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Contemporary Issues and Challenge in Early Childhood Education in the Asia-Pacific Region

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Editors

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Chapter 1
A Changed Agenda for Early Childhood Education in the Asia-Pacific

Susan Grieshaber

1.1 Introduction

The Asia-Pacific is an immense region, and includes countries and territories which vary widely in terms of geography, social and cultural heritage, religion, levels of development, demographic profiles, political systems, and government commitment to early childhood education. It is home to the world's second and third largest economies (China and Japan respectively) and the two most populous countries, China and India. In the past few decades, many countries and territories in this region have experienced rapid changes in economic development, population growth and urbanisation, social transformation, natural disasters and technological development. Economic improvement has brought about a significant increase in access to education in parts of Asia and the Pacific. In many countries and territories, the global trend of recognizing the importance of early childhood education has been acknowledged in policy changes and financial commitments by governments to the early years. These changes and commitments vary according to history and cultural traditions, and the financial standing of respective countries. This book depicts current issues and challenges that some of the countries/territories in the region are experiencing and how each is meeting the demands of change. Chapters from East Asia are drawn from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), Indonesia, Japan, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore. The Pacific is represented by chapters from Australia, New Zealand, and Vanuatu, and contributions from South Asia come from India. For the most part (but not exclusively), the chapters focus on the years before compulsory schooling, including children from birth to 6 years of age.

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There are many similarities and many differences amongst the countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region, and many within country differences. These similarities and differences reflect the complexity of the cultures, languages, religions, histories, political systems, geographical terrain, migration patterns and other movement such as tourism and human trafficking. Many of the countries and territories in the region have histories of experiencing invasion, imperialism, war and colonization; and others in the region and around the globe have been the invaders, imperialists and colonizers. Much colonial action was motivated by "rich countries, with superior weaponry, exploiting the mineral (and human) wealth of poor countries" (Penn 2011, p. 106). The effects of these invasive and colonizing activities are still being experienced; and they have produced many border changes in the past, including the dissolution of major powers and the creation of new nation states and territories. War persists in West Asia (e.g., Afghanistan), East Asia (e.g., Indonesia), has troubled Sri Lanka (South Asia) for many years, and tensions remain between and among countries in the region (e.g., in East Asia between the Democratic Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea; China and Japan; Japan and the Republic of Korea). In addition to these challenging circumstances, wide economic disparities exist within and between countries and territories that manifest in differing opportunities for education and employment, and in some areas, reflect geographical isolation and the perpetuation of poverty.

Many governments now support early childhood education and care (ECEC) based on research evidence that shows benefits accrue in both the short and long term. These benefits can include improvements in child well-being, learning outcomes, economic circumstances (e.g., reduction in poverty), female participation in the workforce, and fertility rates (OECD 2012). However, benefits that accrue from ECEC are contingent on the quality of services that are provided, as poor quality ECEC can have "long-lasting detrimental effects on child development" (OECD 2012, p. 9). Quality and other challenges confront the early years in the changing Asia-Pacific context. Changes in society and education generally in the past few decades have impacted on early childhood education policies, theories, philosophies, professionals, provision for education and significantly, families. Some of the issues and challenges confronting early childhood education, and the ways in which governments, systems and services are dealing with them are discussed in this book.

The fact that many governments now invest in ECEC when they have not previously indicates the intensity of the changes that have occurred in educational policy making in the past 20 years. Educational policy analysts Rizvi and Lingard (2010) have recognized that globalization has "reconfigured the state and its authority in developing public policies, and that national and local policies are now linked to globalized educational policy discourses, pressures from international organizations and global policy networks, and globalization effects more generally" (p. x). Globalization is understood as international sharing of products, views, ideas and so on. The way in which globalization has affected nations and territories varies according to dynamic and complex combinations of matters, which according to Rizvi and Lingard (2010) include transnational economic

activities, political and cultural matters, and advances in information and communications technologies. They also contend that the OECD is now a major "policy player" (p. 38), exerting considerable influence because it promotes "a range of neoliberal ideas about the global economy and its implications for public policy… [Including] policies of deregulation and privatization" (pp. 38–39). Member countries (of the OECD) in the Asia-Pacific region include Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. The OECD has produced four highly significant reports about ECEC (Starting Strong 2001; Starting Strong II 2006; Starting Strong III 2012; Starting Strong IV 2015). These documents can act as blueprints for governments to make policy and funding decisions, as has happened in Australia. Processes of globalization continue to transform educational policy, and especially ECEC policies.

The discussion in this chapter centres on the ways in which globalization and neoliberalism have shaped policies which have then been instrumental in reconceptualising ECEC globally; and as a direct result of that, the addition of standards to the ECEC repertoire, and the subsequent focus on professionalism. Consequently, this volume is organized into three parts: Re-conceptualizing early childhood education and care (Part 1); Re-examining standards (Part 2), and Redefining professionalism (Part 3). In this chapter (Chap. 1), issues confronting ECEC are considered, bringing together current ideas that have specific application to countries and territories in the region. Research and contextual information that provide the backdrop to the three parts of the book are discussed in this chapter. Hence in what follows in this chapter (Chap. 1), the part about re-conceptualizing early childhood education and care considers the ways in which ECEC in the Asia-Pacific region has been reconceptualised through the influence of globalization, human capital theory and consequent 'investment' in ECEC. The applicability of standards and the 'standardisation' of ECEC in the Asia-Pacific region are discussed in the second part, about re-examining standards. The third part of this chapter (Redefining professionalism) deliberates on the ways in which professionalism has changed due to the influence of human capital theory and investment in ECEC. Overviews of each chapter are located prior to each of the respective parts of the book.

1.2 Re-Conceptualizing Early Childhood Education and Care

One issue that relates to reconceptualising ECEC is the categorization of countries and territories as belonging to the global North or global South; and international non-government organizations (INGO) headquartered in the global North funding ECEC programs mostly in the global South (Penn 2011). Examples of INGOs include the well-known Aga Khan Foundation, Plan International, Save the Children, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank.

Regions or localities in many countries in the Asia-Pacific have been part of programs supported by these and other INGOs. According to Penn (2011), a fundamental issue of concern is that these early childhood and care programs are based on particular theoretical ideas and practices about ECEC that originate in the global North and often North America, and are "(mis)applied to the global South" (p. 110). For instance, Penn states: "…equity and quality arguments are downplayed and investment arguments are overplayed in the interpretations of ECEC which are being put forward" (p. 110).

