowered as a professional group.

5.5 Summary

This chapter focused on how teacher decision making (TDM) was discursively constructed in Victorian early childhood policy in 2004. To assist with the investigation of influences on TDM apparent in policy, the concepts of power, authority, and accountability, were used as an analytic framework. Four early childhood education policies were analysed, focusing on teacher authority, obligation, and constraint. A CDA of the early childhood policies revealed that characteristics of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) were endorsed across the four policies. The central curricula role of teachers advocated in all four policies (DHS, 2002, 2004a; Victorian State Government, 1996, 1998) was to take into consideration how each child develops individually, and to plan to meet children's developmental needs. Such practices are fundamental practices of DAP (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). It was found that even though teachers were held accountable for their work, they were invisible in three of the four early childhood policies analysed. Teacher invisibility in three policies, and a brief reference to teachers in the fourth policy, potentially undermines teachers' authority as professionals who hold expertise in early childhood curriculum. Furthermore, in the policies analysed proprietors of early childhood settings and preschool agencies held authority over curriculum. Avoiding explicit reference to early childhood teachers as social actors in policy denies them public acknowledgment of their professional status as qualified teachers. To further examine the influences affecting TDM, the next chapter (6) investigates teacher accountability and performativity through a CDA conducted on teacher interview data.

Chapter 6: Teacher Discourses of Accountability and Performativity

The aim of this chapter is to trace how accountability and performativity discourses affects and positions teacher decision making (TDM). Analysis in this chapter builds on from Chapter 5 where it investigated influences on TDM through the concepts of power, authority, and accountability. One of the reasons for considering teacher accountability and performativity is to ascertain the ways in which teacher curricula practice is shaped by the accountability discourse. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) is seen as an effective way to examine influences on TDM, in particular, how teachers account for their curricula practices. Due to its capacity to reveal effects of power relations at the situational, institutional, and societal levels, CDA (Fairclough, 2001b) is used to uncover notions of dominance, and privilege in discourse (Fairclough, 2001b; Gramsci, 1971). Adding to the conceptual framework, questions posed by Ranson (2003) about accountability in education are used in this chapter as analytic tool to address the intricacies of teacher performative accountability.

The chapter commences with a discussion about teacher accountability (Section 6.1), followed by a critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) conducted on interview data (Section 6.2). Section 6.2 is divided into three sections. The first section (6.2.1) discusses performative anxiety, disregard, and confidence in light of Lily's interview transcripts. The second section (6.2.2) focuses on performative anxiety and confidence revealed in Christiana's interview transcripts, with the third section (6.2.3) illustrating the ways Ruth's interview transcripts revealed performative confidence and disregard. The chapter concludes with a summary (Section 6.3).

6.1 Teacher Accountability

Taking the position that participating in particular social practices “shapes the dispositions of its members” (Ranson, 2003, p. 462), this section investigates the effects of accountability on early childhood teacher decision making. A teacher accountability typology based on Ranson's (2003) work is used (Table 6.1) to categorise different types of early childhood teacher accountability. Ranson's (2003)

Table 6.1 Typology of Early Childhood Teacher Accountability (adapted from Ranson, 2003, p. 463)

	Teacher-Consumer Accountability	Teacher-Contract Accountability	Teacher-Performative Accountability	Teacher-Corporate Accountability
<i>Practice</i>	Client expectation Quality	Strengthen service efficiency	Efficiency Strengthen quality	Control Infrastructure Resourcing
Why: Purpose of accountability				
Who: Relations of answerability	Parents and families	Care-for Children group employer/school Regulator: DHS & DET	Care-for Children group employer/school Regulator: DHS & DET Quality assurance: NCAC	Care-for Children group employer/school School council Kindergarten Voluntary Parent Committee
What: What is accounted for	Extent of choice	Regulations and quality performance indicators	Regulations and quality performance indicators	Capital Student achievement
How: Rules of accountability	Market competition	Meeting professional practice indicators	Inspection Quality improvement visits Manager or school principal	Appraisals, setting and school philosophy statements, school charter
Criteria	Consumer choice	Technical expertise	DHS service provision requirements Quality indicators	Amount of state-funded children in class
Data	Reports on children's development and learning	Written program plans-short and long term	Reports on children's development and learning	Appraisals, setting and school philosophy statements

typology of accountability regimes is adapted and applied to include practices relevant to Victorian early childhood teacher accountability in 2004, and supplements the CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003). The teacher accountability typology (Table 6.1), specifically the ‘Teacher-performative Accountability’ column, is used conceptually as a way to focus the CDA on teacher accountability issues. The typology used draws only on Ranson’s (2003) ‘practices’ category (Table 6.1), rather than the categories of ‘structures’ and ‘cultural codes’, as the focus is teacher accountability, not public accountability. Ranson defines the category of ‘practices’, which includes questions and prompts which are useful. For example, statements such as, “Why: Purpose of accountability” and “Who: Relations of accountability” (Ranson, 2003, p. 463) enable the examination of accountability from different perspectives. Neo-liberalism, according to Ranson (2003), brought a “new political order...based on principles of rights designed to enhance individual choice” to the education sector (p. 465). Ranson (2003) argued that the age of professional accountability was no longer; instead neo-liberal governance was apparent in education for the first time (commencing from early 1990s), where private sector ways of managing, focusing on efficiencies, raising standards and outputs were now visible. The effects of the neo-liberal discourse on middle school teachers in the Australian context are evident in social practices where teachers are subject to increasing bureaucratic requirements (Comber & Nixon, 2009). For example, bureaucratic practices where teachers have to account for their teaching and children’s learning; raise student performance; and work within “standardised curriculum and assessment” (p. 333). Using a neo-liberal accountability category from Ranson’s typology, teacher performative accountability is now examined.

6.2 Teacher Performative Accountability

Teacher performative accountability requires teachers to account for their work based on their practice or performance. In the Australian early childhood education context, teacher performative accountability can be in the form of “surveillance via spot checks, licensing visits and validation processes” (Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008, p. 41). Questions posed by Ranson (2003) about teacher

accountability (see Table 6.1) are used as analytic tool to address the intricacies of teacher performative accountability. A brief definition is now provided about the three types of performative accountability.

Performative anxiety is apparent when teachers are concerned or worried about their individual accountability (Ball, 1994). Performative confidence is displayed through teacher self-belief and self-assurance in abilities. Disregard as a performative accountability is noticeable when teachers disrespect or ignore expectations of others, often through holding enough confidence to do so.

The analysis illustrates how teachers accounted for their teaching practice through their discussion about performative accountability. The ways in which teachers did this is of particular interest. Uncovering the workings of performative accountability is not as simple as asking teachers who they are accountable to, as this may only uncover part of the response. Instead a critical examination of discourse in its micro, meso, and macro levels of action (Fairclough 2001b) provides a systematic approach to provide insights into teacher accountability.

6.2.1 Performative anxiety, confidence, and disregard: Lily.

Lily was the only participant to show all three types of performative accountability: anxiety, confidence, and disregard. The varying states of performative accountability might be due to Lily being an experienced child care practitioner and manager, on the one hand, and relatively new to the role of preschool teaching, on the other.

Anxiety

The way in which Lily exhibits performative anxiety is investigated first through the CDA device of modality (Fairclough, 2003). Interview Excerpt 6.1 is from early in the first interview conducted with Lily and shows her concerns.

Excerpt 6.1.

- 1 *Interviewer:* All right, let's talk planning. You were mentioning that writing
- 2 objectives was an issue. How do you do it [write objectives] at the moment?
- 3 *Lily:* Well, I try and observe (...) I just think that to get the overall picture of a
- 4 child, you have to do so many observations in so many areas. You just can't do it
- 5 [write enough developmental observations on each child]. I only have the children
- 6 for four hours [at a time, per three sessions per week] and when you have your

7 assistant [co-worker] who is needing help, you don't have a parent [helper] you
8 are trying to do everything, you have not got time to sit down and write obs
9 [observations]. (TL1:06-7)
10 (...) *Interviewer*: What do you class as developmental areas?
11 *Lily*: Well, social and emotional, language and fine motor, gross motor and the
12 cognitive...yeah, just those (TL1:08).

Teacher accountability is revealed in terms that encompass expectation or obligation, such as: “you have to” (Line 4), “you just can't do it” (Line 4), “I only have” (Line 5), “you don't have” (Line 7), “you are trying to do everything” (Line 7), “you have got no time” (Line 8). Through the use of pronouns, Lily's understanding of teaching expectations is apparent. Traces of the accountability discourse (Ranson, 2003) are apparent through Lily's emphasis on improving performance; particularly where her expectation is to “have to do so many [recorded] observations [of children] in so many areas” (Line 4) “to get the overall picture of a child” (Lines 4-5). The statements above imply that Lily understands her practice as requiring improvement, and not yet satisfactory. This type of performative anxiety can be due to the “formal answerability” aspects of teacher performative accountability, where professionals are to account for their practice as an ongoing and “continuous process” (Ranson, 2003, p. 469).

In another example, Lily's transcripts show performative accountability through the way she compares her practice to that of other teachers. For example, Lily uses the pronoun “you” five times, which creates a generic community (Fairclough, 2003) of teachers (Excerpt 6.1). For example, in the swap from the use of “I” in Line 3, “I just think that...”, to using the pronoun “you” in a generic collective sense, as in “you just can't do it” (Line 4), Lily is referring to herself as an individual teacher and then as a teacher within a community of teachers. The use of ‘you’ as a teacher in a community gives more authority to the subject matter that is being described (Fairclough, 2003). The way the pronoun “you” is used in a collective sense validates practices of other teachers. The repetition of ‘you’ in the collective sense also gives the impression that there is an endorsed way of practising in early childhood education, or a collective consensus. The use of ‘you’ as a member of a community of teachers also suggests that other teachers are struggling

with similar time and resource constraints and sharing Lily's difficulty of not having enough time to record adequate developmental observations of children.

Performative anxiety is evident when Lily expresses concern about her inability to comply with expectations of having enough written developmental observations and records for each child in the preschool group (Lines 3-8, Excerpt 6.1). Consistent with the DAP discourse (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and its focus on recording observations of children, Lily says that the practice of taking developmental observations of children (Lines 3-4) is needed to gain an "overall picture of a child" (Excerpt 6.1, Line 3). In order to do this a certain number of developmental observations of children should be taken (Lines 3-4) within the domains of social, emotional, language, fine and gross motor, and cognitive developmental areas (Lines 11-12, Excerpt 6.1). In Lines 4-8, Lily points out that she is having trouble writing observations because of the length of time it takes to write them, as well as the problem that the children are only in the centre for "four hours [at a time for three sessions per week]" (Lines 5-6). Performative anxiety is apparent by the way that Lily understands how she must account for her practice, with perceived outside expectations requiring her to carry out practices in particular ways.

Rather than directly responding to the question raised about writing objectives, Lily refers to the practice of recording observations of children (Line 3). The discussion does not return to the focus of the question in Excerpt 6.1 about how Lily writes objectives, instead both the interviewer and Lily stay focused on the practice of recording observations of children for several minutes. For example, Lily continues with the issue of writing observations in Excerpt 6.2. She explains that she recognises that she "just can't do it [take adequate amounts of recorded developmental observations of children]" (Line 4). The interviewer draws on her members' resources (Fairclough, 1992, 2001b) and consequently affects Lily's response by limiting the question by asking Lily if she either carries out the practice of putting her developmental observations of children on "one big sheet and transfer[s] them" or puts them on "stickies" (Lines 1-2). The way the question is phrased using terminology specific to early childhood education is used by both

interviewer and interviewee. The common sense understandings about practice in Excerpt 6.1 indicate a shared discourse, DAP. The type of closed question asked indicates the positioning of the interviewer, where I limit the practice to the type of practices I am familiar with, rather than allowing Lily to expand on her understandings. Rather than viewing the closed question (Lines 1-2) as a problem, Lily says she has concerns about not recording developmental observations on children “properly” (Line 8), implying that there is both a proper and an improper way to record developmental observations.

Excerpt 6.2.

- 1 *Interviewer:* Do you do them on one big sheet and transfer them, or on stickies
- 2 [post-it notes]? How do you do it?
- 3 *Lily:* This is the other thing trying to find which is the best...I am just writing
- 4 them on a piece of paper and I then have to transfer them to the children’s
- 5 individual papers at home...
- 6 *Interviewer:* You transfer them?
- 7 *Lily:* Yes, because I am not writing them [developmental observations of
- 8 individual children] properly. And then I was just writing them down on a piece
- 9 of paper like this, as I was doing them. Then I thought, what if I am not getting
- 10 all areas, and thought, ‘Should I be going back to all areas, to make sure?’ Then
- 11 I thought, ‘Aren’t I trained enough and experienced enough to know which
- 12 areas I have done?’ (TL1:08)

First, Lily discusses trying to find the best way to record children’s development (Line 3), then she proceeded to explain the technique of transferring the observational data to children’s individual records at home (Lines 4, 5). When prompted by the interviewer, who repeats Lily’s comment in a question form, Lily then explains in more detail her uncertainty of whether her recording technique is ‘proper’ (Lines 7-8). Her uncertainty about practice is expressed through hypothetical questioning: “what if I am not...?” (Line 9) and “should I?” and through the use of the word “properly” (Line 8). Part of Lily’s anxiety seems to come from thinking that she cannot adequately cover all developmental areas in her observations of children. This discussion leads Lily to say, “Aren’t I trained enough and experienced enough?” [to remember all records of observations of children] (Line 11). At the centre of Lily’s hypothetical questioning about her professional

training and experience as a teacher, is compliance and improvement, and how she should be carrying out particular practices. Ranson (2003) notes that, both compliance and improvement are “embodied in the expectation of accountability” (p. 369).

The effects of performative accountability apparent in Lily’s transcripts highlight the premise that ‘taking adequate, recorded developmental observations of all children in her class is associated with *adequate* early childhood teaching’. Lily’s discussion normalises the practice of taking adequate recorded developmental observations of all children across all developmental areas in a preschool group, as well as showing how characteristics of the DAP and performative accountability discourses are reproduced. Drawing on such discourses has resulted in Lily showing uncertainty about her practice. When asked what would happen if she did not take observations of children, Lily says:

Excerpt 6.3.

- 1 *Interviewer:* What if you didn’t do observations [written] for individual children?
- 2 What does that mean for you?
- 3 *Lily:* I’d be worried, I’d still feel the outgoing children, the noisy children are the
- 4 ones that you tend to focus on a lot and I’d be concerned of the quieter ones, I am
- 5 really concerned about the quieter ones because they can slip through. They can be
- 6 going through the program and just sitting there and doing this and that so that I
- 7 definitely know that you have to do written obs [observations] because the little
- 8 one I am thinking about, Monica, she just goes along and if I just didn’t observe
- 9 her she would just go through the kinder and I would not know the first thing that
- 10 she was doing. (TL1:09)

Lily discusses the necessity for developmental records of all children. Her comments make visible her understanding that early childhood practice should include taking developmental records of all children. What is striking about these comments is that, in highlighting that observations are important for knowing about what children are doing in the classroom; Lily is not referring to how these observations might work as a basis for designing pedagogic interventions. Her perspective points to a discourse where the focus is centred on understanding where children are in terms of their development. What is not evident is how observations might be used as pedagogic tools to design learning experiences.

Lily has expectations of taking enough developmental observations of all children in all developmental areas. She says she would be worried if she did not record adequate numbers of observations of children in her class and that quiet children would be overlooked, and consequently she would not know what the quiet children were doing or how they were progressing developmentally. Lily's comments are marked by linguistic features, "factive assumptions" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 56). Factive assumptions are "triggered by factive verbs – for instance, 'I realised (*forgot, remembered*)'" (author italics) indicating an existential assumption about phenomena existing" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 56). Factive assumptions can be seen in Lily's statements: "I definitely know that you have to..." (Lines 6-7, Excerpt 6.3), and "if I didn't observe her she would..." (Lines 8-9). The perspective Lily takes positions her teaching in ways consistent with the discourse of DAP.

Lily's obligation did not stop with the number of developmental observations she thought she required. Her concern was also whether her planning was adequate (TL1:08), and how much actual teaching a kindergarten teacher should be doing (TL1:31). For example:

- "[I am] confused" (TL1:10)
- "Not doing 'it' [planning] properly" (TL1:08)
- "I am just everywhere" (TL1:06)
- "[I have] changed [my planning] too many times" (TL1:06)
- "Should I be going back to make sure? [re-checking observations]" (TL1:08)
- "Should I be writing them [observations on children] every term? Or should I just say, 'It is my philosophy'" (TL1:21)
- "What do I want to do with the children?" (TL1:21) and
- "How much should a kinder[garten] teacher be teaching them [children]?" (TL1:31).

Rhetorical questioning and comments made by Lily about the adequacy of her practice listed in the above points show her performative anxiety, where she questions the adequacy of practice. For example, "I am confused" and "[I am] not doing it properly" (TL1:08). Performative anxiety manifests itself as questioning herself about the adequacy of particular practices: "should I...?" (TL1:08) and

practice compliance, “how much should...?” (TL1:31). These comments made by Lily indicate a feature of performative accountability, a “preoccupation with specification” (Ranson, 2003, p. 466).

Performative anxiety is also shown by the way Lily talks about keeping observations of children and her concern about being inspected by the Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS) (TL1:09). Lily raises the issue of having an inspection from the DHS and said that the prospect of an inspection “worries” her (TL1:09). She says that she’s worried because she found it difficult to keep updated written developmental observations and records (TL1:09). Lily explains: “DHS worries me that they are going to inspect me and say, ‘how do you know this, and how do you know that, without records?’ I think that scares me the most” (TL1:09). Terms expressing fear, “it scares me” (TL1:09), and concern, “it worries me” (TL1:09) highlight Lily’s understanding of what constitutes adequate practice; for example, the number of developmental records to be taken on each child (TL1:08) and whether she is teaching enough (TL1:31).

When asked how she sees the role of the DHS and the state government, Lily replies:

Excerpt 6.4.

- 1 *Interviewer:* How do you see DHS role? The state government’s role?
- 2 *Lily:* Well, I would hope that they would be supportive. Now, she was [DHS
- 3 children’s services officer that had just visited the preschool] she was. I did not feel
- 4 intimidated at all, although I do worry about things. But then I can calm myself
- 5 down and think, ‘Lily, you have no control over this, this is what is here, you just
- 6 have to go with it and relax’ [as there was no forewarning an officer would be
- 7 checking the preschool records], whatever the issues are. I panic about things, I
- 8 know things will get done in the kinder. I will be honest with her and say, that I
- 9 was ready, if she questioned me, of [sic] saying that this was what I am capable of
- 10 doing, I am doing my best and I’m happy with it. So, I would hope that they would
- 11 be supportive, in the past, from what I have heard [from other teachers] they are
- 12 not [supportive]. I think that’s sad. And I wanted to know if they were going to be
- 13 supportive. We had a meeting [two combined councils] kinder teachers and they
- 14 were all talking about being scared of them [children’s services officer] and I
- 15 was like scared, but if I got her [Kylie] again, I would not worry, but if I got Tilly I
- 16 would be worried.

- 17 *Interviewer:* So, it is personalities and what they do...
- 18 *Lily:* They should be more supportive of us and, do they [children's services
- 19 officer] not understand what we do? The hours we put in etc. (TL2:37-38)

Extract 6.4 illustrates the ways in which Lily's teaching confidence wanes and increases throughout her account of how she views the role of DHS officers and the state government in relation to her teaching. To begin, Lily uses words that reflect a low level of certainty (Fairclough, 2003) to describe her relations with children's services officers: "I would hope" (Line 2), "I did not feel" (Line 3), "I can calm myself" (Line 4), "I panic about things" (Line 7). From this, her comments move to medium levels of certainty (Line 7 to Line 14): "I know things" (Lines 7-8), "I will be honest" (Line 8), "I will be ready" (Line 9), "I am capable of", "I am doing my best" (Line 10), "I am happy with it" (Line 10), "I have heard" (Line 11), "I think" (Line 12), "I wanted to know" (Line 12). However, she shifts back to uncertainty: "I was like, scared" (Line 14) and "I would be worried" (Line 15-16). The fluctuation between low and medium levels of certainty, without any signs of conviction and high levels of certainty, shows that Lily disposition towards a DHS officer visit to Green Street Kindergarten, illustrated in this excerpt (6.4), is one of trepidation. The "rules of accountability" (Ranson, 2003, p. 463) are shown by the way Lily interprets inspection criteria set by the DHS officer, and how she will enact the criteria. Lily hypothetically accounts for her practice and performative accountability is apparent in her "modes of thinking...[and] speaking" (Ranson, 2003, p. 469) through the practices she refers to and her assessment of her practice (Excerpt 6.3, Excerpt 6.4).

Descriptive words are another way to reveal Lily's performative accountability. Lily uses descriptive words to portray her state of being in relation to a potential 'spot-check' DHS inspection: "not intimidated" (Lines 3-4), "worry" (Line 4), "calm myself down" (Lines 4-5), "no control" (Line 5), "relax" (Line 6), "panic" (Line 7), "capable" (Line 9), "happy" (Line 10), "scared" (Line 15), "not worry" (Line 15) and "worried" (Line 16). These wide ranging terms show Lily's fluctuating performative accountability, from being capable (Line 10) and knowing things (Lines 7-8), to using words such as "panic" (Line 7) and "scared" (Line 15). The use of emotive language shows the anxiety can be associated with teacher

practice and how what lengths someone can go to comply with perceived standards of practice. Through the use of descriptive words to describe a potential ‘spot-check’ DHS inspection, a type of “formal answerability” (Ranson, 2003, p. 469) is apparent. Formal answerability is a mechanism for understanding who a person accounts to (Refer to Table 6.1) and is displayed through “an instrumental event, as with an annual review or appraisal” (Ranson, 2003, p. 469). In Lily’s situation, she is answerable to the DHS, where it is a “continuous [performative accountability] process” (Ranson, 2003, p. 469).

Through her descriptions of the DHS and her reactions to the DHS officer in Excerpt 6.4, it is possible to see a clear division between ‘us and them’ (Fairclough, 2003) being constructed by Lily. In Line 13, “we” refers to the early childhood teachers and “them” (Line 14) refers to the DHS children’s services officers. Terms describing ‘them’, DHS children’s services officers, range from: (them) being “supportive” (Lines 2, 11, 12, 13, 18) to being “scared of them” (Line 14). When referring to the role of the DHS, modal markers, clues revealing a social actor’s positioning or standpoint (Fairclough, 2003) are illustrated in the type of language Lily uses showing her fluctuation from being uncertain about her practice to being moderately certain. According to Excerpt 6.4, Lily views the role of the DHS as one of support, whereas the language depicting Lily’s “worry” (Line 16) and being “scared” (Line 15) suggests that perhaps Lily views the DHS children’s services officer role as more than merely a supportive role, but one of inspection. It was also personalised: “If I got her [Kylie], I would not be worried, but if I got Tilly, I would be worried” (Lines 15-16). Depending on the person from the DHS, Lily was either worried about accounting for her practice, or not. Lily rhetorically asks, “do they [children’s services officers] not understand what we do?” implying that the officers do not understand the role of early childhood teachers and have expectations that may not be realistic based on time constraints of early childhood teachers or “the hours we put in” (Line 19, Excerpt 6.4). From Lily’s comments (Excerpts 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4), performative accountability is revealed in the form of obligation, in particular, the type of practices Lily thought she was obliged to undertake as an early childhood teacher. Performative accountability in relation to practice is

evident in the type of practices that Lily is accounting for, who she is accounting to, along with how she is accounting for practice.

Confidence.

In contrast, and at times contradictory to the excerpts analysed above, Lily does express some confidence about the practice of recording children's development and is able to make professional judgments on children's development in a confident way. This discursive contradiction enables a space in which to consider the complexities of teacher performative accountability. Lily demonstrates anxiety and confidence with regard to performative accountability. For example, teaching confidence is clearly illustrated in Lily's statements: "I know exactly in my head" (Line 2, Excerpt 6.5), "I am finding from" (Lines 3-4, Excerpt 6.5), "when you are experienced, you actually know" (Excerpt 6.6, Line 1) and "I can tell you what they [children] all need" (Lines 1-2, Excerpt 6.6).

Excerpt 6.5.

- 1 *Interviewer:* When you say no observations, do you mean no written observations?
- 2 *Lily:* Yes, I know exactly in my head [where children are at] which is everything
- 3 [all developmental areas]. I do the obs [written observations] and I am finding
- 4 from my observations, a lot of the obs are social [about social development] and
- 5 they seem to be about 'to interact and to turn take and use their words' and some
- 6 are not able to verbalise. (TL1:07)

Excerpt 6.6.

- 1 *Lily:* But, I think that when you are experienced you actually know. I can tell
- 2 you what they all need [in developmental terms]. (TL1:09)

Further evidence of Lily's confidence about her practice occurred after an unannounced spot check inspection was carried out by a DHS staff member during the second interview at Green Street Kindergarten (TL2:36). The unannounced DHS inspection of program and operational aspects at meant a DHS staff member checked the setting for compliance with procedures and policies (TL2:36). The positive outcome of the DHS inspection acknowledged Lily's working knowledge of state regulations and policies (TL2:36). In the fourth interview (TL4), after the DHS inspection, there was a noticeable shift in Lily's confidence as a teacher. When discussing modifications to children's learning experiences she was planning based on children's interests, Lily showed confidence when she said: "It is all in my

head. And for the first time, probably ever since I've started at kinder, I already know what I am doing on the next plan" (TL4:67); and "I am more relaxed and more confident [with teaching]" (TL4:68). Another way to demonstrate confidence about accounting for practice is to have disregard for accounting mechanisms. The ways Lily disregarded professional performative measures is now discussed.

Disregard.

Lily showed disregard for the curriculum advisory role that Care-for-Children played in guiding her teaching. When asked to whom she thought she was accountable, Lily claimed that she did not often see her immediate manager at Care-for-Children. When I asked: "Who do you think that you are accountable to? Who is your manager?" and Lily replies: "I never see her, the [Care-for-Children group employer] coordinator. She has been in this job since January and I have not seen her here [at the kindergarten] at all. That can be positive for me in a way" (Interview conducted in June that year, TL2:36).

When referring to not seeing her immediate line manager from Care-for-Children for six months, Lily's comment "that can be positive for me" (TL2:36) suggests that she did not value Care-for-Children's on-going curriculum advisory role. During another interview Lily listed all the professional organisations and individuals that she networked with, particularly people who influenced her teaching decision making. In this discussion, Lily did not mention her group employer, Care-for-Children, as having an influence on her teaching practice and realised later on in the conversation that she had forgotten to include the Care-for-Children coordinator on her list (TL3:59). This omission and Lily's comments reveal that she thought her direct line manager had little influence on her curricula decision making. Due to the nature of the position, Lily's line manager from the Care-for-Children group employer should have played a role in accountability, as someone having some type of influence. Instead Lily had not seen her manager for six months, which indicated that Lily was not accountable on a regular basis to her manager.

In summary, Lily showed all three types of performative accountability: anxiety, confidence, and disregard. Performative anxiety was evident when Lily expressed concern about her inability to comply with expectations of having enough

written developmental observations and records for each child in the preschool group (Lines 3-8, Excerpt 6.1). In contrast, at times, Lily showed some confidence about the practice of recording children’s development and confidently made professional judgments. Disregard was shown by Lily for the curriculum advisory role Care-for-Children played in guiding her teaching.

6.2.2 Performative anxiety and confidence: Christiana.

In the interview transcripts Christiana displayed both performative anxiety and confidence. Each is discussed in turn.

Anxiety.

Christiana had accountability concerns. In response to an upcoming *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)* (NCAC, 2001) review visit, Christiana was anxious about having “enough” written developmental records in each developmental area for each child (TC2:32). Christiana said the QIAS process made her “nervous” (TC2:31). She spoke about the process as more of an inspection of her teaching practice and program rather than conveying the intention of QIAS, which was to undertake a process of continuous improvement (NCAC, 2001). Christiana was nervous about her ability to comply with the QIAS expectations, in particular, planning documentation and developmental record keeping for the children in the group. Christiana talked about the immense task of completing ‘enough’ developmental observational records on all children in her group. She explained in Excerpt 6.7, what she was striving towards.

Excerpt 6.7.

- 1 *Christiana:* I am trying at the moment to.... We have accreditation [QIAS]
- 2 coming up, so I am trying to come up to date with all my observations, having a
- 3 few observations that show all the developmental areas of the children. So there is
- 4 no point of me having 15 observations on one child showing that the child is good
- 5 at fine motor skills, because it would be pointless because you are not seeing the
- 6 other areas, and also not showing a lot of variety of what a child can or can’t do,
- 7 with interests, strengths, and so on. (TC1:24)

In Excerpt 6.7, Christiana shows that she is aware of the “rules of accountability” (Ranson, 2003, p. 463), where her understanding of complying to QIAS indicators is apparent. She wanted to ensure that she complied with the QIAS (NCAC, 2001)

quality indicators and had a mix of developmental areas recorded for each child (Lines 1-7, Excerpt 6.7). Christiana remarks that it would be pointless if she wrote too many observations on one area of a child's development rather than a range of development areas (Line 4, Excerpt 6.7). The QIAS Principle 5.2 states that "records of children's learning and well being are maintained by the centre and are used to plan programs that include experiences appropriate for each child" (NCAC, 2001, p. 21). Further, the explanation for QIAS Principle 5.2 states that "while it is essential to keep progress records on every child, it is inevitable that records kept on children attending full-time are usually more detailed and more regularly updated than the records kept on children attending part-time" (NCAC, 2001, p. 21). Even though QIAS practice directives were to record and profile children's learning, development, and well-being (NCAC, 2001), Christiana focused on recording a mix of observations on developmental areas for each child (Excerpt 6.7). Christiana treated the QIAS (NCAC, 2001) quality improvement process cautiously and seriously, particularly with regard to documenting written developmental observations of children. For example, Christiana repeated "I am trying" twice (Lines 1-2, Excerpt 6.7). It was most likely Christiana was aware of how important the quality improvement visit was for her setting and that QIAS outcomes could affect funding and the reputation of Winter Court Childcare Centre.

Anxiety and confidence.

Christiana showed both performative anxiety and confidence in Excerpt 6.8 which comes from the second interview with Christiana, an interview conducted after QIAS Reviewer visit. As Excerpt 6.8 shows, Christiana was anxious before the QIAS Reviewer visit, and confident after the visit.

Christiana was anxious about her own teaching performance and when describing how she felt before the QIAS Reviewer visit, she stated three times that she was "nervous", (Lines 12, 13,15, Excerpt 6.8), "anxious" (Line 14, Excerpt 6.8), and that she had expected the QIAS experience to "be bad" (Line 18, Excerpt 6.8). Her anxiety seemed to be about the issue of having a mix of developmental areas recorded for each child in her program (Excerpt 6.7). In addition, Christiana recognised the important role she had in maintaining the setting's reputation through

adhering to practices outlined in QIAS quality indicators, including recording an appropriate number of developmental records for each child in the group. Excerpt 6.8 shows Christiana's anxiety generated from the impending visit and the QIAS quality indicators. The anxiety was apparent in her anticipation of what the QIAS reviewer visit might entail.

Excerpt 6.8.

- 1 *Interviewer:* We might move onto accreditation. An interesting topic... now you
2 went through the accreditation process, how was that?
3 *Christiana:* It wasn't actually that bad, as I was told that they [QIAS reviewers]
4 were going to be picking on me, because I was new out [of university] and new at
5 the centre. So I was told that they would pick on me in particular, but I actually
6 wasn't really involved in it all, as the other teacher [child care worker] was on
7 planning at the time and she went through all the process, going through all the
8 observations with the person who comes out [the QIAS reviewer], the planning
9 everything like that. So I really never, didn't go through it in a way... I was
10 working towards it [the QIAS reviewer visit] with getting the observations up to
11 date, and things like that, the room was all [up to date] like going through the
12 observations and what we had was all right. But it kind of made me more nervous
13 before it happened [laugh] with everyone telling me. It made me more nervous,
14 anxious about it, with everyone telling me that it is going to be really bad...some
15 of the staff were really good, as they could tell that I was really nervous, as I kept
16 asking, 'What are they doing [the QIAS reviewer]? And how long do they stay?'
17 They probably thought that I was driving them up the wall, I don't know... But,
18 I wanted to know [about it] and it kind of reassured me that stuff, they [the staff]
19 were all like, 'Just be yourself, don't worry about it, you are not doing anything
20 wrong in the room, so they can't pick up on anything. The kids are fine, you
21 treat them all right, so that is fine...'. It makes you feel at ease as well. When the
22 actual day came, it wasn't that bad, it was just a normal person. (TC2:32)

In this situation Christiana's practice was being "steer[ed] at a distance" (Ball, 1994, p. 55). Being steered at a distance shows different ways in which power, authority and accountability operate outside overt forms of control. For example, Christiana's practice was steered at a distance as the QIAS quality indicators guided her practice and imposed performative measures, rather than her performativity concerns being directed at management. This type of performative accountability is a "more subtle yet totalizing form of control of teachers than is available in the top-down

prescriptive steering” (Ball, 1994, p. 54). Instead of Christiana being directed by management to improve practice, “coercion is replaced by self-steering” (Ball, 1994, p. 54) where she talks about striving to meet QIAS standards of practice “I was working towards it [the QIAS reviewer visit]” (Lines 9-10). Christiana was concerned about the unknown experience in the upcoming QIAS visit, but also nervous about her practice living up to QIAS scrutiny.

In the interview after the QIAS reviewer visit to Winter Court Childcare Centre, Christiana was more relaxed about the quality improvement review process (Excerpt 6.8). For example, she said that she felt “at ease” (TC2:32). This “ease” might be due to no longer being subject to the performative pressure of the QIAS process. The pressure that Christiana mentioned may have been due to how important the quality improvement visit was for her setting, as she knew that QIAS outcomes could affect funding and the reputation of Winter Court Childcare Centre (NCAC, 2001). Christiana’s anxiety here affirms the insights provided by Fenech, Sumsion and Goodfellow’s (2008) study, where they maintained that when teachers’ work is measured by performance-related indicators they can feel that their work is being policed, so their relationships with external bodies can become based on fear and suspicion.

In addition, in contrast to her initial perceptions about the effects of the QIAS Review, after the QIAS visit Christiana seemed reassured by the process. She said: “some of the [QIAS] staff were really good” (Line 15, Excerpt 6.8), indicating a positive experience with some staff; that “it [the QIAS process] kind of reassured me” (Line 14, Excerpt 6.8), which indicated that she felt a sense of reassurance by the review process. Showing a sense of relief that she had survived the QIAS process, Christiana noted that “it wasn’t that bad, it [the QIAS Reviewer] was just a normal person”.

In summary, Christiana displayed both performative anxiety and confidence. She was anxious and nervous about her own teaching performance before the QIAS Reviewer visit, and ‘at ease’ after the visit. The interview transcripts illustrated the ways Christiana accounted for her practice where she regulated her practice in a subtle, self-reflective, and self-steering way (Ball, 1994), ‘choosing’ to comply with

QIAS standards of practice rather than being overtly coerced. The insights generated from the ways Christiana accounted for her practice showed that there are different ways teachers can be coerced into performative activities, without direct instruction.

6.2.3 Performative confidence and disregard: Ruth.

Performance accountability can be recognised as teacher confidence in interview data. As well as performative accountability highlighting teacher uncertainty about practice, teaching confidence is also evident. Ruth showed both performative confidence and disregard. There were no significant episodes of Ruth displaying performative anxiety.

Confidence.

Ruth showed confidence when discussing her views on her accountability responsibility as a teacher in Hillbridge Grammar School (Excerpt 6.9).

Excerpt 6.9.

- 1 *Interviewer:* While we are on accountabilities, do you have DHS accountabilities,
2 school accountabilities, that you need to show things to and say what you are
3 Doing? And to the parents?
4 *Ruth:* Well, the school saying what they want, too. I am responsible to the principal
5 [school] so the principal can call the shots as well.
6 *Interviewer:* And principals can change...
7 *Ruth:* Yes, absolutely...So, there are givens in the centre that I can't do much
8 about. For example, we have large groups, 25 in kinder and 30 in pre-prep and
9 while parents want to come [to bring their children], the school will take those
10 numbers. Whereas from an early childhood point of view, we quite might like 20
11 [children]. So there is [sic] school policies and procedures, all that sort of thing.
12 There are things from the top down that impact on what we do. Now for me I have
13 been very, very fortunate as compared with other schools. I have pretty much had
14 a free reign. They have been respectful of that and I meet with the principal every
15 couple of weeks and we work well together and that sort of thing. So, from my
16 point of view it is not an issue, but I know that in lots of schools it can be quite
17 difficult. (TR3:42-43)

Ruth is accountable to the principal, who can “call the shots” (Line 5, Excerpt 6.9). There are “school policies and procedures” that she is aware of (Line 11) and “things [expectations] from the top [school management] down” (Line 12) that she is expected to enact. However, Ruth described her performative accountability by

comparing with others: “I have been very, very fortunate compared with other schools” (Lines 12-13). With regard to “relations of answerability” (Ranson, 2003, p. 463), Ruth suggests that she is in a much better situation than others. For example, Ruth shows self-assurance in her abilities: “I have pretty much had free reign” (Lines 13-14), and does not appear to be compromised by others. Ruth talks about having practice choices and seems confident with the freedom she is given (Lines 13-17, Excerpt 6.9). A further illustration of Ruth’s self-assurance is shown in the way she describes her working relationships with people she is accountable to: “they have been respectful” (Line 14); and “we [the principal of the school and Ruth] work well together” (Line 15).

Disregard.

It can take confidence to be able to show disregard and it can be subtle. Ruth was aware that her position as an Early Learning Centre manager and teacher meant that she had to adhere to DHS and state government policies (TR3:40). The way Ruth describes the situation (Excerpt 6.9) illustrates some disregard for the DHS children’s services officers when inspecting the early learning centre at Hillbridge Grammar School.

Excerpt 6.10.

1 *Ruth:* There are huge differences across the board, depending on the preschool
2 field officers [children’s preschool officers] and what they look for, whether they
3 come in and are very officious and [are] real policeman. They are trying to
4 improve their image. In the past the person has not even acknowledged how nice
5 the centre looks or the displays the children have done, or that sort of thing, and
6 has measured the depth of the sand and the tanbark and said it was not correct
7 ...They [DHS inspection staff] are trying to improve and the preschool field officer
8 we have at the moment is very professional and helpful. (TR3:41)

One reason for showing disregard about inspection practices was Ruth’s experience in previous DHS visits. Children’s services officers did not pay attention to the results of Ruth’s teaching, not noticing “how nice the centre looks” (Line 4-5, Excerpt 6.10), and displays at the early learning centre made by the children (Line 5, Excerpt 6.10). The way the children’s services officers were portrayed by Ruth in Excerpt 6.10 was based on an individual officer. She stated: “we have [a children’s services officer] at the moment” who is “professional and helpful” (Line 8). Ruth

referred to children's services officers as removed and distant, as "they" (Line 3, Excerpt 6.10) and "the person" (Line 4, Excerpt 6.10), indicating a lack of regard. In addition, through the interviews, Ruth used the outdated title for children's services officers, which was preschool field officer. This could be due to not knowing or remembering the new field officer title, or it could be due to not recognising the new title deliberately.

Ruth used various ways to describe the DHS children's services officers in action, stating that there were "huge differences" (Line 1) between individual officers' approaches to inspecting settings. In particular, "what they look for" (Line 2), and how they "come in [to the setting]" (Line 3), with some children's services officers being "very officious" (Line 3). At one stage Ruth compares a DHS children's services officer to "real policemen" (Line 3), implying that they can be overly officious with setting inspections. At some level, the comparison Ruth makes between a DHS children's services officer and that of a "real policemen" (Line 3), shows some disrespect for the role of a children's services officer. The comment suggests that this particular DHS children's services officer was overly officious. However, Ruth did acknowledge children's services officers "trying to improve [their inspection techniques]" (Line 7) and the officer that "we [Hillbridge Grammar School] [usually] have...is professional and helpful" (Line 8).

In summary, in Ruth's interview accounts, both performative confidence and disregard were illustrated. Performative confidence was apparent when Ruth showed self-assurance in her teaching abilities and through the way she describes her working relationships with other people. She showed disregard about the processes used by the Department of Human Services (DHS) staff when inspecting Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Centre. Ruth implied that DHS staff could be overly officious with preschool setting inspections and not acknowledge the good teaching practices and efforts that she and her staff have made at the early learning centre.

6.3 Summary

At first glance it seems as if early childhood teachers were not held accountable for their curriculum decisions in Victoria in 2004 as there was no government-mandated

curricula framework. However, when policies and interview transcripts were examined for evidence of accountability and performativity, various forms of control and obligation were identified. Using a teacher accountability typology based on Ranson's (2003) work, and conducting CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003), enabled an analysis of how the three teachers were held accountable for their curricula practice. The teachers in the study were accountable to regulators, for example, the Department of Human Services (DHS), the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC), their line managers and group employer, parents, and to the children themselves. This chapter has provided insights into the ways in which teachers were accountable for curriculum, and how accountability manifested itself in the teachers' professional disposition as performative anxiety, confidence, or disregard. It was found that Lily was the only participant to show all three types of performative accountability: anxiety, confidence, and disregard. Christiana's interview transcripts revealed both performative anxiety and confidence, and Ruth's interview transcripts revealed performative confidence and disregard. The next chapter continues the investigation into influences on TDM and examines how discourses are legitimated, marginalised, and silenced.

Chapter 7: Legitimated, Marginalised, and Silenced Discourses

The aim of this chapter is to continue the examination into how discourse positions and affects teacher decision making (TDM). It does this through analysing interview data showing how particular discourses and associated curricula practices are legitimated, marginalised, and silenced. Analysis in this chapter builds on from Chapters 5 and 6, where power, authority, and accountability in policy were examined (Chapter 5), and teacher accountability and performativity in interview data were analysed (Chapter 6).