The investment arguments are well known internationally in ECEC and are based on human capital theory, which emphasizes creating situations to maximize the economic productivity of individuals. Increased economic productivity comes from the perceived gains that can be made in children's overall social, emotional and intellectual development as a result of investing in ECEC programs (Heckman and Masterov 2005). These programs are also expected to be instrumental in breaking the poverty cycle (Dornan and Woodhead 2015; UNESCO and UNICEF 2012). Penn (2011) argues that the influence of investment arguments is so great that "whether deliberate or not, INGOs and charities operate an international policy cartel on ECEC, relying on a common currency of ideas and language, which pays very little attention to local realities" (p. 110). The common currency of ideas and language is what Penn describes as "universal precepts" which are assumed to be "applicable everywhere" (p. 107). The irony is that if ideas are assumed to be applicable universally (to all children/families in all situation sat any time anywhere in the world), then it is not possible to take local matters such as complex histories, languages, cultures, contexts and inequalities, into account. So the adoption of universal approaches can make the achievement of equity and quality ECEC highly elusive and somewhat impractical.

Investment arguments are not limited to ECEC. There has been a distinct global trend toward neoliberalism, evident in policies that privilege the market and privatization (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). In education policy, this manifests in an emphasis on human capital theory and accountability, i.e., producing citizens who will contribute proficiently to the economy. And Heckman and Masterov (2005) have identified ECEC as producing the most returns on investment than any other stage of education, particularly for those children from "disadvantaged environments" (p. 2). The argument is that intervention in the early years is much more cost effective than at later stages of life, including the benefits to the economy of being gainfully employed as opposed to being unemployed or incarcerated. To this end and drawing on data from the *Young Lives Cohort Study*, Dornan and Woodhead (2015) make the point that in supporting children's developmental trajectories, "Prevention via early intervention remains the best strategy" (p. 27). However, in human capital theory, children are seen in financial terms, that is, as potential contributors to the economy. Human capital arguments have been very powerful in influencing governments and policy makers globally to invest in ECEC (Penn 2014).

In the context of globalization, the application of human capital theory to ECEC through investing in the early years is a different way of conceptualizing ECEC from what has occurred in the past. It also brings public attention to ECEC,

which has previously been overshadowed by the other sectors such as primary and secondary education. In many countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region, ECEC has traditionally received little government funding and has had to rely on philanthropic societies for support (e.g., Australia, Hong Kong SAR, New Zealand, Singapore). Not only has human capital theory influenced governments to invest more in ECEC, but the neoliberal influence has also been felt in terms of privatization, with increased numbers of for-profit organizations entering the market. This has changed the traditional dynamic from benevolent societies with humanitarian roots whose primary concerns have *not* been return on investments; to the market, and outcomes from investment dominating the ECEC agenda (e.g., Heckman and Masterov 2005). Not surprisingly, part of this involves a "reconceptualisation of the very purposes of education" (Rizvi and Lingard 2010, p. 80). For ECEC, this means an instrumental focus on producing children/citizens who will contribute meaningfully to the economy and not become a burden for the government. The intrinsic value of learning has been subsumed by market principles and the value of knowledge over capital (the knowledge economy); and in an information society, knowledge can grow through application (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). The knowledge economy is flourishing in the "newly industrializing countries" (p. 81) of India and Singapore; and China and Vietnam, where "market socialism" (p. 82) is the descriptor used. The adoption of human capital theory and the economic exchange of knowledge have been accompanied by a diminution of values such as democracy and justice, and a focus on individuals rather than community, ethical and cultural principles (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). For ECEC, these changes produce questions about how children, childhood and families are now conceptualized in various countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region; how they are valued, and what this might mean for early childhood services from policy and practical perspectives.

1.3 Re-Examining Standards

As ECEC is now conceptualized differently from the past, i.e., through discourses of human capital theory, globalization, and investing in the early years, there are policy mechanisms to assist with ensuring that young children develop into productive citizens and contribute to the economy. While the benefits of ECEC are widely lauded, they are contingent on the quality of services provided. The OECD (2012) is explicit in its recommendation about how quality can be improved, specifying "quality goals and minimum standards will help enhance quality in ECEC" (p. 9). The causal relationship between standards and quality is prefaced on the idea that goals and regulations can help "consolidate political will and strategically align resources with prioritized areas; anchor discussions between ministries for better government leadership in ECEC; promote more consistent co-ordinated and child-centred services with shared social and pedagogical objectives; and provide guidance for providers, direction for practitioners and clarity for parents"

(OECD 2012, pp. 9–10). Standards then, amongst other things (see Kagan 2012) are claimed as a (the?) way to improve quality in ECEC. This might mean for instance, setting standards for staff-child ratios, the amount of indoor and outdoor space required, qualification levels of staff, and establishing curriculum or learning standards.

As another example of globalization, standards are associated closely with the USA and have been adopted and applied internationally. Western educational theories and philosophies, and often those from the USA and the UK influence many countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region. For instance, Kagan (2012) produced a method that has been employed internationally as a way of using standards to develop a systemic approach to early education. Examples include the development of standards in Fiji and Mongolia on which parenting education curricula have been based; and in Ghana standards have been used to develop curriculum, teacher training and credentialing. According to Kagan (2012), standards are "useful, if not central, to creating an integrated approach to pedagogy" (p. 66). They are also made as "comprehensively and culturally sensitive as possible… [to] reflect the goals, values, desires that adults hold for their children" (p. 66). However, this does not stop detractors arguing against the creation and use of standards; and the ongoing challenges of using them. Concerns have been expressed about the "reliability and validity of standards, especially since they will be used for so many purposes" (p. 67). As a result, a validation method has been developed and is used where a systemic approach to standards has been adopted. However, it has been pointed out that the use of assessment measures developed in the west may not be valid in other countries because of cultural, contextual, content and assessment differences (Rao et al. 2013). Another matter of concern is the use of standards where there is wide variation and diversity *within* populations in the one country, which might include "ethnicity, religion, geography, tribe, language, and ability" (Kagan 2012, p. 67). Kagan says that while changes have been made to account for such diversity, standards are developed with the aim of including all children.