One of the benefits of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is that it can identify knowledge and practices that are privileged; knowledge and practice known as legitimated knowledge (Fairclough, 2003; Habermas, 1973). Legitimation is apparent through social actors providing explanations or justifications about social practices, or giving particular social practices a purpose or authority (Fairclough, 2003). This chapter uses Fairclough's (2003) understanding of legitimation, where social practices are explained and justified, and certain actions are given legitimacy. Another way to uncover discourse in operation is to identify marginalised discourse. To do this, interview transcripts were analysed for instances of knowledge and practices being relegated to occupying compromised positions (Fairclough, 2003). Compromised positions occur when social actors are in a position that they are not entirely satisfied with, or where they have to make concessions (Fairclough, 2003). To identify silenced discourse, instances in the data where it is expected that a particular discourse would be apparent, but is not, are identified. Silence in discourse is identified in places where there are obvious gaps, where particular social practices are missing from the text.

The chapter commences with an identification of frequently used curricula terms identified in interviews (Section 7.1). Next, Section 7.2 examines how the three teachers legitimate (7.2.1), marginalise (7.2.2), and silence (7.2.3) teacher directed practice. Building on from findings in previous chapters (5, 6), Section 7.3 considers how developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is legitimated. It provides two examples of this: an examination into the ways in which one teacher was unfamiliar with features of DAP in early interviews, yet becomes familiar with

the same DAP features in later interviews (7.3.1), and it examines ways in which DAP is legitimated through the practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests (7.3.2). The chapter concludes with a summary (7.4).

7.1 Curricula Terms Identified in Interviews

This section (7.1) identifies which curricula terms are most frequently cited in the interview transcripts. Identifying the frequency with which teachers mentioned terms associated with curricula in the interview transcripts provides insight into the terminology teachers were using. Terms associated with DAP such as children's needs, play, and children's interests, were cited frequently across all interview transcripts (over 100 times each) (see Tables B.8 and B.9, Appendix B). Even though some of these terms and practices (children's needs, play, and children's interests) originate as part of the child-centred practice (CCP) discourse (Dewey, 1952; Entwistle, 1970), they are referred to as DAP characteristics due to the prevalence of these features as part of the DAP discourse in the Australian context (see Section 2.4.3, Chapter 2). Terms related to curriculum subject areas (CSA) (referred to from here as 'curriculum terms') were cited less frequently than terms associated with DAP. However, the most frequently mentioned curriculum terms were art and creativity, literacy, and music. Figure 7.1 illustrates three of the most prevalent terms used in the interviews that are characteristics of DAP: children's needs, cited 183 times by all three teachers, play (151 times), and children's interests (117 times).

Figure 7.1 also shows the frequency of use of curriculum terms. Art and creativity were cited 69 times, literacy was referred to 63 times, and music was mentioned by the three teachers 50 times. The vertical axis (Figure 7.1) shows the number of times a curricula term was mentioned by the three teachers in the interview transcripts. The horizontal axis presents bars representing different types of curricula terms as indicated in the key.

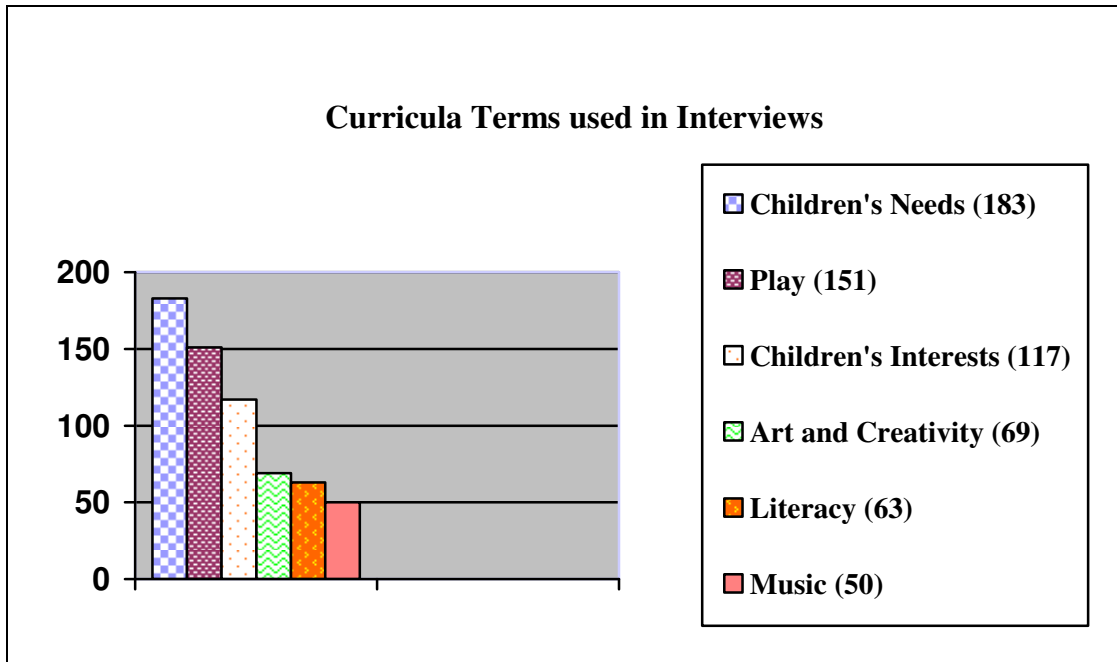


Figure 7.1. Curricula Terms used in Interviews.

The process of identifying terms is not meant to be a representative account of the focus of each interview because as the interviewer, I introduced topics for discussion. The citations are not comparable across participants, as each participant was interviewed for varying amounts of time. However, the frequency of teacher citations shown in Figure 7.1 illustrates preferences given to particular terms: children's needs, children's interests, and play. Figures 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4 depict the number of times terms associated with DAP and with curricula areas are used by Christiana, Lily and Ruth (respectively) in the interviews. The emphasis on DAP terms (children's needs, children's interests, play) was high across all transcripts. Indicating its importance, 'children's needs' was the most cited curricula term in the interviews with Christiana (Figure 7.2) and Lily (Figure 7.3). The curricula practice of addressing children's developmental needs can be traced in all four Victorian early childhood policies (analysed in Section 5.3, Chapter 5), where the expectation of educational programs is to take children's developmental needs into consideration.

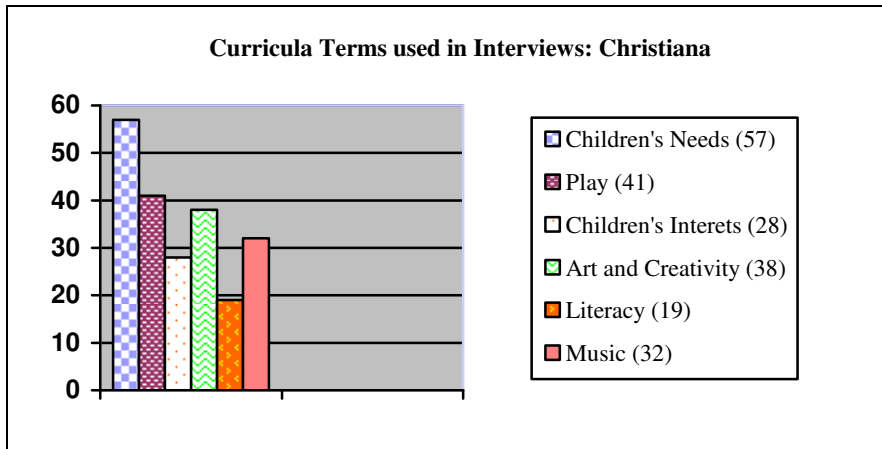


Figure 7.2. Curricula Terms used in Interviews: Christiana.

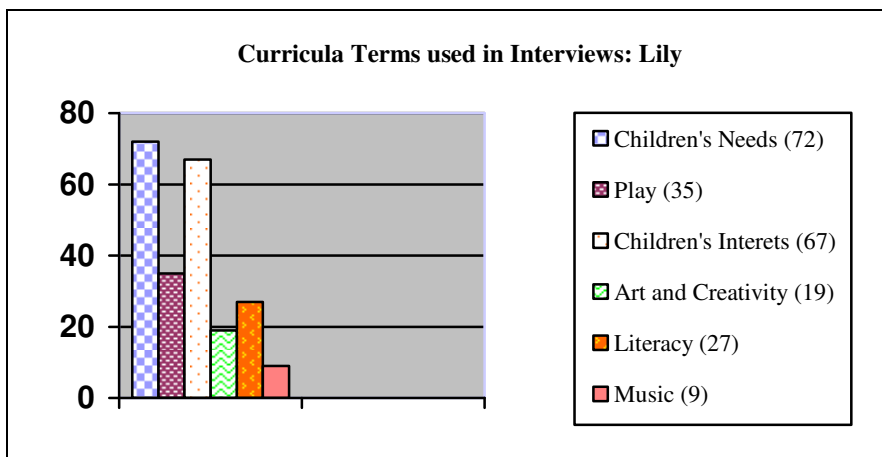


Figure 7.3. Curricula Terms used in Interviews: Lily.

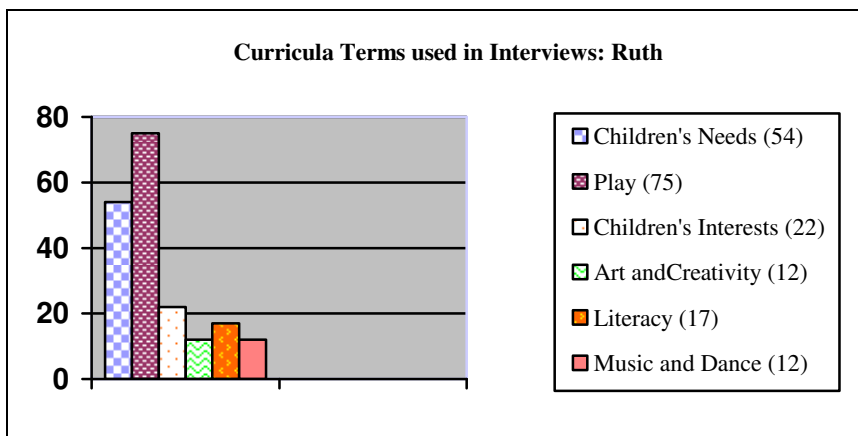


Figure 7.4. Curricula Terms used in Interviews: Ruth

Two of the policies (the Act, the Regulations) were legislation, so the frequent reference to characteristics of DAP as a curricula practice can be understood in this light. In addition, Section 5.3 (Chapter 5) illustrated the ways in which the four policies, the Act (Victorian State Government, 1996); the Regulations (Victorian State Government, 1998); Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, (DHS, 2002) and the Licensing and Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a) endorsed characteristics of DAP as the preferred curriculum.

Due to the strong emphasis of DAP curricula terms most frequently cited in the interview transcripts, along with the strong presence of DAP in the policies, a further investigation is carried out into the influences on teacher decision making connected with such practices. To do this, an analysis of the ways teachers understand teacher directed practice is conducted. As teacher directed practice is almost the antithesis of DAP, where children are able to develop in gradual and natural ways through discovery (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), it is a useful concept from which to uncover teacher understandings of curricula decision making from outside of the DAP discourse.

7.2 Teacher Directed Practice

Teacher directed practice includes practices where teachers direct children's learning and actively teach children particular skills and knowledge. Teacher directed practices are used to describe those practices where teachers lead the teaching and learning process; this is in contrast to CCP, where the teacher's role is one of being receptive to the nature of the child (Darling, 1994), and DAP where teachers are to "prepare the environment for children to learn through active exploration" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 54). Teacher directed practices focus on curriculum content (Entwistle, 1970), with child-centred practices such as DAP, focus on the developmental progression of the individual child (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Teacher directed practice is contrary to the main premise of DAP, where children are to "construct their knowledge and understanding of the world in the course of their own experiences" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 14). Table 7.1 provides examples for each of the ways teacher directed practice was understood across the interview transcripts.

Table 7.1 Teacher Directed Practice

Teacher Directed Practice →	Legitimated	Children’s learning is “enhanced by well chosen and meaningful interactions...and interventions by the staff or by the teacher”. (TR2:29)
		Children are provided with “curriculum opportunities”. (TR1:17)
	Marginalised	“Children don’t just learn through play they also need some scaffolding as they just can’t...[learn what they need to on their own]. (TL1:11)
		I am “not pushing” academic learning. (TL4:74)
	Silenced	If children were “really that bad with it [the skill of drawing] I would set it up as an experience [in the room] as they come and go”. (TC3:81)

The ways in which teachers legitimate teacher directed practice is discussed in Section 7.2.1, marginalise teacher directed practice (Section 7.2.2), and silenced in Section 7.3.3.

7.2.1 Teacher directed practice legitimated: Ruth.

Ruth’s interview accounts show evidence of her legitimating teacher directed practice. In Excerpt 7.1, Ruth questioned the learning children might be missing out on within an exclusively free-play environment.

Excerpt 7.1.

- 1 *Ruth:* If you provide children with a totally uninterrupted play environment, at
- 2 what point do you assist the children in understanding values and concepts of
- 3 showing respect and all those sorts of things? Because they don’t necessarily,
- 4 automatically just happen. (TR2:28)

Ruth exhibits a high level of certainty in her statements about an uninterrupted play environment (Excerpt 7.1). This is shown through her rhetorical questioning, “...at what point do you assist the children in understanding values and concepts?” (Line 2, Excerpt 7.1). The way this question is phrased indicates that Ruth understands there is ‘no point’ at which educators can teach values and concepts in an

uninterrupted play environment. Through her rhetorical questioning, Ruth has legitimated the social practice of educators directly teaching values and concepts to children. This view is in contrast to DAP, where children’s learning is to come about from their own individual and personal experiences, discovery and free-play, (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). For example, Ruth views the curricula practice of children learning through play as one where adult input is required to enhance children’s understanding: “because they [children understanding values and concepts] don’t necessarily, automatically just happen” (Lines 3-4). The phrase “because they...” is a grammatical feature called a “connector” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98), connecting an uninterrupted play environment (Line 1), children’s understanding (Line 2), and the notion of learning not automatically happening (Lines 3-4). The use of the connector links these ideas, reinforcing the premise that the type of learning required in the policies does not always happen in an uninterrupted play environment. Ruth’s comments in Excerpt 7.2 confirm her view that adult interaction enhances children’s play.

Excerpt 7.2.

- 1 *Ruth*: My philosophy is ...children learn through play, however their play is
- 2 enhanced by well chosen and meaningful interactions and at times, interventions
- 3 by the staff or by the teacher. (TR2:29)

Teacher directed practice is further legitimated by the way Ruth understands her role as teacher, and that of other staff, to interact thoughtfully in children’s play and, intervene where necessary (Excerpt 7.2). She also notes the importance of choosing carefully when to interact with children and what to say as part of those interactions. The phrase “My philosophy is” (Line 1, Excerpt 7.2) is a declarative statement containing a degree of certainty and truth (Fairclough, 2003, p. 117) and shows Ruth’s conviction to children learning through play along with “meaningful interactions” provided by staff and teachers (Line 2, Excerpt 7.2).

In line with teacher directed practice, Ruth understands the role of the teacher to interact meaningfully in children’s play. Free play often refers to the type of play espoused in DAP, which is “child-initiated” and “provides a context for children to practice newly acquired skills” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 14). On the contrary, children’s play, according to Ruth, is an opportunity for children to

learn via meaningful interactions and at times, through interventions by staff. Ruth's account suggests that children's play can be enhanced by meaningful and well timed interactions and interventions by adults. On this basis, Ruth maintained that teachers can "make a difference in children's play" (TR1:27). To do this, the teacher, "with all her skills and knowledge as an early learning professional, [she] should be able to gauge at what point it becomes interrupted play" (TR1:26). That is, skilled teachers are able to make professional judgments about opportune times to intervene in children's play when the aim is to enhance children's learning.

In Excerpt 7.3, Ruth's view of 'uninterrupted play' is explained further. She describes how she remembered the concept of free-play when entering the early childhood field many years before.

Excerpt 7.3.

- 1 *Ruth:* When the free-play concept came in...staff stood back and drank their
2 coffee on the edge of the sandpit and [children] do [did] their own thing for the
3 next three hours. Which is fine [not interrupting children's play] sometimes, it
4 depends on the children and the group. That can be fine sometimes, but it might
5 not necessarily be, if you look at all this other learning that can happen.
6 *Interviewer:* That would be an issue I imagine that this is raised here [at your
7 school/pre prep program], the concept of 'free play' and preschool. What sort
8 of response do you have when families say, "Do all the children [only] free play?"
9 *Ruth:* I guess...the cliché word now, is 'uninterrupted play', you see. So once
10 again, if someone applies for a job here and I see the word 'uninterrupted play' in
11 their philosophy, I immediately put a question mark [beside their name], as it
12 shouldn't be seen as uninterrupted play, it should be seen as all this [the sum of]
13 the teacher, or all the staff members. She [the teacher] may choose not to
14 interrupt their play, but with all her skills and knowledge as an early learning
15 professional, she should be able to gauge at what point it becomes interrupted
16 play. (TR1:26)

In the depiction of the concept of free-play (Excerpt 7.3), Ruth implies that some early childhood practitioners take a non-interventionist approach to children's play and because of this, miss opportunities to assist children's learning. Ruth's conviction about the value of interacting with children is apparent when she says that she may not employ a staff member who endorses the practice of 'uninterrupted play' (Lines 9-13). Thus, Lily has legitimated teacher directed learning practices.

Aspects of Ruth's curricula practice are influenced by the expectations of the school, Hillbridge Grammar. This is apparent in the interviews and from the school practice where specialist teachers from the primary school who teach French, physical education, literacy and music also teach these curriculum subjects to children in the Early Learning Centre (Early Learning Centre, Hillbridge Grammar School Philosophy, 2004). The school's emphasis on literacy is evident in Excerpt 7.5, where Ruth discusses how phonics is taught at the school library each week, for all children attending the Early Learning Centre.

Excerpt 7.4.

- 1 *Interviewer:* How do you see it [specialist subjects within the curriculum]?
- 2 (TR1:15)

Excerpt 7.5.

- 1 *Ruth:* We also have early literacy classes at the school library each week. The
- 2 librarian takes a story time session. We also use Letterland®. We have one
- 3 sound each week and we have one area in the room where we set up this. There
- 4 are three activities that stem from the Letterland® activities, it is very low key and
- 5 it is there for the children who are ready for it. You do see it in the children's
- 6 play in other areas, they are making and learning the sounds. (TR1:16)

Teacher directed practice is noticeable and endorsed through Ruth's reference to "we have early literacy classes" (Line 1), "we [introduce] one sound [phonic] per week" (Lines 2-3), and have "activities that stem from Letterland®" (Line 4). Letterland®, a phonics "system for teaching literacy skills to children...through a unique pictogram and metaphor based story system" is teacher directed practice as it teaches children particular adult-introduced concepts (Wendon & Letterland International, 2004, p. 2). Introducing phonics through the Letterland® system, and teaching phonics to children each week, is the antithesis of practices advocated in DAP, where children are thought to best learnt through play where that is voluntary and directed by the child, and through her/his own curiosity (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997).

Even though Ruth's transcripts show that while she endorses teacher directed practice, she also draws on DAP. For example, providing children with opportunities to actively learn through the environment (Lines 2-6, Excerpt 7.5), is a principle of DAP (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997, p. 13). The statement, "it

[Letterland®] is there for the children who are ready for it”, implies children need to be ‘ready’ for learning (Line 5, Excerpt 7.5), suggesting the DAP concept of readiness, where teachers determine when individual children are developmentally ready to learn. In this instance, Ruth combines teacher directed practice, where children are taught curriculum concepts (Letterland®), compromised with a DAP outlook which recommends children being developmentally ‘ready’ for learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Another way Ruth draws on both teacher directed practice and DAP is by calling curriculum subjects “curriculum opportunities” (TR1:17) within a play environment (TR2:30). The use of the term curriculum opportunities provides some distance between what might be perceived as ‘school-like practices’ and curricula practices in preschool. The term “schoolification” has been used to mean early childhood education being absorbed or “colonised” by primary school education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2006, p. 62). ‘Schoolification’ of early childhood education occurs where the curriculum focus is traditional primary school curriculum areas of mathematics, language, and literacy skills, and so on (OECD, 2006). Ruth tries to distance her practice from ‘school-like’ curriculum practices by saying that Letterland® activities carried out by the specialist teachers at the Early Learning Centre were “very low key” (Line 4, Excerpt 7.5), which implies that they are not the same literacy practices found in primary school. She also explained that the three Letterland® activities were for children who were ready for them (Line 5, 7.5), suggesting that some children may not be developmentally or educationally ready, and have the choice not to access these activities. Therefore, even though Ruth legitimates teacher directed practice she does so with some influence from the DAP discourse.

In summary, this section (7.2.1) has provided instances where Ruth has legitimated teacher directed practice. Excerpts revealed teacher directed practice to include practices where Ruth deliberately interacted with children to enhance learning. Ruth was explicit with her commitment to teacher directed practice, in particular where she declared the teacher role to deliberately intervene in children’s play (TR2:29). Even though teacher directed learning is a contrasting practice to that

of DAP, there were influences of DAP in Ruth's interviews. In the next section (7.2.2), instances where Lily explores the possibility of teacher directed practice, yet does not show full commitment to the practice, are provided.

7.2.2 Teacher directed practice marginalised: Lily.

This section discusses how Lily marginalises teacher directed practice, and at times explores the possibility of teacher directed practice. In the following excerpt, Lily partially endorses teacher directed practice through her questioning about how she could move a child on in their learning.

Excerpt 7.6.

- 1 *Lily:* Sometimes I think with art, like how do you get a child
- 2 [to paint differently]...like I had a child last year who was just painting,
- 3 painting, painting, and everyday he would completely cover the art easel
- 4 [with paint] and I thought well, if they [children] are not taught or shown or
- 5 helped to get past that they may never get past it. With learning you do have
- 6 to have something...(TL1:11)

Lily maintained that children's learning may stagnate and not move past a particular point if they are not taught or shown alternatives (Lines 5-6, Excerpt 7.6). Lily said that you do have to "do something" (Lines 5-6), implying that teachers should directly 'teach', 'show', or 'help' (Lines 4-5) children learn. However, Lily does not state how she will directly teach children skills, so that learning does not stagnate. There is a silence about how this practice might be carried out.

In contrast to the silence, in another episode Lily explained how she considers extending children's literacy learning after they have watched the Letterland® instructional phonics CD. In this episode it is not clear to what extent Lily would like to directly teach concepts to children, but she does provide children with the opportunity to learn literacy concepts after children have viewed the Letterland® instructional phonics CD.

Excerpt 7.7.

- 1 *Lily:* With [learning] the alphabet everyone is using Letterland®. So the children
- 2 are telling me Letterland® letters and names. They know it all. I am thinking,
- 3 that I am following on from that [in my program], but I am not pushing it. I
- 4 mean that there has to be an advantage if they know them [letters of the
- 5 alphabet] at that age. One of the Dads gave me the [Letterland] CD and it is a

Excerpt 7.7 shows how Lily has marginalised teacher directed practice, where it is relegated to occupying a compromised position (Fairclough, 2003). The compromised position of teacher directed learning is apparent where Lily explains that she is “not pushing it [academic learning]” (Line 3), yet acknowledges the benefits of children learning beginning phonics from the Letterland® instructional phonics CD. Lily’s reluctance to teach skills and concepts directly to children, as she does not want to appear to be “pushing” academic learning (Line 3), is consistent with DAP, where “pushing” children to learn is deemed a developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP); in particular, where children are put in situations where their “developmental capabilities” are “exceeded” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 124). It is most likely that Lily partially resists teacher directed practice, and directly teaching children phonics, due to her understandings and endorsement of the DAP discourse (illustrated in Section 6.2.1). It is not clear if Lily was letting children in her class watch the Letterland® instructional phonics CD, given to her by one of the children’s parents, or not (Lines 1-6, Excerpt 7.7). However, Lily was aware of the CD’s content, as she said, it is a “great musical” (Line 6, Excerpt 7.7), and could see the learning benefits for children (Lines 2-5, Excerpt 7.7).

Moreover, Lily normalises the Letterland® instructional phonics CD and justifies its use due to children’s (potential) educational gains. She normalises children watching the Letterland® instructional phonics CD by saying “everyone is using it” (TL4:74), implying that the practice is appropriate if everyone is using it. Second, Lily justifies the Letterland® instructional phonics CD by highlighting the benefits for children’s learning, stating that: “children are telling me Letterland® names” (Lines 1-2), and “they know it all” (Line 2). Third, Lily justifies the Letterland® instructional phonics CD based on the effect of children learning letters and names that she is seeing (Lines 1-3, Excerpt 7.7). She advocates children watching the Letterland® instructional phonics CD when she says: “there has to be an advantage [for children to learn phonics]” (Lines 4-5). Lily does not dismiss

children’s learning gains when they watch the Letterland® instructional phonics CD, which contains learning about beginning phonics concepts.

Regardless of Lily’s recognition of the benefits of Letterland® instructional phonics CD, she relegates teacher directed practices to occupying a compromised position (Fairclough, 2003), as she does not fully endorse teaching children skills and knowledge directly. For example, Lily states that she is “not pushing it [academic learning]” (Line 3), yet acknowledges the benefits of learning about beginning phonics for children. If Lily fully endorsed teacher directed learning she would embrace the instructional learning of phonics contained in the Letterland® instructional phonics CD, and extend children’s learning by incorporating phonics into her teaching. Instead, Lily states that “one of the Dads gave me the [Letterland] CD” and “it is a great musical” (Lines 5-6), with both statements playing down the significance of the Letterland® instructional phonics CD as a teaching resource, which is consistent with the DAP view where it is most likely that such a didactic resource would be discouraged (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

In summary, Lily’s interview accounts show that she was not adverse to teacher directed practice, and was open to the possibility of engaging in such practices. However, it was noticeable that there were silences around the way Lily proposed to directly teach children concepts and skills to extend on children’s learning about phonics. Teacher directed practice was marginalised as Lily relegated the formal teaching of phonics to occupying a compromised position (Fairclough, 2003) making a note that she does not “push” academic learning onto children (Line 3). This view is consistent with DAP (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

7.2.3 Teacher directed practice silenced: Christiana.

Teacher directed practice is silenced in Christiana’s interview transcripts. For example, where one would expect to find evidence of teacher directed practice, it is not apparent. In Excerpt 7.8, Christiana describes a hypothetical teaching and learning situation, illustrating how she would avoid directly teaching children.

Excerpt 7.8.

- 1 *Interviewer:* So if you wanted to teach drawing skills, would you approach it a different
- 2 way?

3 *Christiana*: Yes, I would do it as an experience in the room. Like doing more things
4 to do with fine motor stuff [development]...if there were children who were not good
5 at drawing, like not [being able to draw an object]...or [able to] hold[ing] pencils,
6 grasping and things like that. I would do activities to cater for that...Say, that they
7 were really that bad with it [drawing skills] you would set it [the environment] up as an
8 experience as they [children] come and go. But you would also kind of approach the
9 situation to get them to do it [learn how to draw, hold a pencil and grasp objects]
10 specifically. You know you have got something [a learning activity] set up, and Tim
11 and Tom who aren't really good at it and you want, like...them to be good at
12 grasping...say cutting with scissors. You have things that they can cut out, but they
13 don't want to do that, and you try things, and you know them and sometimes you think
14 that all they need is to start them off and encourage them, the verbal encouragement
15 and reassurance. You know, 'that looks fantastic, you are nearly finished'.
16 *Interviewer*: So encouragement is okay in that case?
17 *Christiana*: Yeah. (TC3:81)

When asked how she would teach specific skills to children, such as drawing, Christiana replies that she would “do it as an experience in the room” (Line 3, Excerpt 7.8), which means that she would set up activities for children to learn in their own time and space. There is a teacher expectation here that children will engage in the activity and learn through discovery. Endorsing DAP, Christiana said that children learn through the classroom environment which is set up in such a way that they learn on their own, with minimal adult guidance (Lines 3-14, Excerpt 7.8). If one endorses DAP, they would only introduce curricula materials and learning after an individual child has demonstrated the “mental ability needed to master them [the curricula materials]” (Elkind, 1989, p. 114), rather than before. Christiana’s reluctance to directly teach children skills and concepts, illustrated in Excerpt 7.8, is in line with the DAP approach that maintains that curriculum should be matched to the individual child’s emerging intellectual abilities, rather than teach specific skills to children, such as drawing. Christiana’s endorsement of the DAP discourse, and the silence about teacher directed learning discourse in Excerpt 7.8, is clear through the subtle way she intended to persuade children to become involved in the activity she set up. The use of the phrase “you [the teacher] kind of approach the situation to get them [children] to do it specifically” (Lines 8-10, Excerpt 7.8) indicates Christiana’s expectation that children will access the particular learning activity.

There are silences in Excerpt 7.8, as there is no indication that children will be taught skills directly by Christiana, even when children were deemed to be ‘bad at drawing’ (Lines 4-8). Driven by concerns for the inappropriateness of “formal, academic instruction of young children”, the emphasis in DAP (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. v) is for teachers to keep teacher directed practices to a minimum. The preferred pedagogical approach advocated by DAP means that teachers in practice can shy away from teaching children skills and concepts, as found in Christiana’s situation, even if teaching skills and concepts directly is the most effective way for children to learn in particular situations.

From the excerpt above (7.8) it is noticeable that there are silences when it comes to Christiana teaching children concepts and skills directly. For example, Christiana avoids directly teaching children skills at a time where one might expect a teacher to step in and demonstrate the skills, particularly when a child is deemed as ‘bad’ at drawing. Instead, children are offered adult encouragement and praise if they attempt an activity (Lines 13-15). Consistent with DAP, Christiana is showing that she thinks her teaching role is to facilitate children’s learning through play; play that is voluntary and directed by individual children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Christiana’s reluctance to directly teach children skills and knowledge (TC3:81) has been referred to in literature as: “to teach without teaching” (McArdle, 2001, p. 215). The phrase that McArdle (2001) uses, to ‘teach without teaching’, uncomfortably “holds together the two opposing areas of freedom (child-centredness) and discipline (teacher directed pedagogy)” (p. 215). The use of the phrase “you [the teacher] kind of approach the situation to get them [children] to do it specifically” (Lines 8-10, Excerpt 7.8) indicates a hesitancy and reluctance on Christiana’s part to directly teach specific skills and concepts to children. Others (for example, Burton & Lyons, 2000), in the Australian context, have noted this phenomenon which is particular to preschool education, and they have asked “when does a teacher, teach?” (p. 271). Rather than an early childhood teacher ‘teaching’, a view where teachers are ‘facilitators’ of children’s learning is dominant in literature (Logue & Harvey, 2010).

In summary, this section (7.2) has shown how teacher directed practice was legitimated by Ruth, marginalised by Lily, and silenced by Christiana. Ruth was explicit with her commitment to teacher directed practice, in particular where she declared the teacher role to deliberately intervene in children's play (TR2:29). Analysis shows how Lily's understanding of the DAP discourse influenced her teacher decision making, and subsequently she marginalised teacher directed practice. Whereas, Christiana did not discuss any instances of when she might directly teach children skills and concepts. To further investigate the way discourses are legitimated, marginalised and silenced, the next section (7.3) examines further how DAP is legitimated.

7.3 Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Legitimated

This section considers how developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is legitimated. It provides two examples of how DAP is legitimated in the data. Section 7.3.1 shows how Christiana is initially unfamiliar with features of DAP in the first interview when she was relatively new to her place of work, Winter Court Childcare Centre. By the second interview, Christiana was endorsing the same DAP features. The way DAP is legitimated is also shown through analysis of interview accounts (Section 7.3.2), where the practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests is examined.

7.3.1 Unfamiliar curricula practices becoming familiar.

This section shows Christiana's unfamiliarity with the way her colleagues planned a DAP program at Winter Court Childcare Centre, as depicted in her first interview. By the time of the second interview two months later, Christiana had become familiar with DAP. Features of DAP that were unfamiliar to Christiana to begin with, were legitimated by Christiana in later interviews.

Episodes where Christiana found the curricula practices of her colleagues at Winter Court Childcare Centre 'odd' and unfamiliar are discussed first. Next, episodes of Christiana finding curricula practices of her colleagues' familiar are identified.

Excerpt 7.9 is from Christiana's first interview, two months after she started teaching at Winter Court Childcare Centre.

Excerpt 7.9.

- 1 *Interviewer:* Is there anything that you want to add about your curriculum?
2 *Christiana:* At the start I found it [child care] different to [...] obviously coming
3 into a centre, not being there at the beginning of the year, planning using someone
4 else's program, because I never used to plan the way that the lady [early childhood
5 practitioner] does at the moment. I used to have a different format, so [I have been]
6 adapting the format that she is using, fitting it to what I know. I didn't use
7 developmental areas, that I am aware of, and activities that I am [providing for
8 children, I am] fitting them into those [developmental areas]. I found that different
9 at the start and I think difficult because I had used different planning formats
10 [previously] . (TC1:20)

To identify 'unfamiliar' episodes, where people find a view of the world as "somewhat odd", can be carried out by looking for instances where people do not hold the same implicit assumptions as others (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 65). For example, the DAP discourse was apparent in Excerpt 7.9, however, Christiana said that she was not used to using developmental areas to plan a program for children (Lines 6-10). This signalled an instance of the 'unfamiliar'. Christiana initially distanced herself from planning using developmental areas, finding these practices difficult to adapt to because of the lack of familiarity with the type of planning used at the setting (Lines 2-10). Christiana indicated that her unfamiliarity with the way of planning was due to "not being there at the beginning of the [preschool] year", "using someone else's program" (Lines 3-4), and using a different format to plan.

There is some distance between Christiana's known and familiar way of planning a program and the approach taken by her colleagues at Winter Court Childcare Centre. For example, Christiana says she had tried to get used to planning a program using a "different format" and "adapting" it to practices she was familiar with (Lines 5-6). Christiana used the word "different" four times in Excerpt 7.9 (Lines 2, 5, 8, 9), and the word "difficult" (Line 8), which reveals how unfamiliar these curricula practices were to her. In Lines 6-10 (Excerpt 7.9), Christiana said that she had not used "developmental areas" (that she was aware of) in the past, nor was she used to having "to fit" activities into developmental areas. The planning task of "fitting" activities for children into developmental areas is a DAP inspired practice. It arises from Victorian early childhood policies (for example, *Children's*

Services Licensing and Operational Guide, DHS, 2004a) where educators are required to “translate knowledge about the child and children’s development into planned opportunities for learning” (Lines 25-26, Extract 5.4, Chapter 5, DHS, 2004a, pp. 25-26). Instead of being familiar with developmental planning practices, as other staff members at Winter Court Childcare Centre seemed to be, according to Christiana, she found the practices to be “somewhat odd” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 65).

Another way Christiana shows her unfamiliarity with planning in developmental areas is the way she refers to her colleagues. Using the term “the lady” (Line 4), to refer to her colleague, creates distance between herself and the colleague. It also reduces her colleague’s agency (Fairclough, 2003). For example, the representation of the social actor, who is an early childhood practitioner, has been “passivated” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 145), by reducing the importance of her role to something unfamiliar and lacking a professional title.

In the next excerpt taken from interview one, Christiana shows some familiarity with DAP, yet it also shows her lack of confidence with her practice. Excerpt 7.10.

1 *Interviewer:* What else do you think that this [preschool] year is important for?

2 *Christiana:* I suppose a play-based experience, but they are able to learn about
3 different things. Things that they may need later on, learning say, they may not be
4 able to read, a four year old child probably would not be able to, but understand
5 well, when we read books, which way we turn the paper, which way we read the
6 text. Starting to learn to write, to read. Turning the pages, knowing which way the
7 book goes, so pre-reading, things like that.

8 *Interviewer:* Okay, so play-based. How would you describe your program, would
9 you say that it is play-based? If I am a parent and say, “What sort of program do
10 you run?”

11 *Christiana:* I would say a play-based experience.

12 *Interviewer:* Experience?

13 *Christiana:* Well, a program that is based around interests, needs and
14 developmental areas. I’d probably sum it up like that, and I would further
15 explain it as ‘play-based with activities’, which involves, experimenting,
16 manipulating, sensory things, all different things like that. (TC1:16)

The language Christiana uses in Excerpt 7.10 suggests that she was not overly confident about what a play-based program meant to her. Declarative terms (Fairclough, 2003) indicate that there might have been a lack of certainty about Christiana's thoughts on the importance of the preschool year, and the type of program she provides: "I suppose" (Line 2, Excerpt 7.10), and "I'd probably sum it up like that" (Line 14, Excerpt 7.10). The term "probably" could be an example of expressive modality, which expresses Christiana's obligation in the situation (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 151). The term "probably" may indicate some uncertainty and lack of conviction about the type of program she is implementing. Lack of conviction is revealed in the use of modality terms "suppose" (Line 2) and "probably" (Line 14). In response to the question, what is important in the preschool year (which has been asked before), Christiana restated her initial response: "I would say a play-based experience" (Line 11). Even though I probed the issue further by prompting Christiana to expand on what she meant by the term "experience" (Line 12), she changed the term and described her program as "play-based with activities (Line 15). As researcher, I may have played a part in co-constructing meaning this episode through the type of questioning used.

The episode in Excerpt 7.10 illustrates two points. First, Christiana shows her commitment to the DAP discourse through her endorsement of a play-based program where children can play, experiment and manipulate objects (Lines 11-16). Second, even though Christiana's commitment to the practice of play is apparent, comments made in the interview indicate that she may have been uncertain about her program being described as play-based. Both Excerpts 7.9 and 7.10 show that Christiana may have been unfamiliar with some DAP features and was uncertain about what a play-based program meant in this context.

A discursive shift in the way Christiana constructs the DAP discourse takes place between the first (19 May 2004) and second interviews (14 July 2004). Unlike the first interview (Excerpts 7.10, 7.11), in the second interview Christiana demonstrated more familiarity with DAP and showed confidence with her practice.

Excerpt 7.11.

- 1 *Interviewer:* Let's talk more about observations. (...)
- 2 *Christiana:* What I do is, I went through them [all developmental observations

3 made on children in program] all last term and had a look and went through each
4 observation to see what sort of area it covered and just did like a list of all the
5 children...all the children's [names] up the top and the [developmental] areas down
6 the side and kind of how many observations I had in each [developmental area],
7 just to get an overview...If there are any problems it helps if I have got enough
8 observations to cover that area, it helps to clarify things. (TC2:25)

Using Fairclough's (2001b) CDA approach to identifying common sense understandings in text, it assists in finding the 'familiar'. Familiarity can be found in implicit assumptions and normalised beliefs, where particular understandings are presupposed and particular values and knowledge are viewed as common sense (Fairclough, 2001b). Christiana's construction of the DAP discourse moved from being a practice that was "different" (Lines 2, 5, 8, 9, Excerpt 7.9) and unfamiliar in the first interview, to assisting her to "clarify things" in the second interview (Line 8, Excerpt 7.11). In Excerpt 7.11 Christiana confidently describes the process she takes to record children's developmental needs. Using the term "it helps to clarify things" (Line 8, Excerpt 7.11) shows how useful taking recorded observations of children's developmental abilities, is for her. Christiana justifies the practice of recording developmental observations of children based on the information the observations give her, and if there are any problems with children she can use observations to help "clarify things" (Lines 6-8, Excerpt 7.11).

The type of legitimation strategy Christiana uses here is called "rationalisation" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98). Legitimation through rationalisation occurs when the purpose of recording developmental observations of children (Lines 2-6) is justified to gain an overview of children's development (Lines 7-8). Rationalisation in this situation is illustrated by what Christiana thinks that she "must do" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 99). Christiana justifies the purpose of observing children's development to ascertain their needs (Line 7-8). Use of the DAP discourse in this way illustrates Christiana's "ideological assumption", which is that the curricula practice of identifying and addressing children's needs is viewed as common sense (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 64). Common sense assumptions are one strategy used to identify legitimation.

Christiana's commitment to the practice of identifying children's developmental needs is again evident in Excerpt 7.12.

Excerpt 7.12.

- 1 *Interviewer:* What do you think the role of observing is in preschool? How much
- 2 precedence do you think that you should give to observing?
- 3 *Christiana:* It [taking developmental observations] gives you an overview of that
- 4 child, that child's developmental areas. It allows you to notice, not notice more,
- 5 but have concrete evidence if there is an issue or a problem with that child and
- 6 you have to take that to the preschool field officer [children's services officer] or
- 7 something like that. It gives you that evidence. (TC2:26-27)

Christiana's certainty about the necessity of observing children is apparent through the use of particular modal features (Fairclough, 2003). Modal features show a person's obligation to a social practice and how committed or reluctant one is to carrying out a particular practice (Fairclough, 2003). For example, Christiana says that the practice of recording developmental observations "gives" her an overview of children (Lines 3-4); it "allows" her to notice children's development (Line 4), and it "gives" her evidence" of children's development (Line 7). The terms "it gives" (Lines 3,7) and "it allows" (Line 4) illustrates Christiana's commitment to the practice of taking recorded observations of children's development. Statements such as these made by Christiana reinforce the understanding that as a curricula practice taking developmental observations of children is an objective activity (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2003).

However, there could be other ways to interpret Excerpt 7.12. As researcher I asked questions that may have affected Christiana's response. For example, Christiana may have responded to the way the questions were asked, and the terminology used. Asking '*What do you think the role of observing is in preschool?*' (Line 1) implied that observing young children is part of preschool practice. Similarly, asking '*How much precedence do you think that you should give to observing?*' (Lines 1-2) suggests that I have placed 'precedence' on this practice. Even though Christiana's statements in Excerpt 7.12 suggest she showed commitment to the DAP approach, the effect of my positionality (Osgood, 2006a) as researcher cannot be underestimated.

The legitimization of the DAP discourse is apparent in the way in which Christiana authorises practices that are inspired by DAP. For example, recording developmental observations of children and viewing them as common sense knowledge (“it gives you an overview”, Line 3). The way the DAP discourse “reinforce[ed] the idea that the developmentally appropriate teacher provides the most correct form of teaching” (Ryan & Oschner, 1999) was apparent by the way Christiana adhered to practices consistent with DAP. Even though Christiana said that she was unfamiliar with the planning format at Winter Court Childcare Centre (Excerpt 7.9), she maintained that DAP was something she was exposed to in initial teacher education. On one occasion she said that child development was “drilled into us” in her initial teacher education (TC3:64, TC3:66). Christiana normalises the practice of recording developmental observations of children through her certainty about the necessity of observing children to provide her with information; her implicit assumptions that observations need to be carried out; and by the way that she endorses the practice of recording observations by stating that she might require such documentation for a preschool field officer [children’s services officer] (Line 6).