Despite concerns about standards, globalization has prevailed and there has been considerable development and use of standards in early childhood education internationally and in the Asia-Pacific region in the past decade. Standards are seen as a way of identifying expectations for young children and measuring learning (Kagan and Britto 2005). In 2002, UNICEF, Columbia and Yale Universities in the USA developed the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) as a way to assess and monitor children's early development and learning (Miyahara and Meyers 2008). Following validation, the results of child assessments can be used in a variety of ways including as a "basis for curriculum revision, for instructional improvement and teacher training, for programme evaluation, for parenting education, for public advocacy and for national alignment of standards" (Miyahara and Meyers 2008, p. 17). The appeal of standards has resulted in adoption by many countries. For example, Rao et al. (2013) state that by 2009, 43 countries internationally were using "culturally appropriate" standards (116).

In the Asia-Pacific region, country specific ELDS have been used to develop instruments to assess child development, and validation studies have been undertaken with nationally representative samples (Rao et al. 2013). With assistance from UNICEF, the governments of Cambodia, China, Fiji, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam have developed ELDS (Miyahara and Meyers 2008). The ELDS include details about physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and language development, and some countries include moral, spiritual and cultural development, creativity, and approaches to learning. Examples of ELDS in the region include the Protocol to Assess Lao School Readiness Competencies (Rao 2008), the Cambodian Developmental Assessment Test (Rao and Pearson 2007), and the Vietnam Early Learning and Development Checklist (Rao 2006). In Hong Kong SAR, the Hong Kong Early Child Development Scale (HKECDS) (Rao et al. 2013), was designed specifically for preschool children. According to Rao et al. (2013), it is the first early child development scale which "considers both the holistic development of preschool children and incorporates current expectations of early child development in Hong Kong… [and] it can be used to evaluate both the efficacy of targeted interventions and broader child-related public policies on early child development in Hong Kong" (p. 115).

Further development of standards has occurred in the East Asia and Pacific countries of Cambodia, China, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu, in order "to equip stakeholders…with a common measurement tool to assess the holistic development of children ranging in age from 3 to 5 years" (Rao et al. 2014, p. 15). Called the East Asia-Pacific Early Child Development Scales (EAP-ECDS), the Scales are the result of a three phase development process that included a review of the Early Learning and Development Standards from several countries in the region; a pilot of the Scales in three of the countries (China, Fiji, Mongolia), and administration of the Scales to children in the six aforementioned countries to test reliability and validity (Rao et al. 2014). Administration of the Scales was undertaken in the six countries and required children aged three to five years to complete an 85-item test in their local language in seven domains (cognitive development; socio-emotional development; motor development; language and emergent literacy; health, hygiene, and safety; cultural knowledge and participation; and approaches to learning). After excluding incomplete data (e.g., about ethnicity, urban/rural, age), the validation sample "included 7634 children (1922 rural girls, 1927 rural boys, 1914 urban girls, and 1871 urban boys)" (p. 15). Information was also sought about children's participation in early childhood programs, home learning environments, and nutrition and health. Findings showed that the Scales were "valid and reliable measures of developmental functioning/school readiness" (p. 16). When data from all six countries was combined, a significant impact on child development resulted from attending an early childhood program, although impact varied across countries. Children whose mothers had higher levels of education scored better on the tests. Recommendations included investing in early childhood programs, narrowing the developmental gap between rural and urban children, and the provision of parental education programs.

With significant emphasis on standards through the development and use of the East Asia-Pacific Early Child Development Scales has come an increased awareness of the importance of professionalism.

1.4 Redefining Professionalism

Influences such as globalization and neoliberalism have shaped government, INGO and NGO policies and funding in particular ways, which have then been instrumental in changing or reconceptualizing ECEC. Part of these changes has been the addition standards to the ECEC repertoire, which has brought a subsequent focus on professionalism because of the link between the quality of early childhood services and more highly educated staff (Dalli et al. 2012; OECD 2006). Educational reform in countries such as Cambodia, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore has addressed teacher quality and teacher performance, and resulted in the development of teacher standards in Cambodia and Malaysia (Goh 2012). In several countries in the region, educators in kindergartens and preschools have tended to be seen as teachers because of the high regard in which teachers are held culturally, as well as the contribution of these educators in preparing children for the competitive arena of primary schooling (Monk and Phillipson 2016). Despite this, the work of early childhood educators is "commonly undervalued and underpaid; [and] there is often a lack of recognition of what early childhood educators know and do" (Monk and Phillipson 2016, p. 4). Such understandings influence public perceptions of ECEC and educators.

Several countries and territories in the region have adopted the ELDS as a result of policy decisions because of the association with improved child outcomes (Rao et al. 2014) and quality (see Kagan 2012). For instance, validated child assessments can be used for purposes associated with enhancing professionalism such as instructional improvement, teacher training, and curriculum revision (Kagan 2012). However, standards can contrast with ways in which early childhood educators themselves understand professionalism and professionalization. There is growing resistance to the professionalization agenda that relies on performativity, that is, where there is a direct connection between prescribed practices and procedures, and expectations to meet set outcomes (Dalli et al. 2012; Moss 2012). Technical and managerial approaches such as these tend to override any reference to emotional and affective elements of the work of early childhood educators. Yet these featured prominently in Osgood's (2010) investigation of the professionalism of nursery teachers in London; Taggart's (2011) suggestion of reconceptualising practice through a 'political ethic of care', and Andrew's (2015) challenge to include emotional capital and practical wisdom as essential parts of the work of early childhood educators. However, little of this type of research has been undertaken in the Asia-Pacific region. An exception is the study by Monk and Phillipson (2016), which investigated the experiences and perceptions of

professionalism and professionalization of 78 in-service early childhood education students based in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia. The students' perspectives related to well-being including "work-life balance and work-life roles" (p. 8); the importance of understanding what it means to be educators in their respective cultures, and a "vision of hope leading to the rising status of early childhood education" (p. 12). Feelings and emotions were woven throughout their responses, as was the notion of teamwork.