The DAP discourse was apparent in Christiana’s interview accounts discussed above, in particular where she went from perceiving DAP as ‘different’ and ‘odd’ to legitimating the same practices. In the above analysis, ways that Christiana rejected, then later accepted, features of DAP illustrate a discursive shift. Her commitment to features of DAP were not imposed by others, but rather her consent was “subjectively constituted” (Golding, 1992, p. 107). This suggests hegemony, where “dominant systems of meaning [which] are *lived* (author italics)” (Apple, 2004, p. 4).

In summary this section has illustrated how Christiana’s interview accounts revealed her initial unfamiliarity and uncertainty about DAP inspired ways of planning a program, to becoming familiar. It showed how Christiana went from being unfamiliar with features of DAP to legitimating the same features.

7.3.2 Legitimizing children's interests.

First, the way three policies endorse the practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests is illustrated. Next, interview accounts are analysed to investigate how teachers understand the practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests. The practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests, a feature of the DAP discourse, is focused on due to instances in the interview data where teachers question the adequacy of the practice, and therefore intricacies of legitimation can be uncovered. Even though the practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests originates as child-centred practice (Dewey, 1952; Entwistle, 1970), children's interests are referred to as a DAP characteristic due to its endorsement of the practices and the prevalence of DAP in the Australian context (see Section 2.4.3, Chapter 2 for discussion).

To commence this analysis, the ways children's interests are referred to in three of the four key policies (analysed in Chapter 5), the *Children's Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998), the *Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria* policy, (DHS, 2002) and the *Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide* (DHS, 2004a) are listed. Then an investigation of the ways Lily, Christiana, and Ruth construct children's interests is undertaken. In three Victorian policies, expectations contain the curricula practice where teachers are to plan educational programs based on children's interests:

- (i) "An educational program... [should be] based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each of the children cared for or educated by the service" (*The Children's Services Regulations*, Victorian State Government, 1998, p. 21)
- (ii) "The program must...meet individual children's stages of development, their needs and interests" (*Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria*, DHS, 2002, p. 23)
- (iii) "A children's program...builds on the individual strengths, interest and developmental level of each child" (*Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide*, DHS, 2004a, p. 25).

Each of these three policies refers to planning an educational program which ‘bases’, ‘meets’ or ‘builds’ on children’s interests. Not only are children’s interests to be taken into account by teachers, according to the three policies, children’s ‘development’ (DHS, 2002, 2004a; Victorian State Government, 1998), ‘experiences’ (Victorian State Government, 1998, p. 21), and ‘strengths’ (DHS, 2004a) are to be planned for. When practices are legitimated, “meanings, values and actions” (Apple, 2004, p. 4), and social practices, are endorsed. Each of these three policies endorse the practice of planning curricula content based on children’s interests, a feature of DAP. The policies contain the expectation and obligation, through modal terms “must” (DHS, 2002, p. 23) and implied terms where the expectation that a children’s program ‘will’ build “on the individual strengths, interest and developmental level of each child” (DHS, 2004a, p. 25). Modality markers in the three sections of policies (outlined above) illustrate a commitment to a particular truth (Fairclough, 2003) in the form of DAP, where staff members plan curricula content based on children’s interests. Noticeably, the policies do not provide detail in how a staff member is to carry out this practice. This may be why all three teachers endorse this practice to varying degrees, yet there are differences in the ways they have interpreted this practice.

The ways in which the three teachers construct the curricula practice of children’s interests is now considered. The three teachers thought it necessary to extend the practice of basing an educational program on children’s interests. Sometimes this includes interests derived from ‘outsiders’, either from teachers themselves, or parents, and at other times it includes supplementing children’s interests with curriculum content. The term ‘outsider’ is used here as interests, according to policies above, must be ‘based’, ‘met’, and ‘built’ on individual children. The policies do not include interests of others, so thus they are ‘outsider’ interests.

To assist in uncovering teacher practices with regard to children’s interests, ‘children’s interest’ collocations (Fairclough, 2001b) were identified (See Table B.10, Appendix B). The reason for identifying collocations is to examine how frequently cited words and terms within discourses are used in different ways

(Fairclough, 2003). To do this, patterns of co-occurrence surrounding the term ‘interests’ were identified in the three teachers in interview transcripts (Table B.10). Table B.10 shows that the three teachers carried out four main practices in relation to children’s interests, they: (1) identify children’s interests; (2) base curriculum on children’s interests; (3) assess and extend children’s interests; and (4) introduce ‘outsider’ interests, from teachers and parents. As found above and in Table B.10, teachers in the study do more than base their program on children’s interests, they introduce outside interests to supplement curriculum content (for example the Letterland® instructional phonics CD discussed in Section 7.2, and Christiana refers to a ‘parent’ interest as a basis for a curriculum activity, TC1:21 and Table B.10). How the three teachers legitimated the practice of planning curricula content based on children’s interests is now examined, commencing with Lily.

Even though Lily did not seem completely satisfied with the practice of basing her educational program on children’s interests, she did legitimate it.

Excerpt 7.13.

1 *Lily*: That is where I think that a guideline [curriculum framework document]
2 would be good for me. I don’t have any issues, because I have been going on
3 [planning from] children’s interests and I do all that in the program. You can see
4 things that they [children] are doing. Sometimes you do need to introduce your
5 own learning, because as like with the theorists and that, children don’t just
6 learn through play they also need some scaffolding as they just can’t... [learn
7 what they need to on their own]. (TL1:11)

In Excerpt 7.13 Lily noted that she was able to plan from children’s interests but did not seem to be completely satisfied that this approach exposed children to enough curricula content (Lines 4-7). Lily explicitly expressed concern about whether the practice of planning an educational program based on children’s interests was adequate for selecting curricula content (Lines 4-6, Excerpt 7.13). Even though Lily expressed her desire to add curricula content to the preschool program, she legitimated the DAP inspired practice of planning from children’s interests. She does this when she acknowledges that she already bases her educational program on children’s interests: “I don’t have any issues, because I have been going on [planning from] children’s interests and I do all that in the program” (Lines 2-3,

Excerpt 7.13). This statement indicates that Lily legitimates the practice of planning an educational program based on children's interests through her acknowledgment stating that she does this (Lines 2-3, Excerpt 7.13), yet questions the adequacy of this practice.

On the one hand, Lily acknowledged that she carried out the practice of addressing and planning for children's interests and said that she did not have any issues with it (Line 2, Excerpt 7.13). On the other hand, moments later in the interview (Excerpt 7.14), she discussed her dilemma of not knowing when she should be teaching children concepts, or when to introduce supplementary resources.

Excerpt 7.14.

- 1 *Lily:* And, that is the other thing, I think, Do I follow children's interests in going
- 2 with them? or Do I have a curriculum or guideline that tells me, should I start them
- 3 off to learn about themselves first? How do I start off with cutting with scissors
- 4 and that, where do I start that skill? Do you just give them [children] scissors?
- 5 When should they cut with scissors? Should it be second term, third term or do
- 6 you give them scissors straight away? (TL1:12)

Excerpt 7.14 reveals Lily's dilemma of not knowing when or if to teach children pre-planned content or concepts, or when to introduce resources to support children's learning. Excerpt 7.14 shows Lily's uncertainty about her planning. Hypothetical modality, where social actors question themselves revealing their modal position (Fairclough, 2003, p. 169), is apparent in the following phrases: "do I?" (Lines 1, 2, 3), "do you" (Line 4), "should I?" (Line 2), "should they?" (Line 5), "should it?" (Line 5), "how do I?" (Line 3), and "where do I?" (Line 4). Lily's questioning shows some uncertainty as well as illustrating her endorsement of the practice of planning content based on children's interests as she shows that she is trying to accommodate it.

The uncertainty about how she should address children's interests expressed by Lily in Excerpt 7.14 (Lines 1-2), has been echoed in other studies examining preschool curricula practice. When researching children's interests as a catalyst for planning with gifted preschoolers within a Victorian context, A. Grant (2004) argued that early childhood teachers have an expectation that they should always

follow children's interests, even though the teachers themselves expressed uncertainty about how to do this. Nonetheless, based on the two excerpts above (7.14, 7.15), Lily is both a supporter of planning an educational program based on children's interests, yet is also a critic as she questions whether teachers should introduce outside content, or even be guided by a curriculum framework.

Lily's struggle with knowing what constitutes a 'genuine' child interest uncovers larger issues at stake, particularly when teachers plan based on children's interests. The practice raises questions about the role of adults in determining children's interests, and whether determining curricula content based on children's interests is adequate for selecting curricula content (Lines 4-6, Excerpt 7.13). On this same issue, Woodhead (1997) provokes the early childhood curricula practice of addressing and planning curricula content based on children's interests. Woodhead argues that children's interests are not an apparent quality of the child, but rather they are a "matter of cultural interpretation which will certainly be context-specific and may well vary amongst various stakeholders who believe they have the wisdom to shape children's futures" (p. 80). Thus, the practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests is not straightforward.

In contrast to Lily, Ruth legitimates the practice of planning curricula content based on children's interests yet questions the authenticity of the practice where teachers may contrive children's interests. When asked about projects and the project approach, Ruth says:

Excerpt 7.15.

- 1 *Interviewer:* How do you see projects and project approach?
- 2 *Ruth:* I think that it is important that a project is based on the interest of the child,
- 3 I think that it is important that within that project, although it might sound like
- 4 the idea is coming from the children, it is important that they do come from the
- 5 children with support from the teacher. It is very easy for teachers to...contrive,
- 6 almost contrive the situation so that the project happens. (TR1:32)

Ruth has difficulty accepting the practice where teachers contrive situations to make it appear as if an idea or interest has come from children (Excerpt 7.15). This shows Ruth's conviction to a particular type of practice, one where teachers are genuine in the way that they identify a child's 'interest'. Ruth legitimates this practice further

by stating that by incorporating ideas stemming from children themselves is important for early childhood curriculum. She does not state why. However, Ruth uses the phrase “it is important” (Lines 2, 3, 4) three times within Excerpt 7.15, indicating her commitment to the curricula practice where children’s interests should come from children themselves, rather than being contrived by adults. Even though it is apparent that Ruth legitimates the practice of planning an educational program based on children’s interests, she constructs this practice to include ‘outsider’ interests, either through “curriculum opportunities” (TR1:17) or through teacher introduced content (Section 7.3.1).

Lily, Ruth and Christiana legitimate the practice of basing curriculum content on children’s interests to some extent. However, Christiana’s practice seems to be most closely connected with the child’s actual interest in an activity. The concepts of selecting curricula concepts on children’s interests and whether children are interested or not are at times used interchangeably in Christiana’s interview accounts. Based on children’s interest or lack of interest in a particular activity, Christiana changed her curriculum content, including pre-planned activities stemming from pre-planned objectives for children (TC2:51). The teaching approach Christiana used relied on children to communicate the activities they were interested in, and for her to gauge the type of activities in which children might be interested. In addition, Christiana briefly mentions curriculum activities selected on “parent interests” and a “staff interest” (TC1:21).

Even though there are shared understandings between the three teachers about what it means to base an educational program on children’s interests, a feature of the DAP discourse, each teacher has constructed this practice in a slightly different way. For example, Lily raised the issue of when she should be teaching children concepts or whether introducing supplementary resources to extend children’s learning is an acceptable practice, rather than solely relying on children’s interests as a catalyst for curriculum content. Ruth addressed children’s interests in her program, yet she thought it necessary to supplement children’s interests with “curriculum opportunities” (TR1:17), and deliberately introduced content to children. Whereas Christiana changed curriculum content based on children’s

interest or lack of interest in a particular activity (TC2:51), and briefly mentioned supplementing children's interests as a basis for curriculum content with "parent interests" and a "staff interest[s]" (TC1:21). These examples, provided from teacher interview transcripts, illustrate the far reaching effect statements included within policy, such as the statement within the *Children's Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998) which says:

An educational program... [should be] based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each of the children cared for or educated by the service. (p. 21)

What is apparent, is that the three teachers interpret and construct practices from the DAP discourse in different ways. Consistent with findings from other chapters, each teacher justifies the practice of basing an educational program on children's interests, yet draw from discourses that are consistent with the educational context they teach within. Ruth, teaching in a school context, incorporates "curriculum opportunities" (TR1:17), or teacher introduced content (Section 7.3.1), and Christiana in a long day care context, is reluctant to introduce too much content that does not stem from children's interests, adhering to a DAP centred view, even though she briefly mentioned supplementing children's interests as a basis for curriculum content with "parent interests" and a "staff interest[s]" (TC1:21). Whereas Lily, working in a sessional kindergarten, questions whether she should be introducing supplementary resources to extend children's learning, rather than being consistent with DAP and relying on children's interests as a catalyst for curriculum content.

This section (7.3) has shown how DAP is legitimated in teacher interview transcripts. It has done this through illustrating how Christiana's interview accounts revealed her initial unfamiliarity and uncertainty about DAP inspired ways of planning a program, to becoming familiar. It also illustrated how the practice of addressing children's interests, a characteristic of DAP, is legitimated by teachers. The three teachers were not in agreement about how children's interests should be enacted in practice, yet they all seemed to endorse it to varying degrees. However, even though the three teachers seemed to embrace DAP according to interview

transcripts, their constructions of DAP are not easily unravelled. For example, the contradictory nature of teachers work may show up as unresolved, contradictory, or conflicting understandings of DAP. In addition, my own positioning as researcher, including my construction of DAP, the order and type of questions asked, and the way in which I asked the questions, will have most likely affected participant constructions of DAP.

7.4 Summary

This chapter assisted in answering a CDA generated question posed in Table 4.1 (Chapter 4), which asked, what discourses are marginalised, silenced, and excluded from the text? Subsequently, by applying CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) this chapter has analysed teacher interview transcripts, examining how teacher directed practice and features of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) were legitimated, marginalised, and silenced. The objective of this chapter was to address the research questions: (1) What influences early childhood teachers with curricula decision making? (2) What are the dominant discourses affecting early childhood teacher decision making? It was achieved by identifying frequently cited curricula terms (Section 7.1) and analysing the ways in which teacher directed practice was legitimated, marginalised, and silenced. In addition, the analysis built on from findings in previous chapters (5, 6), and it showed how the DAP discourse was legitimated (7.4). To illustrate how the DAP discourse was legitimated, a CDA was conducted on Christiana's interview accounts revealing her initial unfamiliarity and uncertainty about DAP features, to her becoming familiar with these same features in later interviews (7.3.1). Section 7.3.2 showed the ways the three teachers legitimated and adapted the DAP approach of basing curricula content on children's interests. The next chapter (8) concludes the study.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

In the absence of a government-mandated preschool curriculum, an assumption could be that early childhood teachers in Victoria in 2004 were in a position of relative autonomy with respect to teacher decision making. However, this study found that this was not the case. This final chapter revisits the aims of the study (Section 8.1), discusses the findings (Section 8.2), provides critical insights, and discusses implications arising from the study (Section 8.3). It offers recommendations in Section 8.4, a concluding statement is provided in Section 8.5, and a postscript in Section 8.6.

8.1 Aims of the Study

In the last decade, researchers concluded that little is known about what influences early childhood teacher decision making (TDM) (Genishi et al., 2001; Ryan & Goffin, 2008; Wood & Bennett, 2001). Coupled with this, many studies that have investigated early childhood TDM from the teacher perspective (for example, Abu-Jaber et al., 2010; Charlesworth et al. 1991, 1993; Chen, 1997; Doliopoulou, 1996; Hegde & Cassidy, 2010; Kim, et al., 2005; McMullen et al., 2005; Snider & Fu, 1990) have focused on developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), as a practice for which to strive, rather than investigating the wider influences on TDM.

Therefore, to address TDM in an area where there are few studies conducted from a critical point of view, this study interviewed three teachers working in Victorian preschools over one preschool year and analysed four key Victorian early childhood policies. Drawing on critical theory (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964) enabled the study to analyse data from a critical perspective, one which could uncover legitimated, marginalised, and silenced discourses in policy and teacher interview accounts. To understand how discourse positioned and affected teachers, the study conducted a critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) on the data, early childhood policies and teacher interviews. It did this to understand how discourse positioned and affected teachers' curricula decision making.

The central aim of the study was to address the main research question: What influences early childhood teacher curricula decision making? To explore this question further, two sub questions guided the study:

2. How do dominant discourses position early childhood teacher decision making?
3. How are curriculum and pedagogy described and represented in key Victorian early childhood policy documents in 2004, prior to the introduction of mandated curricula frameworks?

Drawing on Ball's (1994) forms of control within educational contexts, Chapter 5 investigated forms of control affecting teacher decision making in relation to curriculum. Based on a position that understands policies as constructed from discourse and ideology that are discursively produced within particular contexts (Gale, 1999; Sandra Taylor, 1997), policy was examined to find out how it was produced, what ideas were dominant and why, and who is privileged. The chapter drew on concepts of power, authority, and accountability to describe the role of policy in the Victorian preschool context, and it analysed how early childhood teachers were constructed within these policies.

Chapter 6 examined the effects of accountability on teacher decision-making, focusing on teacher performative accountability. Ranson's (2003) typology of accountability regimes was adapted and applied to investigate practices relevant to Victorian early childhood teacher accountability in 2004. With the focus on influences on curricula practices, this chapter provided insight into how teachers were affected by performative accountability.

Chapter 7 investigated teacher curricula practices in relation to how teachers legitimated, marginalised, or silenced particular discourses. Interview accounts of the three teachers, Christiana, Lily, and Ruth, were analysed to show how they reported on and constructed curricula practices. Building on from previous chapter findings (5, 6), the ways the DAP discourse was further legitimated was examined. To do this, analysis showed how one teacher, Christiana, was initially unfamiliar and uncertain about DAP features, to her becoming familiar with these same

features in later interviews. It also illustrated the ways the three teachers legitimated and adapted the DAP approach of basing curricula content on children's interests.

8.2 Findings of the Study

The study has five main findings:

- (i) The developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) discourse is the preferred curriculum in four Victorian early childhood policy documents;
- (ii) Early childhood teachers were invisible in three key early childhood policy documents and subsequently their authority as curricula experts was diminished;
- (iii) Early childhood teachers were held accountable for their curricula practice. Performative accountability was apparent in all three teacher interviews.
- (iv) The DAP discourse was legitimated in preschool education by early childhood teachers;
- (v) Teacher directed practice was legitimated, marginalised, and silenced by teachers in the study.

Each of the five findings is discussed in turn.

(i) The developmentally appropriate practice discourse is the preferred curriculum in four Victorian early childhood policy documents.

The finding addresses research questions two and three: How do dominant discourses position early childhood teacher decision making? How are curriculum and pedagogy described and represented in the key Victorian early childhood policy documents in 2004, prior to the introduction of mandated curricula frameworks?

The developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) discourse was a dominant discourse in the four key Victorian early childhood policies according to insights provided by CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003). Section 5.3 (Chapter 5) illustrated the ways in which the four policies: the *Children's Services Act* (Victorian State Government, 1996), the *Children's Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998), the *Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria* (DHS, 2002), and the *Children's Services Licensing and*

Operational Guide (DHS, 2004a) endorsed DAP as curriculum. The ways DAP functioned as a legitimated discourse in Victorian early childhood policy in 2004 highlights the effects of power in and behind discourse (Fairclough, 2001b). For example, one of the key early childhood policies, the *Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide* (DHS, 2004a) outlined what constitutes a "good [children's] program" (Extract 5.4, Chapter 5), with two of the four points (Line 21, Lines 25-27) derived from DAP; these being: i) a teacher should have knowledge of child development (Line 21, Extract 5.4, Chapter 5) and ii) a teacher should be able to "translate knowledge about the child and children's development into planned opportunities for learning" (Lines 25-26, Extract 5.4). The consequences of such statements are that a "good [children's] program" is dependent on and limited by the DAP discourse. In addition, it was found that curricula directives within two legalised policies, the *Children's Services Act* (Victorian State Government, 1996), the *Children's Services Regulations* (Victorian State Government, 1998), provided little scope for teachers to practise in ways other than DAP. Significantly, missing from the *Children's Services Act* (Victorian State Government, 1996) was any notion of children being educated via curriculum subject knowledge, or educated in ways other than through teachers meeting children's developmental needs. The implications of this omission are that 'other' ways of practising were not endorsed or legitimized as legislated government policy. Thus, as a form of control, key early childhood policies guided teachers into DAP ways of thinking and practising.

(ii) Early childhood teachers were invisible in policy and subsequently their authority as curricula experts was diminished.

Finding two is where early childhood teachers were invisible in three key early childhood policies and their authority as curricula experts diminished. The finding addresses research question one: What influences early childhood teachers' curricula decision making? It answers this question by applying a CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) to policy data to examine how early childhood teacher practice is constrained and identifies who has curricula authority and power in policies. As key stakeholders, one would expect teachers to be highly visible as social actors throughout the four key early childhood policies. Instead, the term 'teacher' is used

only once across the four policies and this is in relation to referring to eligibility requirements for preschool funding in the *Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria* policy (DHS, 2002). Here, it states that a preschool agency “must employ a qualified teacher holding an approved early childhood qualification” and that the “teacher must plan and deliver the preschool program at this funded location” (DHS, 2002, p. 5). Other than this single reference, in the Preschool Procedures and Funding policy, the four policies imply the presence of teachers rather than explicitly referring to them as a defined professional category.