According to Dalli et al. (2012), a new conceptualisation of professionalism in ECEC is required, one that is able to "reflect the complex realities in which early childhood practitioners live their lives and their profession, and how practitioners' realities are inextricably linked to their wider context" (p. 7). The complexity of the work of early childhood educators and the constant and multiple actions required, often simultaneously, have been noted by many researchers including Felip (2012) and Monk and Phillipson (2016). These researchers have also identified the importance of professional learning being conceptualized and occurring with educators in the teams in which they work on a daily basis, rather than as individually oriented affairs. A significant part of the reconceptualization of professionalism and professionalization is considering questions such as what it means to act professionally in different cultural contexts, and whether it is possible to have a "common ground of understanding about professionalism across multiple early years settings" (Urban and Dalli 2012, p. 157). Along with these questions are several other provocations that researchers might consider:

- What is the place of western/European inspired research in countries and territories of the Asia-Pacific that have Indigenous and Confucian heritages and histories (i.e., non-European heritage cultures)?
- How might more investment in ECEC produce more regulations and greater standardization of early childhood education?
- In an era of globalization, what other factors are important in enhancing quality and improving professionalism in addition to the introduction of standards such as the ELDS?
- What is the place of INGOs from the global North in the global South?
- What are the implications of reducing highly complex and complicated work to simplistic representations of practice?

1.5 Target Audience

Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Early Childhood Education in the Asia-Pacific Region presents contemporary perspectives and recent empirical research findings about the state of early childhood education in the Asia-Pacific region. It provides a review of the landscape of early childhood education in this changing region and in so doing addresses the main issues and major shifts occurring within the diversified contexts of different countries and territories. Each chapter tells of

the changing early childhood milieu in each country or territory and provides an insightful and informative read, first and foremost, for researchers and scholars. It may also have applicability for policymakers and practitioners working in the early childhood education field. The book contributes new knowledge because it investigates a range of Asia-Pacific countries, their early childhood environments, and how they are addressing current and emerging challenges. An international team of experienced researchers from the Asia-Pacific region investigates the unique and dynamic approaches adopted by different countries and territories to key issues of re-conceptualizing early childhood education and care, reconsidering early learning standards, and rethinking professionalism. By examining policy choices and evidence-based practices, the authors illustrate contextual initiatives and responses to prevailing circumstances including the strategies adopted by different countries; and in some chapters, local innovations within countries and territories.

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Part I
Re-conceptualising Early Childhood Education and Care

Historically, support for early childhood education and care (ECEC) varies according to a wide range of matters including government policies, financial status, social and cultural traditions, cultures, and languages, to name a few. Traditionally, in many countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region, ECEC has received little or no government support, and benevolent societies and philanthropic bodies have taken the major responsibility for provision. However, factors such as neoliberalism, human capital theory and the development of Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) (see Chap. 1) have changed the context in which much ECEC now occurs. In this section, contributors investigate how policy changes have affected the provision of ECEC, the political, economic and social changes that have influenced policy changes, and what has resulted for children, families and early childhood professionals.

In Chap. 2, **Sirene Lim** makes an argument that early childhood care and education in **Singapore** is characterized by marketization and corporatization. She canvasses policy initiatives since the year 2000, considers how these are informed by neoliberalism, and highlights some of the challenges of for-profit centers being listed on the stock market. While little empirical research has been undertaken in Singapore, Lim draws on international literature to identify and discuss the consequences of adopting a market approach. Recent government policy initiatives have attempted to address growing concerns about children in the preschool years who experience disadvantage, as well as matters related to teacher qualifications, curriculum guidelines and regulatory and accreditation frameworks. Unlike countries such as Australia and England, in Singapore, the curriculum guidelines and regulatory and accreditation frameworks are not mandatory. However, the spectre of technical approaches looms given the policy context and circumstances, with Lim contemplating early childhood education being conceptualized policy-wise as something in between public and private "good".

Writing from an **Australian** perspective, **Melinda Miller** (Chap. 3) explores reconceptualist work that highlights how colonialism produces historical silences and political and social invisibility for Indigenous peoples. In particular her chapter examines how centring Indigenous knowledge frameworks and perspectives in research and practice supports decolonizing early education and care in an Australian context. Miller discusses the interconnectedness of colonialism, whiteness and racism and the challenges educators face in the early childhood sector. The impacts of the development of new forms of scholarship and activism are deliberated.

The **Korean** universal free childcare policy is addressed in Chap. 4 **Eunhye Park and Hong-Ju Jun** investigate developments in this policy, which was expanded to all households with children aged 0–5 in 2013, regardless of parents' employment status and income. The introduction of providing full subsidies for center-based care to all families has changed the lives of children and their families and as well as the landscape of childcare provision. In this chapter, the authors first reviews the contexts of a dual system of early childhood education and care, and then retrospect how the development of free childcare policy has evolved to full subsidy to all households. Furthermore, the policy has also triggered disputes on excessive demand on the childcare service without increasing female employment rates, explosion of for-profit centers and lack of quality management system, gap in teacher quality and so on, being posed in relation to the effectiveness and fiscal efficiency of the child care policy. This chapter depicts the complexity of political discourse, considerations and reasonable reflections.

In Chap. 5, **Prasanna Srinivasan** adopts a postcolonial perspective to problematize recent policies for young children, as well as girls and women in **India** (the same Ministry is responsible for early childhood education and girls and women). She questions the claim that improving early childhood care and education in India will bring long-term economic benefits on the grounds that the economic imperative will allow only certain groups to succeed because the policy does not address the causes of disadvantage and inequity. Further, Srinivasan questions the content of recent Indian early childhood education policies, pointing out that endorsing ideas in policy documents that are valued in much western early childhood education are akin to the (absent) presence of the colonizer. She asks about the relevance of these western constructs (e.g., developmentally appropriate practice [DAP]) when India itself is characterized by completely different historical, geographical, climatic, linguistic, faith, and economic circumstances (and more) that the USA where such ideas originated. In the latter part of the chapter, Srinivasan tackles the complex matter of patriarchal and gendered violence for women and children and the ways in which such violence is perpetrated by and through informal means such as traditional stories, and the domination of the formal education system by colonial values.

Early Chinese literacy education undertaken in one kindergarten classroom in Hong Kong is the focus of Chap. 6. **TAM Po Chi** used an ethnographic case study that drew on Sinophone (Chinese speaking communities at the edge of China) and postcolonial perspectives. She showed that despite prevailing ideas about the

influence of western philosophies and Confucian culture (such as rote learning and authoritarian teachers), the literacy practices in this classroom reflected a hybridity of languages, cultures and ideologies. The fusion revealed a complex mixture of not only western and Confucian influences, but a meshing of these with the native cultures and languages of Hong Kong, and the impact of Mainland China following the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. In this kindergarten classroom there was entanglement of classic and transgressive literacy practices that were produced from a complex mix of historical, current, local and global influences.