The discursual effect (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) of the lack of recognition for teachers as curriculum experts in three policies (the Act, Regulations, and the Licensing and Operational Guide), and minimal curricula agency apparent in the fourth policy (Preschool Procedures and Funding policy) resulted in them being disempowered as a professional group. Ironically, the whole purpose of being a three or four year qualified teacher is to be able to be able to effectively implement early childhood curriculum and be recognised as curriculum experts. If this status is taken away through the lack of reference in policy to the professional role teachers hold, then teacher power is displaced. Furthermore, it was found in the study that both content and relations constraint (Fairclough, 2001b) impacted upon teachers. Content and relations constraint were apparent from the way in which teachers were invisible in three policy documents, their professional agency diminished by being categorised as ‘staff’, with non-qualified others holding authority for overseeing and ensuring curriculum. Therefore, a significant finding that has emerged from the study is that due to teacher invisibility in three key policies, early childhood teacher authority as curricula experts was diminished.

(iii) Early childhood teachers were held accountable for their curricula practice. Performative accountability was apparent in all three teacher interviews.

Despite there not being a government-mandated curricula framework for Victorian preschool education in 2004, the study found that teachers were held accountable for their curricula practice. The concepts of power, authority, and accountability were

examined in policy and in interview transcripts using CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003). Subsequently, various forms of control and obligation were brought to the forefront. Using a teacher accountability typology based on Ranson's (2003) work it was found that the three teachers were held accountable for their work, in particular performative accountability was noticeable. Lily was the only participant to show all three types of performative accountability: anxiety, confidence, and disregard. A summary of each of the three teacher's performative accountability is now provided.

Performative anxiety was evident when Lily expressed concern about her inability to comply with expectations of having enough written developmental observations and records for each child in the preschool group (Lines 3-8, Excerpt 6.1). Consistent with the DAP discourse, and its focus on recording developmental observations of children, Lily showed that she legitimated the practice of taking developmental observations of children in order to gain an "overall picture of a child" (Line 3, Excerpt 6.1). In contrast, at times Lily showed some confidence about the practice of recording children's development and making professional judgments. Disregard was shown by Lily for the curriculum advisory role Care-for-Children group employer played in guiding her teaching.

Christiana's interview accounts revealed both performative anxiety and confidence. Performative anxiety was manifested in Christiana's concern about not having enough recorded developmental observations of children, in response to an upcoming Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) (NCAC, 2001) review visit. Whereas performative confidence was apparent in Christiana's interview discussion immediately after the QIAS reviewer visit to Winter Court Childcare Centre, where she was more relaxed about the quality improvement review process. Consequently, it was found that Christiana's teaching practice was "steer[ed] at a distance" (Ball, 1994, p. 55) as the QIAS quality indicators guided her practice and imposed performative measures, rather than her performativity concerns arising from management. Moreover, this type of performative accountability "constitute[s] a more subtle yet totalizing form of control of teachers than is available in the top-down prescriptive steering" (Ball, 1994, p. 54). Thus, it

was found that implicit control and obligation in policy can lead to teacher performative accountability.

Ruth's interview accounts revealed performative confidence and disregard. Performative confidence was illustrated when Ruth showed self-assurance in her teaching abilities and through the way she described her working relationships with other staff. Ruth shows disregard for the inspection processes used by the Department of Human Services (DHS) staff when inspecting Hillbridge Grammar School Early Learning Centre. Ruth implied that DHS staff could be overly officious with preschool setting inspections and not acknowledge the good teaching practices and efforts that she and her staff had made at the early learning centre. This finding, where teachers were held accountable for their teaching practice, relates to two research questions: What influences early childhood teachers' curricula decision making? How do dominant discourses position early childhood teacher decision making?

(iv) The DAP discourse was legitimated by early childhood teachers.

A major finding of the study is that the DAP discourse was legitimated by teachers according to the CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) conducted on teacher interview accounts. This finding addresses two research questions: What influences early childhood teacher curricula decision making? How do dominant discourses position early childhood teacher decision making? Curricula practices stemming from DAP include teachers' viewing children as having developmental needs and planning activities based on children's interests in a play-based environment. Chapters 6 and 7 found that the DAP discourse was legitimated by the three teachers to varying extents.

The significance of this finding brings awareness to the way DAP operates as legitimated discourse in early childhood TDM in the study, and how it is reproduced as an unconscious agenda (Burman, 2008; Fairclough, 1995). The DAP discourse discursively operated as hegemony in teacher interview accounts. Hegemony, as "organised assemblage of meanings, values and actions which are *lived* [author italics]" (Apple, 2004, p. 4), legitimates and controls social practices such as TDM. Moreover, it was found that DAP legitimated particular curricula

practices and marginalised others. That said, teacher interview accounts revealed that preschool curriculum should be more than identifying and planning for children's interests as a basis of curriculum, and children's interests should not be contrived by adults. Also found in the data were instances where the DAP discourse was marginalised by other curricula practices, such as teacher directed practice (discussed as the next finding).

(vi) Teacher directed practice was legitimated, marginalised, and silenced by teachers in the study.

Teacher directed practice was legitimated, marginalised, and silenced by teachers in the study. This finding relates to two research questions: What influences early childhood teachers' curricula decision making? How do dominant discourses position early childhood teacher decision making? The study found teacher directed practice was legitimated by Ruth, marginalised by Lily, and silenced by Christiana. Ruth was explicit with her commitment to teacher directed practice, in particular where she declared the teacher role to deliberately intervene in children's play (TR2:29). Analysis shows how Lily's understanding of the DAP discourse influenced her teacher decision making, and subsequently she marginalised teacher directed practice. Whereas, Christiana did not discuss any instances of when she might directly teach children skills and concepts.

8.3 Critical Insights and Implications

Critical insights and implications arising from the findings are discussed in this section. Section 8.3.1 focuses on insights relevant for early childhood teachers, policy makers and regulators, Section 8.3.2 discusses the implications of the study's findings on policy, and Section 8.3.3 provides critical insights and implications in relation to the methodological value of the study.

8.3.1 Critical insights and implications for early childhood teachers, policy makers, and regulators.

The most significant finding arising from this study was the extent to which the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) discourse influenced teacher decision making (TDM). In the absence of a government mandated curriculum framework, DAP was the preferred curricula practice. The implications of DAP as dominant

discourse is that it operated as a ‘common sense’ (Apple, 2004) practice in policy and teaching, where it displaced, marginalised, and silenced other discourses. For example, the analysis conducted on the four key early childhood policies (Chapter 5) and teacher interview accounts (Chapter 7) found that DAP was the preferred curricula practice. In some instances, DAP marginalised teacher directed practice, discouraging teachers from directly teaching skills and curriculum content to children (Chapter 7).

As a consequence, other teaching and learning approaches and curriculum content were marginalised and displaced by DAP. This meant that due to the effects of the dominance of the DAP discourse it limited theoretical space for other ways of thinking and practising. Even though there were examples in the data showing practices that were not part of the DAP discourse, the dominance of the DAP discourse meant that it was difficult for teachers in the study to think and practise in other ways. Affirming McArdle’s (2001) finding where early childhood educators were found to “teach without teaching” (p. 215), this study has found that two teachers were reluctant to engage in teacher directed practice (Chapter 7). Instead they preferred children to learn through discovery.

The question raised by Ball (1994), “where are the teachers in all this [policy]?” is relevant here, particularly as there was a lack of reference to teachers in the four key early childhood policies, which inadvertently worked to undermine teacher professionalism and authority. Where proprietors and preschool agencies held authority over curriculum in the policies, implications were that teachers were denied public acknowledgment of their curricula expertise, and authority as qualified teachers. In these policy texts, teacher power was displaced (Ball, 1994). The lack of professional recognition for early childhood teachers is not a new issue. For example, Burton and Lyons (2000) reported on findings from the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (1996), where the commission found:

the vast bulk of persons engaged in long daycare activities, although they might be 3 or 4 year qualified professionals, are not engaged in the delivery of an educational program but rather the delivery of a developmental

program appropriate to the needs and age of the children. (Burton & Lyons, 2000, p. 278)

The findings from the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (1996) resulted in a debate over the role of early childhood teachers in long day care settings, with the argument centred on whether teachers “teach” in long day care or provide “developmental programs” for children (Burton & Lyons, 2000, pp. 278-279). In 2007 Sumsion noted that there was a lack of professional recognition for early childhood teachers, particularly those working in long day care settings, where teachers could expect low pay and poor conditions. These issues raise critical insights into the professional status of Australian early childhood teachers and the importance of their skills and knowledge being recognised, no matter which sector they work within.

The potential effects of early childhood teachers not being recognised as teachers in policy, and as professionals who hold particular expertise in early childhood curriculum design and implementation, puts their professional status, pay, duties, and identity as teachers, under threat. It has been noted by Burton and Lyons, (2000), that if teachers are viewed as those who encourage children’s development (in a long day care setting context), rather than as teachers in an educational context, teachers may be viewed by others as performing less professional duties. Furthermore, rather than solely being a semantic difference between professional titles and duties, there are consequences for early childhood teachers, as not holding a title recognised to be professional, (such as ‘teacher’) can result in low pay and poor conditions, which are often significantly less than primary and secondary teachers (Burton & Lyons, 2000; Lloyd & Hallett, 2010; Sumsion, 2007). One implication of not holding professional recognition in key policies is that those outside the profession, such as policy makers and politicians, have a stronger position in deciding the scope and duties (and ultimately pay and conditions) that comprise the teacher’s role.

The findings provide insights into the Victorian preschool policy context, where previously little was known about how the accountability discourse affected early childhood TDM. Teachers were held accountable for their curricula practice

and were affected by performative accountability. While all three teachers were required to account for their practice, performative accountability affected each teacher differently, in relation to what and to whom teachers were accountable.

An implication arising from this finding is a call for policy makers, managers, and regulators in early childhood education to be aware of the affects of performative accountability. The findings from the study suggest that some teachers may have enough confidence to disregard accountability measures when their professional judgement decides it to be the best way forward, whereas others may be unsure or overwhelmed by accountability measures, resulting in performative anxiety. In particular, this study found that teacher performative anxiety exists where unclear professional expectations (such as an unlimited amount of recorded developmental observations to be taken of each child) are coupled with stringent accountability measures (QIAS and regulatory accountabilities), both of which are to be managed by teachers. The ways in which accountability mechanisms, such as the expectations of the QIAS and regulatory bodies (such as the DHS in 2004), can contribute to generating performative anxiety in teachers and sustaining power relations, requires careful consideration by regulators and policy makers.

8.3.2 Critical insights and implications of study findings for policy.

The finding where early childhood teachers were invisible in three key early childhood policies, coupled with the extent to which the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) discourse influenced teacher decision making (TDM), have implications for future policy. For example, the ways in which policies are constructed requires careful consideration. In particular, policies should name all key stakeholders by their professional title and clearly outline expectations in line with their professional status. Otherwise professional groups, such as early childhood teachers, are in jeopardy of their professionalism being eroded and displaced.

8.3.3 Insights into the methodological value of the study.

The benefits of critical theory for the study were threefold: to bring awareness to discourses that are dominant through highlighting so-called objective perspectives and truths (Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964); break with taken-for-granted

assumptions and to resist dominant and disempowering discourses (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964) and to recommend actions for social change. Through using critical theory and CDA to analyse data, this study provides an original examination into early childhood TDM through policy and teacher interviews.

The application of CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) to policy in educational contexts has been used on a number of occasions (c.f. S. Taylor, 2004; Thomas, 2005a, 2005b). Similarly, other investigations and critiques have used critical theory to examine TDM (Apple, 2004; Arthur & Sawyer, 2009; Ball, 1994; Giroux, 2003, McLaren, 2003). However, studies examining TDM in contexts without government-mandated curricula are less frequently documented, and studies using CDA to analyse TDM in a preschool context have not been found. Thus, this study is innovative in the way it uses critical theory (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964) to investigate power, authority, and legitimation in TDM within a preschool context without a mandated curriculum, and with its application of CDA (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003).

8.4 Recommendations

Advocating for social action and change often is referred to as the emancipatory or transformative aspect, and is a foundational principle of critical theory (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1997; Gramsci, 1971; McInerney, 2004). Reconceptualising practice in early childhood education suggests an agenda of imagining possibilities outside dominant paradigms (Sumsion, 2006, 2007; Woodrow, 1999). In this section, critical theory (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Marcuse, 1964) and CDA approaches (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003) frame recommendations within an agenda of social action and change (Apple, 2004; McInerney, 2004).

Based on the findings, four recommendations are made for social action and change within early childhood education. The first recommendation is to examine the existing practices of early childhood policy and education with the aim of identifying the extent to which members of those contexts (for example, teachers, policy makers, and teacher educators) have access to alternative theories to inform practice; rather than limiting theory to those that legitimate DAP. The second

recommendation is for systemic change within Australian policy, regulatory, and practice contexts. In particular, for early childhood teachers to be recognised as professionals in their own sector, both in terms of recognition for the specialised type of work early childhood teachers do, and to make the professional role of teachers visible in policy. The third recommendation involves constructing further discursive spaces where teachers have opportunities to directly shape early childhood curricula policy. The fourth recommendation is for the conduct of future research into early childhood TDM from multiple points of view, including critical perspectives.

The first recommendation is to examine the existing practices of policy and education contexts with the aim of identifying the extent to which members of those contexts (for example, teachers, policy makers, and teacher educators) have access to alternative theories to inform practice; rather than from those theories that legitimate the DAP discourse. Awareness generated from such insights will provide members of the early childhood education community with other curricula and pedagogical opportunities, those not limited nor restricted by DAP. Early childhood teachers should have access to a variety of theories and approaches to inform their practice and to meet changing societal and classroom needs of the future (Grieshaber, 2008; Ryan & Goffin, 2008). Regardless of the curricula context, early childhood teachers can be empowered by repositioning themselves to being critically reflective teachers, placing all curricula influences under scrutiny and being responsive to families and their local community needs, rather than constrained by dominant discourse. Policy makers, regulators, and teacher educators can reposition influences on teacher decision making by providing other informants for early childhood curriculum, rather than those stemming from discourses of child development. Other studies and commentators (Blaise, 2005; Edwards & Nuttall, 2009; Lobman & Ryan, 2007) have agreed with looking beyond the dominance of DAP and have called for alternatives to the DAP discourse to inform early childhood education. Blaise (2005), and Edwards and Nuttall (2009), maintain that DAP as an informant is not adequate for preschool education, instead postdevelopmental and other ways of thinking and practising are recommended.

Postdevelopmentalism includes reconstructing educational practices, vocabularies and subject positioning within existing institutional and social relations and consideration of what can be done to transform these (Giroux, 2004; Nolan & Kilderry, 2010). Exploring postdevelopmentalism is one counter-hegemonic strategy to shift the focus from DAP to providing alternative theories and practices with some conceptual space. Moreover, Lobman and Ryan (2007) suggest actions such as a “communications campaign”, where a space such as a national conference can act as a forum for teachers, policy makers, and teacher educators, to find out about alternative practices and to change policy.

The second recommendation is for systemic change within Australian policy and practice contexts. In particular, for early childhood teachers to be recognised as professionals in their own sector, both in terms of recognition for the specialised type of work early childhood teachers do, and to make the professional work of teachers visible in policy. If teachers are to be recognised as professionals in their own sector, I advocate that they should be named as ‘teachers’ in policy, or be given a title in policy that reflects their professional skills and knowledge. Not surprisingly, in the Australian context Burton and Lyons (2000) argued that knowledge and specialist skills early childhood teachers hold, needs to be articulated more clearly in the public domain, particularly when their teaching is not always recognised as education. Another more localised way to confront lack of professional recognition is for early childhood teachers is to take on board critical actions, as suggested by Sumsion (2006, 2007). Sumsion recommends that early childhood teachers’ form critical communities, as some teachers are doing in areas of Sydney. These critical communities are spaces where issues of social justice, government agendas and initiatives, along with broader professionalism issues, are questioned and transformed by teachers themselves in small community groups. Taking such critical actions can empower early childhood teachers and their communities through them personally being involved in shaping their professional lives through critical action.

The third recommendation involves constructing further discursive spaces where teachers have opportunities to directly shape early childhood curricula policy.

As part of the social change process, opening up engaging policy spaces for early childhood teachers is required. Processes where teachers are involved in being productive contributors to policies should be canvassed and acted upon (Gale & Densmore, 2003). Teacher voice, representing their collective skills and knowledge, is required in policy to ensure that policy acknowledges the dynamic and specialist skills and knowledge teachers hold. Drawing on Thomas' (2005a) work, where teachers were "taken out of the education policy equation", this study will concur with Thomas' insights and recommend that early childhood teachers reconstruct themselves in policy as an "activist profession", for the purpose of "reclaim[ing] the authoritative voice in the decision-making processes" (pp. 57-58). Such actions will help place early childhood teachers in a strong and confident position, as active professionals who are able to acknowledge and promote their professional selves (Sumsion, 2007; Thomas, 2005a).

The fourth recommendation is for future research into early childhood TDM to be conducted from multiple perspectives, including critical perspectives. The reason for this recommendation is so that legitimated knowledge and practices can be uncovered to create theoretical space for new and innovative theories and practices. Future studies could explore influences, motivations, and ways early childhood educators make curricula decisions in different contexts, as different variables will bring to light other significant influences and discourses. The underpinning rationale for future research to be critical is to enable early childhood teachers some space to voice what counts as worthy knowledge for early childhood curriculum, without being compromised by research paradigms that promote and maintain the status quo. Moreover, critical studies generate critical thinking and subsequently critical actions, where alternative ways of thinking and practices can become possibilities. Finally, consideration could be given to the examination of the current Victorian preschool context, to see how findings from this study (conducted in 2004) are still relevant.

8.5 Concluding Statement

Through critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001b, 2003), the study identified how early childhood teacher curricula practice was constrained, with

authority for curriculum diminished through lack of professional recognition in key policies. Furthermore, despite there not being a government mandated curricula framework for Victorian preschool education in 2004, teachers were held accountable for their curricula practice. The study also showed how developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) has been legitimated in policy and practice.

This chapter presented the findings, outlined critical insights and implications arising from the study, and made recommendations. On a final note, the study has stayed true to its objective to gain critical understanding of early childhood teacher decision making.

8.6 Postscript

Since 2004, the year that the data were collected for the study, curricula changes have taken place in the Victorian preschool context. Three recent initiatives have had an impact on teacher decision making in the Victorian context. The first is a review conducted into curriculum and learning frameworks, the second is the implementation of a national curriculum framework, and the third is the implementation of a Victorian State level curriculum framework.

The first initiative, the review into curriculum and learning frameworks for children aged birth through to eight years was conducted in 2008 by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA] (VCAA, 2008). The findings of the review are relevant to the study, which found that there was no single definition of curriculum operating within Australian early childhood education. Rather, definitions of curriculum and curricula provision varied across Australian States and territories. The review made the recommendation that it was timely (in 2008) for Australia to have a national curricula framework that offered principles guiding teaching practice. In addition, the review recognised the important role of teachers in curriculum provision for children eight years and under. Bringing a critical lens to the review could uncover theoretical perspectives embedded within the review, and which discourses are legitimated and marginalised.

In response to the 2008 review, a new Australian (national) curriculum framework for early childhood educators was developed in 2009, entitled

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (“the national Framework”) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Its rationale was in line with the Council of Australian Governments’ aim to ensure that “all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 5). The national Framework placed emphasis on teacher decision making, stating that educators’ professional judgments are important for the facilitation of children’s learning, and it provides guidance where during the process of decision making, educators are to weave together their:

- professional knowledge and skills;
- knowledge of children, families and communities;
- awareness of how their beliefs and values impact on children’s learning;
- personal styles and past experiences. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 11).

By suggesting particular procedures for teachers when making curricula decisions outlined in the national Framework has moved on from the curriculum-less environment in Victoria in 2004. However, following critical aims of this study, a critical examination could analyse how discourse operates within the national Framework context and investigate who and what knowledge it privileges. For example, one such investigation could consider: the types of professional knowledge are advocated in the national Framework for teachers to use when making curricula decisions. Another examination could focus on: how early childhood teachers understand influences on curriculum decision making in the context of the national Framework.

In addition to providing suggestions about how teachers are to make curricula decisions, the national Framework identifies specific theories and perspectives that educators may draw upon to guide practice. The document promotes a mixture of theoretical positions, including developmental, socio-cultural, socio-behaviourist, critical and post-structuralist theories (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 11). Thus, a CDA could seek to uncover which particular

theories are legitimated, which are marginalised, and how, in the national Framework context.

The third curricula initiative to take place since 2004 was the implementation in 2009 of the Victorian State Government mandatory State curriculum framework, the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all children from birth to eight years* (“the Victorian Framework”) (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, DEECD, 2009). The Victorian Framework was developed to complement the national Framework (DEECD, 2009). Expectations of teacher decision making in the Victorian Framework are to integrate teaching and learning, through a mix of guided play and learning including both adult-led learning and child-directed play and learning. A strong child-centred approach to pedagogy is apparent in the Victorian Framework. For example, some terms used in this study by teachers in a Victorian context (for example, ‘play-based’), and apparent in the 2004 policies analysed, also feature in the 2009 Victorian Framework. The notion of child-centred practices and other discourses affecting teacher decision making in the Victorian Framework could be critically examined to find out how teachers understand such approaches. One way to do this would be to examine the type of knowledge and practices potentially affecting teacher decision making, and to ascertain what is valued and privileged in the Victorian Framework context.