In Chap. 7 **Jie Zhang and Jiaxiong Zhu** examine how Chinese early years curriculum has transformed in recent decades. They present a comprehensive review of curriculum, and key changes and reforms that have provided stimulus and challenge for early years educators in China. This chapter provides insights into the roots of some challenges existing in Chinese early childhood curriculum reform. In particular the authors explore the developed hybrid model of early years curriculum that encompasses traditional communist ways while adopting western play based theories of learning. Interview data highlighting difficulties and disconnections experienced by kindergarten teachers, directors and university professors in the operationalization of these standards and curriculums are shared. Zhang and Zhu encourage Chinese scholars to keep rethinking and reconceptualising early years curriculum in light of complex Chinese sociocultural contexts.

Chapter 2
Marketization and Corporation of Early Childhood Care and Education in Singapore

Sirene Lim

In this chapter, I pursue an argument that Singapore's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) system—a private, marketised and even corporatised system, is in need of policy intervention and re-thinking because of increasing social inequities within a meritocratic climate that largely emphasises individual choice and responsibility for one's success. This paper is framed by critical and postcolonial perspectives that exist within the international early childhood education discourse (e.g., Cannella and Viruru 2004; Moss 2007; Penn 2007; Sumsion 2006).

The chapter beings with contextual information and an overview of key government policies that have shaped ECCE. It also describes the government's position about leaving ECCE mainly in the hands of private and commercial operators. These sections are then followed by an outline of the chapter's critical stance on neoliberalism in educational endeavours. The remaining chapter builds on this conceptual framework to examine the benefits and limits of having a largely commercial and private ECCE market: if such a market creates opportunities for all children and families to access affordable and quality early care and education, if there is any influence on the status of the profession, as well as teacher preparation and education.

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2.1 Overview of Early Childhood Care and Education in Singapore

The Economist Intelligence Unit (2012) published the Starting Well Index to compare the accessibility and quality of early childhood provision (for children ages 3–6) across 45 countries, and ranked Singapore 29th overall. The report was published about a decade after a significant government review of the provision of pre-school education, with recognition that the sector was entirely privatised, comprising not-for-profit organisations and for-profit enterprises (Lim in press; Ministry of Education [MOE] 2003). The Economist Intelligence Unit report may have provided further impetus for greater government control as the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) was created shortly after that in 2013. It was a positive move to integrate and harmonise government regulation of two previously divided sectors of kindergarten and childcare (Khoo 2010; Tan 2007).

The Singapore ECCE landscape discussed in this paper comprises kindergartens and child care centres. Kindergartens offer 3–4 h educational programmes catering for children aged 4 through 6 and were first created, mainly by churches and mosques, for the purpose of preparing children for Primary One (Tan 2007). Previously, kindergartens were regulated by the Ministry of Education. Child care centres, on the other hand, offer full-day care and education programmes for children from 18 months through 6 years and have been licensed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), previously known as the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS). As a service for working parents, child care centres have been more commercialised, with a wider fee range and a significant proportion operating out of commercial buildings and high rental landed property. To encourage more Singaporean families to have children, the ECDA's first task was to increase the number of child care places and to ensure that fees are more affordable for consumers (Early Childhood Development Agency 2013). The government continues to leave the sector privatised, while encouraging organisations and businesses to pay teachers better, and to provide them with career progression and opportunities for continuous teacher education (Early Childhood Development Agency 2014; Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports [MCYS] 2012).

Moving forward, the ECDA needs to re-consider ways to engage with the ECCE market to better understand its impact on the lives of children and their families from a social equity perspective. While this chapter is contextualised within Singapore's meritocracy and particular locale, its argument contributes to existing international conversations on the neoliberal marketisation and commodification of human care and education (Connell 2013; Eika 2009; Hochschild 2005; Moss 2007; Penn 2007, 2011; Sumsion 2006) as well as the conventional view of ECCE as low-skilled women's work that can be reduced to care routines and basic cognitive tasks (Dahlberg et al. 2007; Whitebook et al. 2014).

2.2 Government Initiatives and Position on Early Childhood Care and Education

To provide an overview of ECCE policy activity in Singapore, Table 2.1 is a list of significant government policy initiatives prior to and during the inception of the ECDA. These initiatives were put in place to address the accessibility, affordability, and quality of a private ECCE market (Lim in press). The table shows substantial ECCE policy activity in the new millennium, beginning with the Year 2000 announcement of Desired Outcomes for Pre-School Education, followed by the Ministry of Education's launch of the first national kindergarten curriculum framework (MOE 2003). However, government has continued to take a measured and pragmatic approach by intervening in what it considers to be high leverage areas (Tharman 2013). Four policy initiatives can be clustered according to these high leverage areas.

1. Child outcomes—to spell out the purpose of pre-school education and recommend less academically-focused curricula approaches for young children and encourage centre innovation.
2. Teacher quality and professional status—set higher expectations for teacher qualifications and enhance teacher learning, well-being, and career progression.
3. Government regulatory frameworks—to harmonise the licensing of kindergartens and child care centres; and encourage self-appraisal and provide voluntary quality assessment for programmes that cater for 4–6 year-olds.
4. Policies that increase accessibility and affordability of child care and kindergarten programmes for all families—increase child care places; provide demand-side subsidies based on household income and mothers' working status (Child Care Link FAQs 2016); select Anchor Operators and Partner Operators and subsidise the operation costs of these centres while requiring them to maintain affordable fees and be subjected to quality assessment.

Table 2.1 shows the policy activity in these high leverage areas.

These areas of policy influence are levers allowing for varying government control on the availability, affordability, and quality of ECCE services while maintaining a private and commercial industry. The purpose of maintaining the ECCE market is to offer families choice, keep State expenditure low, and prevent pre-school education from becoming overly formalised, while continuing to provide targeted financial support to economically disadvantaged families (Ministry of Education 2003, 2008, 2010, 2012).

A senior government official offered the following explanation during a parliamentary response to a question on the privatisation of preschool education:

> …diversity allows for experimentation and innovation by preschool operators in the design of curriculum and delivery of programmes […] We want a good quality pre-school sector but this does not mean that we should force all providers to be uniform. Unlike formal school education, experts agree that there is room for diverse approaches in the pre-school sector. (Ministry of Education 2010)

Table 2.1 Policy activity in high leverage areas

Area of influence	Policy initiative
Outcomes for children	Created a set of Desired Outcomes of Preschool Education in the year 2000 to dovetail with existing ones for the entire primary and secondary education system
	Launched a non-mandatory curriculum framework for programmes catering to 4–6 year-olds, Nurturing Early Learners: A Kindergarten Curriculum Framework, following successful 2-year pilot research study of play-based curriculum materials developed by MOE (MOE 2003); a revised version was published recently (MOE 2012)
	Provided preschools with Innovation Grants, awards, and organised annual events for the sector to share best practices (MOE 2010)
	Launched non-mandatory framework for infant/toddler services, The Early Years Development Framework (EYDF) (MCYS, 2011)
	The MOE (2013) created up to 15 pilot kindergartens to explore best curricular practices for scaling up the sector
Teacher quality and status	Increased minimum academic and professional requirements for preschool teachers in preschools (MOE 2010)
	Created a Preschool Qualifications Accreditation Committee co-chaired by MOE and MSF to decide on content to be included in preschool teaching qualifications at Certificate and Diploma levels (MOE 2010)
	Launched the Good Employers' Toolkit to improve staff retention (MCYS 2011)
	Launched a Continuing Professional Development Framework for Early Childhood Educators for leadership and teaching pathways (MCYS 2012)
	Developed structured competency-based career pathways for teachers and identified Fellows as mentors for the sector (ECDA 2014, 2015a)
Regulatory framework and accreditation	Encouraged quality provision through the Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK)—for voluntary self-evaluation and external assessment of centre programmes through a Quality Rating Scale (MOE 2010)
	To work on a new legislative framework to harmonise the licensing of both kindergarten and child care (MSF 2014); yet to be announced
Accessibility and Affordability	Encouraged and supported preschool attendance among children from disadvantaged families (MOE 2010)
	Increased kindergarten and child care subsidies to families (Tharman 2013)
	Increased the number of childcare centres to meet public demand for affordable childcare and created the Anchor Operator Scheme (ECDA 2013), and Partner Operator Scheme (ECDA 2015d)
	Support selected large anchor operators to create mega child care centres for 300–500 children in high demand areas (ECDA 2015a)

To date, I estimate based on a simple count of public lists available on the ECDA website, that more than half of Singapore's kindergarten sector comprises not-for-profit provision (many set up by religious establishments), while the child care sector is mostly for-profit. Of the combined kindergarten and child care sector, just over half appear to be for-profit. Existing policies of privatising ECCE continues to position young children's care and education as the responsibility of individual families. While providing families with tiered subsidies according to household income, the state continues to support ECCE as a private good to be consumed by families according to their preference, needs, and purchasing power. However, in view of increasing disparities in income and fears that economically disadvantaged children may not be ready for formal school both intellectually and emotionally, there is expanded government spending and regulatory control to raise professional expectations of the ECCE workforce and "quality" of care and education through a voluntary quality rating system called the Singapore Pre-School Accreditation Framework (SPARK) (MOE 2010). While the government recognises the importance of ECCE access, especially as a form of early intervention for children in disadvantaged communities, it is not prepared to have much control over curricular programmes and practices beyond a recommended kindergarten curriculum framework, the Early Years Development Framework for infants and toddlers (MCYS 2011). The government's curricular frameworks are not mandatory, and neither is quality rating and accreditation. From an educational and equity point of view, these policies are all issues of concern in a neoliberal ECCE market.

2.3 Neo-Liberalism in Early Childhood Care and Education

Singapore's ECCE market, in the hands of a largely for-profit industry, is a neoliberal endeavour. Neo-liberalism emphasises free market principles and minimal government intervention even in the social welfare affairs of a state; it focuses on individual choice, autonomy, meritocracy, productivity, business competitiveness and efficiency (Connell 2013; Harvey 2005). When these principles are translated to the provision of care and education in schools, kindergartens, and child care centres, the needs of children can become overshadowed by the need for institutions to focus on being competitive in a free market, being attractive to consumers, and becoming financially profitable. A privatised and marketised care and education sector has led to the tendency to concentrate on market competitiveness, shaping consumer choice, profit generation, business expansion, and entrepreneurial innovation (Sumsion 2006; Lloyd 2012).

As businesses, ECCE centres do not necessarily focus on the best interests of young children because such services are created to meet the needs of adults, and as such, a privatised ECCE sector cannot always provide optimal conditions for the care and education of young citizens within diverse and socially stratified societies. A marketised care and education sector thrives on competition while

promising consumer choice (Brennan et al. 2012). This market competition fore-grounds adults' needs and desires because they are the fee-paying consumers, and not their children. As a result, a marketised care and education system leaves little room to prioritise young children's actual desires and agencies as learners (Cannella and Viruru 2004; Eika 2009; Moss 2007; Penn 2007). And in the process of commodifying care and education as a product for sale, child care centres and kindergartens position themselves first as businesses, emphasising particular kinds of teacher performance that could reduce the educational process into a series of mechanical tasks to be completed (Connell 2013). Moss(2007) argued that neoliberal markets over-emphasise the importance of monetary value in societies and reduce the process of education and care into managerial and technical practice.

Not many countries gather data on private, for-profit and not-for-profit organisations; in the UK, a market research firm generates data on the child care market but it is made available at a prohibitive cost (Lloyd 2012). Global discussion and more research is needed as little is known about the consequence of national and international child care markets on the everyday lives of the ECCE practitioners, children and their families. Little is known also about how these businesses and corporations create or sustain affordability, availability, and quality of ECCE (Lloyd 2012). A study of the New Zealand context has shown that teacher professionalism is shaped by corporatisation, defined and used as a business tool so much so that questions are raised about the ability of the for-profit and corporate sector to provide sufficiently high quality and professional ECCE to benefit children (Duhn 2010). And in the Hong Kong voucher system, increased parental choice has preserved conventional public perception that ECCE teachers are caregivers with a job scope that does not really require intellectualism or a university education (Yuen and Grieshaber 2009).

2.4 Discussion

The remaining chapter examines: (1) ECCE when it is business-focused; (2) how such businesses influence perceptions of quality as well as accessibility and affordability, and (3) how business focused ECCE shapes teacher education and professional status.