Currently, in 2011, I am lecturing in UK early years context where the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Department for Children, Families and Schools [DCSF], 2008a) is the curriculum framework guiding teaching practice for children birth to five years, and Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) (Children’s Workforce Development Council [CWDC], 2008) is the equivalent to early childhood teaching in the Australian preschool context. Issues surrounding these initiatives resonate with the Australian context as there are similar questions around teachers’ curricula decision making, teacher authority, professional status, and accountability that can be asked. For example, some recent studies conducted in the UK have focused on professionalism in early years (Lloyd & Hallet, 2010; Miller, 2008; Osgood, 2006b) and the effects of teaching (Garrick & Morgan, 2009).

Therefore, taking into consideration the aims and findings of this study, and building on research agendas already pursued, a critical examination into the influences on teacher decision making in the EYFS (DCSF, 2008a) context, would add critical insights to this area.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent and Study Information

A.1: Participant Expression of Interest

Dear Preschool Teacher

This is an expression of interest to see if you would like to participate in my PhD study that I am undertaking through Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The study is considering early childhood programs and curriculum within Victoria and is particularly interested to know more about teacher decision making.

The study involves about four or so semi-structured interviews, times to be negotiated by you, where I would ask you questions about how you decide on your current program and what influences you when making these decisions. All the interviews will be anonymous. It is an interesting time curriculum-wise in Victoria at present so I look forward to some engaging discussions.

I currently work as a Research Assistant in the School of Education at RMIT at the Bundoora campus, and can be contacted on: (03)99257914 or email: Anna.kilderry@rmit.edu.au.

If you are interested to be a participant in this study, please complete the section below and place in the reply paid envelope provided. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time.

Anna Kilderry
PhD Candidate

Expression of Interest Reply Slip for study: Orthodoxy and reconceptualization: A critical discourse analysis of three early childhood teachers' curricula decision making.

- I am interested in participating in this study
- I am not interested in participating in this study

Your name _____

Early Learning Centre _____

Telephone number _____

Best days & times to call you _____

Please tear off Reply Slip and place in Reply Paid envelope provided.

A.2: Teacher Consent Form



Queensland University of Technology

Consent Form for the Preschool Teacher

Title of study: Orthodoxy and reconceptualisation: A critical discourse analysis of early childhood teacher decision making.

Researcher's contact details: Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education
RMIT University
PO Box 71
Bundoora, Vic 3083
Tel: (03) 99257863 Email: anna.kilderry@rmit.edu.au

Statement of consent:

The research aims to consider how early childhood teachers' make their curricula decisions. By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- have read and understood the information about this project;
- have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
- understand that you can contact the research team if you have any questions about the project, or the QUT Research Ethics Officer on (07) 3864 2340 if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;
- understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty; and
- agree to participate in five interviews over the duration of one term.

Name _____ Signature _____

Date ____/____/____ Daytime Telephone number _____

Name of Preschool _____

Please return this consent form in the envelope provided, to:

Anna Kilderry
School of Education
RMIT University
PO Box 71
Bundoora Vic 3083

A.3: Director and Principal Consent Form



Queensland University of Technology

Consent Form for the Director of the Preschool or School Principal

Title of study: Orthodoxy and reconceptualisation: A critical discourse analysis of early childhood teacher decision making.

Researcher's contact details: Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education
RMIT University
PO Box 71
Bundoora, Vic 3083
Tel: (03) 99257863 Email: anna.kilderry@rmit.edu.au

Statement of consent:

The research aims to consider how early childhood teachers' make their curricula decisions. By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- have read and understood the information about this project;
- have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
- understand that you can contact the research team if you have any questions about the project, or the QUT Research Ethics Officer on (07) 3864 2340 if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;
- understand that you are free to withdraw the preschool teacher participating in this study at any time, without comment or penalty; and
- agree to the Preschool Teacher participating in five interviews over the duration of one term.

Name _____ Position _____

Signature _____ Date ____/____/____

Name of Preschool/school _____

Please return this consent form in the envelope provided, to:

**Anna Kilderry
School of Education
RMIT University
PO Box 71
Bundoora Vic 3083**

A.4: Teacher Information



Queensland University of Technology

Information for the Preschool Teacher

Title of study: Orthodoxy and reconceptualisation: A critical discourse analysis of early childhood teacher decision making.

Dear Colleague,

As part of my Doctor of Philosophy study undertaken at Queensland University of Technology, I am researching early childhood teacher decision making.

The purpose of the research is to gain more understanding about how early childhood teachers make curricula decisions. As Victoria does not have a mandatory curriculum framework document, (public discussions are currently taking place about the development of such a document) this is an ideal time to generate more knowledge about what teachers think about their decision making in a preschool setting.

If you choose to be a part of this research you will be involved in five semi-structured interviews over the duration of one preschool term. The interviews will be audio recorded. If you decide to participate in this study all your contributions and your preschool site will remain anonymous in the study and any publication and presentation, unless you choose to disclose your identity and that of the preschool.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. If you have any concerns or complaints in relation to the ethical conduct of this research please contact the Research Ethics Officer on (07) 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au, or you can contact my supervisor, Associate Professor Sue Grieshaber on (07) 3864 3176.

Attached is a consent form for you to return if you wish to be involved in this study. If you would like to discuss this study any further, please feel free to contact me on (03) 9925 7863 (RMIT University) or on email: anna.kilderry@rmit.edu.au

Thank you for your time, I look forward to talking with you soon,

Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education
RMIT University
Bundoora, Vic 3083

A.5: Information for the Director and Principal



Queensland University of Technology

Information for Directors and Principals

Title of study: Orthodoxy and reconceptualisation: A critical discourse analysis of early childhood teacher decision making.

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of my Doctor of Philosophy study undertaken through Queensland University of Technology, I am researching early childhood teacher decision making.

The purpose of the research is to gain more understanding about how early childhood teachers make their curricula decisions. As Victoria does not have a mandatory curriculum framework document (public discussions are currently taking place about the development of such a document) this is an ideal time to generate more knowledge about what teachers think about their decision making in a preschool setting.

The preschool teachers participating in this study will be involved in five semi-structured interviews over the duration of one preschool term. The interviews will be audio recorded. If the preschool teacher decides to participate in this study all the contributions made by the teacher and the children, including the name of the preschool will remain anonymous in the study and any publication and presentation, unless the teacher (with your permission), decides to disclose their identity.

Participation is voluntary and the preschool teacher can withdraw from the study at any time. If you have any concerns or complaints in relation to the ethical conduct of this research please contact the Research Ethics Officer on (07) 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au, or you can contact my supervisor, Associate Professor Sue Grieshaber on (07) 3864 3176.

Attached a consent form for you to return to me, and if you would like to discuss this study any further, please feel free to contact me on (03) 9925 7863 (RMIT University) or on email: anna.kilderry@rmit.edu.au. Thank you for your time, I look forward to receiving your response in the near future,

Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education
RMIT University
Bundoora, Vic 3083

A.6: Information for Parents



Queensland University of Technology

Information for Parents

Title of study: Orthodoxy and reconceptualisation: A critical discourse analysis of early childhood teacher decision making.

Dear Parents,

As part of my Doctor of Philosophy study undertaken through Queensland University of Technology, I am researching early childhood teacher decision making.

The purpose of the research is to gain more understanding about how early childhood teachers make their curricula content decisions. Although this study is focused on the teacher, you may see me in the preschool setting.

If you have any concerns or complaints in relation to the ethical conduct of this research please contact the Research Ethics Officer on (07) 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au, or you can contact my supervisor, Associate Professor Sue Grieshaber on (07) 3864 3176.

If you would like to discuss the nature of this study any further, please feel free to contact me on (03) 9925 763 (RMIT University) or on email: anna.kilderry@rmit.edu.au

Thank you for your time,

Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education
RMIT University

A.7: Participant Research Approval: Email Correspondence to the Department of Human Services, Victoria 2004

Print View

Page 1 of 3

From: <John.Prent@dhs.vic.gov.au>
To: Anna Kilderry
CC: Jeanette.Nagorcka@dhs.vic.gov.au
Date: Thursday - March 18, 2004
Subject: Re: PhD site/participant research approval

Hi Anna

The approval you will require for your proposed research is from the employers of the early childhood teachers you intend to interview. DHS approval is not required but it would be appropriate to forward a copy of the proposed research and the outcomes of the research to Jeanette Nagorcka, Manager Early Years, at the email address above. Good luck with your work.

John Prent
Manager
Research & Web Services
Community Care Division
Department of Human Services
Level 13, 555 Collins St
Melbourne 3000

Ph: 61 3 9616 7226
Mobile: 0412 252 417
Fax: 61 3 9616 7847
Email: john.prent@dhs.vic.gov.au
Online: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/commcare>

(Embedded image moved to file: pic07376.gif)

"Anna Kilderry"
<anna.kilderry@rm
it.edu.au> To: <John.Prent@dhs.vic.gov.au>
cc:
Subject: PhD site/participant research approval
16/03/2004 11:02
AM

<http://webems.rmit.edu.au/servlet/webacc?User.context=cuagt8Ra8ufoicBi4&action=Ite...> 3/22/2004

To: John Prent
Community Care Division
Department of Human Services (DHS)
13/ 555 Collins Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Australia

16.03.04

Dear Mr Prent,

Re: PhD research approval

I am writing to you to ask you if I require approval from the Department of Human Services to collect data for my PhD study, entitled "Orthodoxy and reconceptualization: A discourse analysis of three early childhood teachers' curricula decision making" (QUT Ref No 3339H) that I am undertaking at Queensland University of Technology.

I will be interviewing three early childhood teachers in terms 2,3 and 4 later this year at various preschool sites- one preschool teacher within a long day care program, one from a sessional kindergarten and one teacher from a school setting. The particular sites have not been selected as yet.

I have obtained ethical approval from QUT's University Human Research Ethics Committee, and I am ready to commence my study.

Could you please advise me what the approval process is from here. I can supply you with additional information about the doctorate study if required.

Regards,

Anna Kilderry
PhD Candidate
QUT

also:

Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education
RMIT University
Bundoora West Campus

PO Box 71
Bundoora, Victoria 3083
Australia

Phone: (03) 9925 7863
Fax: (03) 9925 7887
Email: Anna.Kilderry@rmit.edu.au

This email contains confidential information intended only for the person named above and may be subject to legal privilege. If you are not the intended recipient, any disclosure, copying or use of this information is prohibited. The Department provides no guarantee that this communication is free of virus or that it has not been intercepted or interfered with. If you have received this email in error or have any other concerns regarding its transmission, please notify Postmaster@dhs.vic.gov.au

A.8: Participant Research Approval: Email Correspondence to the Department of Education and Training, Victoria 2004


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From: "Dressing, Louise L" <dressing.louise.l@edumail.vic.gov.au>
To: Anna Kilderry
Date: Monday - October 11, 2004 5:09 PM
Subject: PProcedures to conduct research in Vic Govt schools
ApplicantProcedures.doc (154112 bytes) [\[View\]](#) [\[Save As\]](#)
 Mime.822 (216381 bytes) [\[View\]](#) [\[Save As\]](#)

As requested.

Louise Dressing
Senior Policy Officer
Research
Phone: 03 9637 2349
Fax: 03 9637 2380
email: dressing.louise.l@edumail.vic.gov.au

-----Original Message-----

From: Anna Kilderry [mailto:anna.kilderry@rmit.edu.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 29 September 2004 12:06 PM
To: Research DE&T
Subject: PhD research approval

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to you to see how I should progress with obtaining approval to conduct research, ie. interviewing one preschool teacher at one independent primary school in Victoria as part of my PhD studies at Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

My study is entitled, "Orthodoxy and reconceptualization: A critical discourse analysis of three early childhood teachers' curricula decision making" and I have University ethics approval. So far I have interviewed preschool teachers in kindergarten and child care settings, and my final teacher for the study will be running a preschool program within a

school setting.

My data collection does not require classroom observation, nor any interaction with the students- it is purely based on talking with the one teacher about their curriculum.

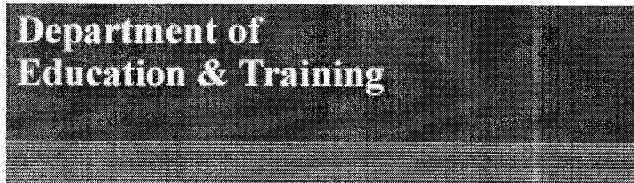
Could you please inform me how I should progress from here.

Sincerely,

Anna Kilderry

Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education

<http://webems.rmit.edu.au/servlet/webacc?action=Item.Read&User.context=ixavqbVo2k...> 10/22/2004



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Research in the Department of Education and Training (DE&T)

- [About research in the Department of Education and Training](#)
 - [The Department 's Research Executive Committee](#)
- [The Research and Development Branch, Office of Learning and Teaching](#)
 - [Research and Development Branch functions](#)
 - [Research and Development Branch key deliverables](#)
- [Conducting research in schools](#)
- [Advisory service on the history of education in Victoria](#)
- [Contact DE&T's Research and Development Branch](#)

About Research in the Department of Education and Training

Research in the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) informs the strategic thinking and policy development of the Department. Research undertaken or commissioned by DE&T focuses on areas that are most important to improve the quality, participation and outcomes of education and training for Victorians.

The Department 's Research Executive Committee

The Department's Research Executive Committee leads and manages the Department's research agenda and practices. The Committee comprises representatives from each Departmental Office and one external member. The Committee's responsibilities include:

- establishing research priorities and improving the Department's research agenda;
- monitoring the scope, strategic intent and quality of research; and
- developing communication and discussion mechanisms to promote debate and improve knowledge on key research findings.

The Research and Development Branch, Office of Learning and Teaching

Under the direction of Department's Research Executive Committee the Research and Development Branch within the Office of Learning and Teaching focuses on issues related to:

- learning and teaching, with attention to improving the learning outcomes of all students;
- issues related to lifelong learning; and
- ways that students and adults acquire knowledge and skills.

Research and Development Branch functions

The functions of the Research and Development Branch are to:

- develop a Departmental research strategy to provide advice on trends and developments in teaching and learning to inform strategic directions and current practice;
- commission major research projects within agreed strategy;
- review and monitor available research to understand how different students best learn including the impact of teaching, community and individual circumstances on learning;
- integrate a research based approach into Departmental planning and work with relevant education authorities to ensure that research shapes direction in learning and teaching;
- complete research and associated strategy development to support the acquisition of social competencies by students;
- assess and processing applications for research in schools; and
- establish an advisory service for history enquiries.

Research and Development Branch key deliverables

In 2004-05 the key deliverables of the Research and Development Branch include:

- the development of a learning and teaching research strategy that is progressively implemented;
- the development of a Knowledge Bank to identify and share excellence in learning and teaching;
- evaluation of the Select Entry Accelerated Learning Program;
- commissioning of a learning and teaching environmental scan;
- the development of a range of research and discussion papers;
- undertaking and/or commissioning research related to improving student outcomes; and
- progressing the *Social Competencies Pilot Schools Project*.

The Research and Development Branch is also developing a range of approaches, which support the collection, discussion, and dissemination of major research findings from local, national and international sources, to support the system.

The Research and Development Branch works closely with other parts of DE&T (central and regional offices and schools) and with other relevant education authorities (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA), Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) and Victorian Institute of Teachers (VIT)) to ensure that research shapes directions in learning and teaching.

Conducting research in schools

The Department of Education and Training (DE&T) acknowledges the importance of research in the development and refinement of strategies to meet the changing needs of students. It therefore welcomes high quality proposals for school level research designed to add to the understanding of students and the effectiveness of educational programs.

There are three stages in gaining approval for research in schools:



1. Departmental review of proposals leading to approval to approach school principals
2. Permission by school principals for research to be undertaken in their schools
3. Consent by students (and their parents as appropriate) and/or staff to participate in the research.

only 1 cell after EOI.

<http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/about/research/default.htm>

Schools - rev 9/29/2004

independence.

Schools may access the Department's procedures document and application form from the Schools Reference Guide under Management / Protocols / Section 6.18 Research in Schools. The web address for the guide is: www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/referenceguide/.

External applicants may contact the Research and Development Branch for further information, (email address: research@edumail.vic.gov.au).

Advisory service on the history of education in Victoria

Advice on the history of education in Victoria and on the availability of key related documents is available to Department of Education and Training staff and stakeholders through the Research and Development Branch. For further information, please contact: research@edumail.vic.gov.au

The following historical records on Victorian government schools, staffing (to 1953) are now located at the Public Record Office (PROV):

- Correspondence and building files (primary, secondary and technical schools, former Education Department, teachers' colleges etc.);
- School history files and publications;
- Historical teacher, staffing and establishment registers;
- Pupil registers and rolls (only a limited collection);
- Scholarship registers;
- Textbooks; and
- Education photographs.

School history researchers and other education researchers requiring access to this material should contact the PROV, 99 Shiel Street, North Melbourne 3051; ph: (03) 9348 5600; tollfree: 1800 657 452;
email: ask.prov@dpc.vic.gov.au ; website: <http://www.prov.vic.gov.au>

Contact DE&T Research

For further information please contact: research@edumail.vic.gov.au



Knowledge & Skills
Building a Future

Contact: Manager, Research and Development Branch (research@edumail.vic.gov.au)
Last Updated: Thursday, July 29, 2004
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A.9: Participant Research Approval: QUT Ethics Approval

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From: Anna Kilderry
To: w.heffernan@qut.edu.au
Date: Tuesday - November 9, 2004 12:38 PM
Subject: update on PhD ethics approval

Dear Wendy,

ref: 3339H

I am writing to you to confirm that I do not require approval from the Department of Education and Training Victoria to be able to interview my final participant for my PhD studies as the teacher is from an Independent school. This advice came from Louise Dressing, Senior Policy Advisor, DET.

As I am interviewing a preschool teacher from an Independent school within Victoria, and DET does not oversee these schools. I have obtained approval from the school principal and the teacher concerned.

I do have one additional query about the "progress report" that was mentioned on your correspondence earlier this year that is due on the 10th Dec each year. Is this the same report as the "Annual Progress Report" that I have recently completed for the Research Students Center, or a separate ethics progress report?

regards,

Anna Kilderry
PhD Candidate
n1364111

Anna Kilderry
Research Assistant
School of Education
RMIT University
Bundoora West Campus

PO Box 71
Bundoora, Victoria 3083
Australia

Phone: (03) 9925 7914 * note new telephone no.
Fax: (03) 9925 7887
Email: Anna.Kilderry@rmit.edu.au

<http://webems.rmit.edu.au/servlet/webacc?action=Item.Read&User.context=rw9ow4Lk7h...> 11/9/2004

From: Wendy Heffernan <w.heffernan@qut.edu.au>
To: Anna Kilderry
Date: Monday - January 17, 2005
Subject: Progress Report - 3339H

Dear Anna

I write further to the progress report received in relation to your project, "Orthodoxy and reconceptualization: A critical discourse analysis of three early childhood teachers' curricula decision making" (QUT Ref No

3339H).

I have noted on the ethics database that the project is in progress, that the project is being carried out in accordance with the original application, that any unforeseen risks have been identified and managed, and that no other ethical concerns have emerged from the study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me further if you have any queries regarding this matter.

Regards
Wendy

Wendy Heffernan
Research Ethics Officer
Office of Research
O Block Podium
Tel: 07 3864 2340
Fax: 07 3864 1304

Table A.10 Teacher Decision Making and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) Studies.

Author/Date of Study in Chronological Order	Focus of Study
Snider & Fu (1990).	The effects of specialized education and job experience on early childhood teachers' knowledge of DAP.
Oakes & Caruso (1990).	Kindergarten teachers' use of DAP and attitudes about authority.
Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & Hernandez (1991).	An investigation into kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices.
Bryant, Clifford & Peisner (1991).	DAP as best practice for beginning teachers.
Charlesworth, Hart, Hurts, Thomasson, Mosley & Fleege (1993).	Measuring teacher's ability to understand DAP.
Charlesworth, Burts, & Hart (1994).	The effectiveness of DAP compared with DIP.
Doliopoulou (1996).	Greek kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices about DAP.
Chen (1997).	DAP in action. Five teacher stories.
Smith, K. (1997).	Student teachers' beliefs on DAP
Stipek & Byler (1997).	Correlation between teachers' beliefs and child-centred practices (practices consistent with DAP)
Buchanan, Burts, Bider, White, & Charlesworth (1998).	Predictors of DAP for first, second and third grade teachers.
Buchanan, Burts & Pellar (1998).	DAP and teacher education. Lessons from one semester.
Edwards (2003).	Teachers' perceptions of curriculum and DAP in a Victorian, (Australian), context.
McCaslin (2004).	DAP as model for teacher change.
Kim, J., Kim, S-Y., & Maslak (2005).	An investigation of teachers' understanding and uses of DAP for young children in Korea.
McMullen, Elicker, Wang, Erdiller, Lee, Lin, & Sun (2005).	Measuring DAP beliefs in the U.S.A, China, Taiwan, Korea and Turkey.
McMullen, Elicker, Goetze, Huang, Lee, Mathers, Wen, & Yang (2006).	Measuring DAP beliefs in the USA
Goldstein, L. (2007).	An examination of kindergarten teaching in the USA beyond the DAP versus standards dilemma.

Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb, & Gheith (2010).	Teachers' practice is measured whether DAP or DIP in Jordan.
Han & Neuharth-Pritchett (2010).	Teachers' and teaching assistants' practice is measured whether DAP according to teacher attitude inventory.
Walsh, McGuinness, Sproule & Trew (2010).	Implementing DAP in primary schools in Northern Ireland.

Appendix B: Interview Information

B.1: Initial Participant Interview Questions

1. What is your teaching philosophy? For example, what underpinning theories inform your practice?
2. What are the benefits or disadvantages of running a preschool program in a school or childcare centre or as a stand-alone kindergarten?
3. Are there any curricula advantages or constraints running a preschool program in a school environment or within a childcare centre or within a sessional kindergarten setting?
4. How do you plan your curriculum?
5. How do you explain your curriculum to the families of your service?
6. What are your planning priorities each term?
7. How do you document children's developmental or educational progress for your records, for the centre and for the families?
8. To what extent have the new Australian curriculum documents affected your teaching?
9. To what extent have curricula models from overseas, (that is, The Reggio Emilia approach (Abbott & Nutbrown, 2001), High/Scope, and the New Zealand curriculum, Te Whariki), affected your teaching?
10. Are you familiar with the Kirby Report: The review of the issues that impact on the delivery of preschool services to children and their families in Victoria? (Kirby & Harper, 2001). What comments would you like to make about the issues raised in that document?
11. What is your opinion of the Victorian curriculum discussion document, Beliefs and understandings: A conversation about an early childhood curriculum framework (November, 2003)?

B.2: Participant Interview Questions

Interview 1

Introduction and Current Program

1. What type of teaching qualifications do you have?
2. What types of subjects did you study during your pre-service teaching course? Which subject areas did you value?
3. What type of teaching experience have you had, in what types of settings?
4. When you first taught what type of program did you have? How did you decide on the content, the focus and the teaching strategies?
5. Why do you teach in a preschool setting?
6. What type of professional development have you mainly engaged with?
7. What education do you regard as important information for teaching within early childhood education?
8. What is your teaching philosophy? For example, what underpinning theories inform your practice?
9. Do you use the term “program” or “curriculum”? How do you perceive these concepts in early childhood education?
10. What theories or practices have influenced your teaching the most?

B.2: Participant Interview Questions

Interview 2.

Curriculum and Other Influences

1. What do you mean by “free play”?
2. What do you see as the “educational program”?
3. What do you see as an “innovative” educational program for pre-prep children?
4. How do you plan your program?
5. How do you view child development in relation to your program?
6. How do you think that children learn?
7. How do you see the specialist classes fitting in with the pre-prep curriculum?
8. Who do you plan with or take program/curricula guidance from?
9. How do you explain your program to your school community?
10. How do you explain and report your program/curriculum to government departments (ie. The Department of Human Services, Victoria)?
11. What are the benefits or disadvantages of running a preschool program in a school?
12. What are your planning priorities each term?
13. Who do you discuss your program evaluations with?
14. How do you document children’s developmental or educational progress for your records, for the centre and for the families?
15. Are you involved in any teacher network or early childhood organisations?
Does this influence your curricula decisions?

B.2: Participant Interview Questions

Interview 3:

Other Curriculum Frameworks and Conclusion

1. To what extent have the new Australian curriculum documents, (eg. SA & Qld preschool Curriculum Guidelines and NSW framework) affected your program?
2. To what extent have curricula models from overseas, (ie. The Reggio Emilia approach, High/Scope, and the New Zealand curriculum, Te Whariki), affected your teaching and curriculum decisions?
3. Does any other curriculum framework or teaching method largely influence your program? How?
4. What do you think about the issues raised in the Victorian curricula discussion document, *Beliefs and understandings: A conversation about an early childhood curriculum framework* (November, 2003)?
5. What do you think about a mandatory curricula framework document for early childhood education within Victoria?
6. Would you like a curricula framework document to be national, State- wide, or regional?
7. How do see a new curriculum document affecting your teaching practice?
8. Are you familiar with the Kirby Report: *The review of the issues that impact on the delivery of preschool services to children and their families in Victoria?* (Kirby & Harper, 2000). What comments would you like to make about the issues raised in that document?
9. What are your comments about the issues raised in this document?
10. Any further comments?

B.3: Interview Schedule

**Teacher Interviews: Lily
Green Street Kindergarten**

Interview	Interview date	Interview time	Hours
1.	12.05.04	1.30-4.30pm	3 hours
2.	02.06.04	1.30- 3.00pm	2.5 hours
3.	28.07.04	1.30-3.30pm	2 hours
4.	25.08.04	1.30-3.15pm	2.75 hours
5.	24.11.04	1.00-2.15pm	1.5 hours
	Total		11.75 hours

**Teacher Interviews: Christiana
Winter Court Childcare Centre**

Interview	Interview date	Interview time	Hours
1.	19.05.04	2.30-3.40pm	1.10 hours
2.	14.07.04	2.30-4.15pm	2.75 hours
3.	08.09.04	2.30-4.00pm	2.5 hours
	Total		6.35 hours

**Teacher Interviews: Ruth
Early Learning Centre, Hillbridge Grammar School**

Interview	Interview date	Interview time	Hours
1.	29.10.04	10.00-11.00am	1 hour
2.	05.11.04	10.00-11.00am	1 hour
3.	26.11.04	10.00-11.00am	1 hour
4.	03.05.05	10.00-11.00am	1 hour
	Written notes. Not audio-recorded.		
	Total		4 hours

B.4: Coding System for Transcripts

Transcript codes

TR	Teacher Ruth
TL	Teacher Lily
TC	Teacher Christiana
TR1	Teacher Ruth, Interview 1
TL2	Teacher Lily, Interview 2
TC3	Teacher Christiana, Interview 3
TR1:16	Teacher Ruth, Interview 1, page 16
TL2: 40	Teacher Lily, Interview 2, page 40
TC3: 83	Teacher Christiana, Interview 3, page 83

Notations

TC3 B238	Teacher Christiana, Interview 3, Tape side B, tape counter 238
12.35- 3.30pm	Time interview was conducted
...	Speaker pauses
[]	Researcher's notes and comments

B.5: Interview Transcript Excerpt with Initial Analysis: Lily

Raw Data: Teacher Interview 3
 Teacher L. (TL) 28.07.04
 Interviewer: Anna Kilderry
 1.30pm- 3.30pm

Tape	Interview	Comments
TL 3 265	<p>TL: I always wanted an indoor/outdoor program, but I didn't want the children running in and out. I wanted to make sure that they still stayed settled doing something, so we had the first hour and a half an hour indoors, so they all come together. That gives them the opportunity to play together, as many of them have special friends and I just felt that I wasn't able to supervise and I needed to give Sabrina some more responsibility. So that is why I thought I'd come up with this.</p> <p>AK: So that is working?</p> <p>TL: Yes. So we have indoor for the hour and a half inside, then it is pack up time, then it is group time... Just to move them, we have the group time depending on what their concentration is like, we mostly get about 15 minutes, we do a lot of dancing and singing. Then they wash their hands and have their snack. Once they have had snack, they know that they are either indoor or outdoor and they go and check. [There is a white board with the children's names on them].</p> <p>AK: So if the children are inside today, they will be outdoors tomorrow, or the next time?</p> <p>TL: Yes, each time they are here they swap. That has worked really well. When we pack up we often do a little group time by ourselves [half group] do a game, like <i>Doggy Doggy</i> or <i>Duck Duck Duck</i> – we have a nice mat outside and Sally [pseudonym] will do it inside. Then we all come back together for a story. The story is about five minutes. When you do inside/outside, they don't need you. They are just so settled.</p> <p>AK: Are you having assistance for John [pseudonym] yet?</p> <p>TL: No, it doesn't look like we will get that. They [council] were going to try but he has settled a lot.</p>	<p>The difference between having the whole group either inside or outside...now chn are settled</p> <p>Implication.. First time in formal education can set scene for learning attitudes.</p>

B.6: Interview Transcript Excerpt with Initial Analysis: Christiana

Raw Data: Teacher Interview 1
Teacher C. (TC) 19.05.04
Interviewer: Anna Kilderry
1.30pm- 2.40pm

Tape	Interview	Comments
<p>TC1</p> <p>127</p>	<p>Tape 1 TC 12.05.04</p> <p>AK: So your hours are a few days a week?</p> <p>TC: Yes, Tuesdays 8.30-11.30am, Wednesdays 8.30-2.30, and Thursdays 8.30-11.30am. I am only here in the morning, I only get to see how the morning side of how this center works.</p> <p>AK: What sort of things have you done since you have been here?</p> <p>TC: I came in March [2004], I have come into a center that was already set up, and working quite well. And what I am doing at the moment is working with the teacher, the qualified teacher [child care worker] at the moment in providing a program for children aged 3- 5 years, children that are kinder age and those that are obviously in the 3 year old kinder age, working with that to find a program that challenges the younger children as well as the older children, but not too much, so that the children who are three, or just above three don't find it difficult to manage in the program.</p> <p>AK: I imagine that there is quite a range [of abilities] between the 3-5 year old children. Are they separated [into age groups]?</p> <p>TC: No they are together all the time.</p> <p>AK: Okay, you have worked in with the program that had been here, has there been any changes that you have been making?</p> <p>TC: Not at the moment, I have taken on what has been done. I am slowly hoping, particularly planning and focusing for the children who are kinder age. I am hoping to make the program more... [advanced] so that the children who are going onto school next year do not have less of an advantage than children say might be in a sessional kindergarten. So trying to focus more on...[academic abilities] so at the moment we are trying to focus on children writing their names. We used at the start, pieces of paper that had their names printed on it to put on their work, so hopefully we will more focus on it in 3rd and 4th term, and hopefully we can get the kinder age children to be able write their name, or at least something similar along [those lines].</p>	<p>Again calling child care worker qualified teacher.</p> <p>Comparison to sessional kindergarten, don't want children to have less of an advantage.</p> <p>School readiness issues... Children to write their names</p>

B.7: Interview Transcript Excerpt with Initial Analysis: Ruth

Raw Data: Teacher Interview 2
 Teacher R. (TR) 05.11.04
 Interviewer: Anna Kilderry
 10.00am-11.00am

Ta pe	Interview	Comments
TR 2A 131	<p>AK: So the children's inquiries take over from there...the direction?</p> <p>TR: Yes, depending on how important that would be and whether you want that to be with one, two or three children or the whole group.</p> <p>AK: Okay, so there would be some [activities] suitable for the whole group, and others just an interest for a few children?</p> <p>TR: Yes, a range of experiences, because many experiences happen across the day.</p> <p>AK: The old way would be themes or something like that. And now the big shift is the teacher is the co-learner...</p> <p>TR: The themes, the projects the emergent curriculum, all that sort of stuff happened in traditional kinder, or what I class as traditional kinder, however now that all still happens now but with a different focus from where the teacher stands. So you see, in my view the quality of the work or the partnership of the teacher and the child, I think is the secret of a successful program.</p> <p>[pause]</p> <p>TR: Like I said you can have a very poor centre, for example a church hall that is really quite revolting, but if you have a teacher that can tap into the parents and move with the children through their experiences, then you can have a good situation.</p>	<p>AK comment: Teacher as learner too.</p> <p>teachers 'tapping in'</p>
160	<p>AK: Ok.</p> <p>TR: But, choosing carefully at what point she [the teacher] actually interacts so the interaction can be standing back, it can be initiating thought, it can be question asking it can be inviting a shared role, it can be literally documenting what the children are saying, assisting them [the children] with getting the materials that they need to move on, all that sort of thing. So, for the staff member to really know the crucial point of contact.</p>	<p>The timing of interaction</p> <p>What an ece teacher does. Pedagogy not as clear cut as other sectors?</p>

Table B.8: Frequency of Developmentally Appropriate Practice Terms Cited by Teachers in Interview Transcripts.

Discourse Terms	Terms used	Christiana	Lily	Ruth	Total Number of Citations
Developmental Domains	Social (Development)	11	11	3	
	Emotional (Development)	0	4	0	
	Cognitive (Development)	5	3	4	
	Language (Development)	6	14	7	
	Physical (Development)	0	0	1	
	Development	6	9	3	
		28	41	18	Sub-total 87
Observing Children	Observation	7	2	0	
	Observations	43	27	4	
	Observe	0	4	2	
		50	33	6	Sub-total 89
Children's Needs	Need	36	60	24	
	Needs	17	11	15	
	Weaknesses	0	0	0	
	Ability/abilities	2	1	3	
	Strength/s	2	0	12	
		57	72	54	Sub-total 183
Children's Interests	Interests	7	30	16	
	Interest	0	28	0	
	Interested	21	9	6	
		28	67	22	Sub-total 117
Choice	Choice/s	9	0	2	
		9	0	2	Sub-total 11

Readiness	(School) Readiness	3	12	1	
	Ready	3	18	4	
		6	30	5	Sub-total 41
Play	Play	37	31	68	
	Play-based	4	2	0	
	Free Play	0	2	7	
		41	35	75	Sub-total 151
Discovery	Manipulating	3	2	0	
	Experimenting	3	0	0	
	Discovery	0	0	0	
		6	2	0	Sub-total 8
Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)		225	280	182	Total 687

Table B.9: Frequency of Curriculum Terms Cited by Teachers in Interview Transcripts.

Discourse Terms	Terms used	Christiana	Lily	Ruth	Total Number of Citations
Literacy	Literacy, language, literature, reading, writing, alphabet, book/s, letter/s, phonic/s, story/ies, Letterland.	19	27	17	63
Maths and Numeracy	Maths, mathematics, numeracy, numerate, count/ing, number/s.	12	6	2	20
Science and Technology	Science, technology.	0	10	1	11
Social Science	Social science.	0	0	0	0
Physical Education	Physical education, P.E. movement, dance/ing, gross motor.	2	11	8	21
Art and Creativity	Art, craft, creativity, draw/ing, paint/ing, collage.	38	19	12	69
Health	Health.	0	1	2	3
Music	Music, sing/ing, song/s, instrument/s.	32	9	9	50
Curriculum Subject Areas (CSA)		103	83	51	Total 237

Table B.10: Children's Interests: Collocations in Interview Transcripts.

Categories	References made to <i>Children's Interests</i> in Interview Transcripts
1. Identifying children's interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That was <i>an interest</i> (TL1:29) • [I] go <i>with the children's interest</i> (TL4:69) • <i>Picking up on their interests</i> (TR1:06) • <i>Catch their interest</i> (TR1:22) • If they are <i>showing an interest</i> (TC2:31) • If they are <i>interested</i> (TC2:49) • That is <i>what they are asking for</i> [a song that children were interested in], so that is [what I'll do] (TC2:50)
2. Basing curriculum on children's interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Going on children's interests</i> (TL1:11) • <i>Following children's interests</i> (TL1:12) • Based on the <i>interest of the child</i> (TR1:30) • Basing it [the program] on the <i>children's interests</i> (TR1:09) • It [the program] must be <i>interest-based</i> (TL5:92), • <i>Based around [children's] interests</i> (TC:1:09, TC1:15) Catering to all the [children's] <i>different interests</i> (TR1:16)
3 Assessing and extending children's interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not one child was <i>interested</i> (TC2:49) • If they <i>weren't interested</i> (TC2:50) • They can <i>lose interest</i> (TC3:66) • Absolutely <i>not interested</i> in it (TC1:15) • They <i>loved it</i> [activity based on child's interest] (TL1:29) • <i>Showed no interest</i> (TL3:55) • <i>Extend someone's interest</i> (TC1:30)
4. 'Outsider' interests from teachers and parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That is my <i>own interest</i> (not really interest) (TL4:71) • <i>Staff interest, parent interest</i> (TC1:21)

Appendix C: Policy Information

Extract C.1: Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide, Section 3.1.1 Ensuring that Children's Developmental Needs are Met.

- 1 3.1.1 Ensuring that Children's Developmental Needs are Met.
- 2 A children's program that addresses children's developmental needs:
- 3 Builds on the individual strengths, interest and the developmental level of
- 4 each child.
- 5 Is based on an acceptance of and respect for each child, regardless of
- 6 ability, gender, race, language or culture.
- 7 Is child-initiated and based on a play approach that encourages exploration,
- 8 questioning, discovery, creativity and problem solving.
- 9 Recognises that children need to participate in the program at their own
- 10 pace.
- 11 Addresses children's physical, social emotional, cognitive and language
- 12 development.
- 13 Is based on recorded observations of the developmental progress of each
- 14 child.
- 15 Uses a variety of materials, equipment and experiences that are open-ended.
- 16 This enhances children's creativity and problem solving skills.
- 17 Provides the child with meaningful interactions with adults and other
- 18 children.
- 19 Is planned, documented and evaluated.
- 20 A good children's program requires:
- 21 A knowledge of child development.
- 22 An understanding of the individual child; the family, culture and social
- 23 context.
- 24 An effective partnership with parents or guardians.
- 25 The ability to translate knowledge about the child and children's development into
- 26 planned opportunities for learning, and to make use of incidental learning
- 27 opportunities. (DHS, 2004a, p. 25)

*Extract C.2: Children's Services, Licensing and Operational Guide. Section 3.1.2
Planning a Children's Program*

1 A Children's program enhances the development of the individual. It recognises
2 that children have specific needs as individuals in the community and seeks to
3 develop competent, self-directed, problem solving, creative children who have
4 positive self-esteem.

5 Regulation 28 states that the proprietor must ensure that an educational or
6 recreational program that is based on the developmental needs, interests and
7 experiences of each child and is sensitive to individual differences, is available to
8 all children cared for or educated by the children's service.

9 Planning a children's program is based on:

10 Developing the service's philosophy which describes an overall plan for the
11 service, states its underlying values, the general learning and developmental
12 outcomes sought and broadly indicates the ways that these outcomes are achieved.

13 Establishing program goals which indicate the knowledge, skills and behaviours to
14 be gained through the program and reflect the needs of the children.

15 Involving parents/guardians by developing mechanisms to share information and
16 understanding of common goals and objectives. This helps parents/guardians to be
17 informed about and make comment on the program.

18 Observing the individual child and recording behaviour and development. It is
20 important to ensure that all children in the service are observed over a period of
21 time. By means of observation it is possible to identify areas for development and
22 prepare both short term and long term objectives for the individuals of the group.

23 Analysing the recorded observations which provide information for identifying the
24 child's interest and skills across the developmental areas.

25 Developing a program for the whole group. The written program needs to clarify
26 the strategies to be used to address individual children's objectives, as well as the
27 long term and short term program goals.

28 Evaluating the program includes measuring the progress of individual children and
29 assessing whether the written program goals have been achieved. Evaluation is a
30 tool for staff to reflect on individual children's needs, the suitability of planned
31 experiences and strategies used. It is a vital part of the ongoing planning process.
(DHS, 2004a, pp. 25-26).

*Extract C.3: Children's Services, Licensing and Operational Guide. Section 3.1.5
Documenting a Child's Program.*

6 3.1.5 Documenting a child's program
7 Documenting the program is important in communicating effectively with staff and
8 management and in effectively exchanging information with the children's
9 parents/guardians. It also provides a basis for ensuring that planning and evaluation
10 of the children's program occurs.
11 Regulation 20(2) (d) requires that information about the program is available for
12 inspection when the service is open. This means that the following written records
13 should be maintained and available for inspection:
14 The service's philosophy
15 The service's program goals, which form the basis for the weekly/fortnightly
16 program and the daily activities.
17 Individual child records, based on observations of the child, which provide a
18 written summary of each child's all round development in a variety of situations.
19 A current written weekly/fortnightly program
20 Program evaluation, process and outcomes.
21 It is important that the documentation provides observable links between:
22 A child's needs/skills and the individual child record.
23 The individual child record and the written program.
24 The written program and the program in action.
25 The program implementation and evaluation.
26 Children's Services Officers will expect to observe these links during monitoring
27 visits. (DHS, 2004a, p. 30).

Table C.4 Early Childhood Curricula Related Policies in 2004: Regulative and Governance Policies.

Regulative and Governance Policies	Early Childhood Curricula-Related Individual Policies
1. Children's Services Act, (Victorian State Government, 1996)	<i>Regulations:</i> Division 2 Licensing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (18, 4) Grant or refusal of licence
2. Children's Services Regulations, (Victorian State Government, 1998)	<i>Regulations:</i> Part 4 Provision and Display of Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (20, 1d) Information to be available Part 6 Children's Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (28, a, b) Educational or recreational programs • (29) Equipment
3. Victorian Preschool Program-Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria, (DHS, 2002)	<i>Policies:</i> Section 4 Service Provision Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality • Programming
4. Children's Services Licensing and Operational Guide, (Department of Human Services, (DHS), 2004a)	<i>Suggested Practices:</i> Section 3 Children's Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1.1 Ensuring that children's developmental needs are met • 3.1.2 Planning a children's program • 3.1.3 Providing a pleasant and stimulating environment • 3.1.4 Selecting furniture, materials and equipment • 3.1.5 Documenting a children's program