2.4.1 Early Childhood Care and Education as Business Activity: Franchises, Mergers and Acquisitions

The Singapore government's increased involvement in ECCE (as shown through the multitude of policies listed in Table 2.1) could be read as an indication that it is beginning to view ECCE as an essential provision to society—important

for working adults and to the proportion of children who may face difficulties upon entering an academically challenging primary school system. Culturally, Singapore society has always placed great importance on children's education (Goh and Gopinathan 2008). This was demonstrated by the fact that in the 1970s, within the first decade of independence, 100 % primary school attendance was achieved without it being made compulsory (Goh and Gopinathan 2008). Even the Prime Minister has commented on Singapore being a nation preoccupied with enrolling children in tuition programmes outside school (Lee 2012). Families supplement their children's kindergarten education with academically-oriented enrichment programmes (e.g., phonics, math) on weekends or week nights. Given improvements in many families' economic circumstances and ambitions for their children to succeed in school, the nation's commercial shadow education industry has been instrumental in creating what Gee (2012) terms in the title of his report, an educational 'arms race'.

Internationally, there have been calls for public investment in early years learning and development, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged children, so as to reduce future social costs to societies (Barnett and Masse 2007; Heckman 2006; Rolnick and Grunewald 2003; Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). This positions ECCE as something that is necessary for the good of society, not too different from basic primary education and healthcare. This then begs the question of whether it is ethically right for such an important public good to be offered by a mix of more for-profit than not-for-profit private operators. Competitive consortiums and corporations are able to freely market and brand their services to possibly inflate their image, potentially misuse market power, charge higher fees, poach teachers, and inflate salaries unreasonably to push out small, independent providers (Tay 2013).

In the absence of systematic data in Singapore, I present issues that have been raised in local news and discussed by scholars examining childcare corporatisation and marketisation elsewhere (Brennan et al. 2012; Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Penn 2007; Sumsion 2006) to illustrate how the competitive unpredictability of a global business environment has caused large child care businesses to fall and rise behind the façade of popularity and branding success.

In a globalised commerce environment, businesses are prone to acquisitions and mergers and it becomes inevitable to prioritise business innovation and profit generation; this is also true for commercial child care (Sumsion 2006). For instance, Busy Bees (UK's largest nursery chain) now owns three popular Singaporean child care brands (about 50 centres in Singapore) and the Asian International College (Farrell 2015). Looking back a decade ago, in 2006, the Australian conglomerate ABC Learning acquired Busy Bees, the fifth largest UK nursery provider. But after ABC Learning went into receivership in 2008, Busy Bees was sold to the American-owned Knowledge Universe in 2009. In Singapore, Knowledge Universe acquired three popular brands of child care centres and the Asian International College in 2007 to become the largest private ECCE provider in Singapore at the time. Presently, Knowledge Universe no longer exists in Singapore, and its centres now come under the Busy Bees umbrella. The former

CEO of Knowledge Universe in Asia (now at Busy Bees), had this to say about the ECCE enterprise when interviewed by journalists:

> Our whole approach to developing the business is about hand picking the best in the market, focusing on institutions that stand out with innovative and cutting-edge practices [...] We then formulate customised solutions to address the needs of our customers and partners, adding value to what they have. (Phillips et al. 2013, paragraph 7)

The above quote is representative of what businesses do, that is, cater for the needs of their customers. But as businesses, it is inevitable that they would also have to look into the interests of their business partners who may be shareholders (Moss 2007; Penn 2011). By their very nature, commercial child care centres cannot exist with a sole priority to serve the needs of society or that of disadvantaged children, but focus on monetary profit.

Another example of ECCE as business is a home-grown enterprise called the Cherie Hearts Group International. At one point it was considered the largest and fastest growing private child care chain in Singapore, with franchises outside the country (Suhaimi 2009); and its founder had earned a reputation as a successful local young entrepreneur with a unique franchise model (National Archives of Singapore 2005). In 2011, Cherie Hearts was bought by G8 Education's Singapore subsidiary, along with two other brands and now has more than 50 child care centres; in Australia, the company manages over 200 centres across the continent and is one of the largest child care operators listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (G8 Education, n.d.). Cherie Hearts in G8 Education Singapore has earned the Singapore Prestige Brand Award and Promising Franchisor Award (Cherie Hearts Awards 2016). But two of G8's three child care brands do not have SPARK-certified centres (ECDA 2015b). This illustrates the argument made in this chapter about the fluid nature of child care quality in a commercial market and how "word-of-mouth" advertising can shape public perception of quality.

2.4.2 Popularity-as-Quality: Rich-Poor Divide in Accessibility

Eika (2009) has argued that in the industry of care provision, whether it is the care of children or the elderly, marketisation has its limits because consumers often do not know enough about "quality," nor do they have access to sufficient first-hand information; care services are not purchased frequently and are often required by families under pressure and time constraints; and not all consumers can exercise their choice fully, because it depends on how much they can afford.

Given the free market nature of ECCE in past decades, "quality" has been defined by the market providers and consumers who popularise certain kindergartens and child care centres by word of mouth. Over the years, programmes have marketed themselves in increasingly innovative ways to appeal to children and families. For instance, there are programmes that enhance brain functioning

through patented approaches and equipment, develop multiple intelligences, include yoga for children, and motivate children with a playground inspired by a popular online game. These centres appeal to families who want to pay for unusual programmes rather than the average not-for-profit offering.

Such marketing and branding of "niche" and innovative programmes has not changed much with the government's quality rating tool for self-appraisal, external assessment and eventual accreditation (MOE 2010). A search on the government child care portal reveals that popular and well-known ECCE brands tend to charge the highest fees in the entire sector (Child Care Link 2016), but there is no research evidence to show that they offer higher quality ECCE than centres charging half or less. Even though the government has established SPARK, the voluntary preschool quality accreditation framework (MOE 2010), and has been encouraging preschools to be externally assessed for continued improvement, there may not be sufficient incentive for centres that are already popular, to do so. A preschool centre with children on a long waiting list may not find it necessary to show proof of its quality by going through a time-consuming quality rating exercise by external assessors. And centres that are part of large for-profit chains may have their own ways of convincing the public of their quality, such as obtaining a franchisor award, or a prestige brand award. It is, therefore, not surprising that the government is way off its original target of having 85 % of all preschools participating in the SPARK external assessment by 2013 (MOE 2010). Instead, less than 20 % were reported to be SPARK-certified: 1 in 4 kindergartens and 1 in 7 child care centres (Chan 2014). Perhaps this is not unusual in a privatised market: Xiao (2010) observed that in the United States, only 20 % of childcare centres had applied for voluntary NAEYC accreditation a decade after the accreditation framework was established; and only 7.5 % actually obtained accreditation status.

One would need to examine how such voluntary quality rating and accreditation mechanisms are actually making a difference in a privatised ECCE landscape, and for whom such processes ultimately benefit. Competitiveness in a tight labour market has created teacher movement, from lower-paying centres to higher-paying ones (Tay 2013). With a growing middle-and upper-class, this commercialisation phenomenon will continue to create social stratification as these centres continue to attract better-resourced families who perceive them to be offering higher quality care and education than lower-priced centres catering to the masses. More educated families have more power now as consumers; they have higher expectations of teachers' language abilities and want their children to be interacting with those from similar socio-economic backgrounds (Lim 2015).

An entirely different set of issues face economically disadvantaged children. Government support exists in the form of generous subsidies for low income families to enrol their children in pre-school or child care. If the children's attendance is regular, they would certainly receive support for holistic development. But it has been reported that children in this particular population may not attend child care or pre-school regularly (Ng 2015) and monetary incentives alone are not sufficient to mitigate the effects of poverty and multiple stresses often faced by such families (Ng 2013). What remains to be done is for the sector to create

more comprehensive and holistic services that see to the needs of economically disadvantaged adults and children; that is, to provide maternal health care, social services, employment and re-training advice and opportunities, child health and nutrition, and child care and education support services.

While the government can provide salary subsidies and insist that anchor operators cap their fees, it must realise that the nature of "quality" in the care and education of young human beings is ultimately a shifting construct, dynamically shaped by families' perceptions, and one that is difficult to measure (Dahlberg et al. 2007). At best, the Anchor Operator Scheme (i.e., selected not-for-profit centres subsidised by government and required to cap fees accordingly) could try to persuade families that they offer "value-for-money" quality ECCE. Even so, anchor operators will not solve the fundamental issue of social stratification because economically advantaged families still have the freedom to decide on placement of children according to how much they are willing or able to pay for ECCE that matches their own knowledge, values, income, aspirations, and needs.

2.4.3 Influence on Teacher Education and Professional Status

The privatisation and commercialisation of ECCE has resulted in commercialisation and commodification of both early childhood teacher education and higher education in Singapore. This has influenced the development of teacher education and the image of the profession. Unlike primary school teacher preparation, which is only available at a government-funded local institution of higher education (the National Institute of Education), for about two decades, ECCE teachers have been trained mainly in commercial training agencies. At its peak, the industry had 27 training agencies in 2006 (Lim in press). Many of these private training agencies were also partnering with foreign universities to offer part-time early childhood degree programmes with significantly reduced study durations.

It has only been in recent years that the government has made explicit its support for capacity development at three local polytechnic institutions and the Institute of Technical Education to offer both full-time and part-time early childhood diploma and certificate level programmes (Teng 2015). This move may have indirectly reduced the number of for-profit training agencies with accredited ECCE teaching diplomas to nine (Early Childhood Development Agency 2015c), demonstrating the importance of government intervention in shaping public perception and rigour of ECCE teacher education within a privatised and commercial industry.

A major limitation of having a largely commercial and private ECCE teacher education landscape is this: having existed for two decades, the sector has not encouraged much growth of scholarship and criticality, especially with ECCE teacher education pegged at a certificate level (without complete secondary

education) or diploma level for secondary school leavers. These entry requirements are lower than those aspiring to be primary school teachers. Run by private businesses, ECCE teacher preparation, while regulated by government requirements for minimal standards, has not supported the sector's knowledge generation or leadership growth. Without ECCE teacher preparation housed in a university, and without more systematic teaching and learning research, there can be little critical reflection and evaluation of local practices, issues and trends.

ECCE around the world is largely female, given the stereotypical view that women should work with young children (Cannella and Viruru 2004; Hochschild 2005; Penn 2007). In Singapore, the sector is also overwhelmingly female, a challenge to be surmounted if the work of caring for and educating young children is to be seen as a gender-neutral task. Figures show that across the 498 private kindergartens in Singapore more than 99 % of the teachers are female; in primary schools, 81 % are women, whereas in junior colleges, 59 % are female (MOE 2014). In the compulsory years, in terms of gender distribution in the mainstream education system, there is a significantly higher proportion of female teachers in primary schools than in junior colleges (MOE 2014). From a systemic perspective, preschool teachers form the least-educated ranks of the nation's community of educators because they typically have diploma and/or certificate qualifications, and have been traditionally separated from the community of primary and secondary school teachers. The gender divide is created by a traditional separation of children's "care" and "education" needs, where caring work is seen as being more feminine (Cannella and Viruru 2004; Hochschild 2005; Penn 2007).

The ECCE workforce in Singapore has traditionally come from the bottom one-third of the academic cohort, but with the government's raised requirement in minimum academic standards, preschool teachers are now recruited from the middle one-third of the academic cohort (MOE 2010). ECCE has been viewed by the public as women's work or low-skilled caring work that should be done for family members without remuneration (Folbre 2003), and Singaporeans generally think that preschool education is an uncomplicated task of teaching children to rote learn words and numbers (Loke 2015). Comparable to reports from the US and the UK, ECCE as caring work has created low wages that have been endemic in the sector (Ackerman 2006; Folbre 2003; Penn 2011; Whitebook et al. 2014). In Singapore, early childhood graduates earn at least 20 % less than graduates in other disciplines (Davie 2013).

In Singapore, the professional status of ECCE practitioners has remained lower than that of primary school teachers, even though the government acknowledges the importance of child care services that allow women to remain in the workforce (Chan 2014). Early years care and education is not often a career of choice for many, mainly because of the tradition of lower salaries compared to other kinds of employment available to either diploma or degree-graduates (Davie 2013). Because of the sector's lower pay, it has attracted less educationally qualified staff. But with the recent government call for swift expansion of child care services (Chan 2014), the sector now faces stiff competition among the 600 or so brand names for certified teachers and principals to fill the many newly established

centres (Davie 2013). There are anecdotal and newspaper reports of a significant shortage of teachers in the Singapore ECCE market and disillusioned young graduates who prefer not to join the sector after their diploma studies (Craig 2013; Tay 2013). Independent reports and investigations of teacher shortage or movement do not exist yet although this has been identified as an issue in the international literature; in contrast, job turnover and occupational turnover of the early years workforce has been studied in the USA, Australia, and the UK (Rolfe 2005; Sumsion 2006; Whitebook and Sakai 2003). And we know that young children thrive in environments where there is staffing consistency and quality interactions (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000; Whitebook et al. 2014).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how the ECCE market in Singapore has a strong influence over public conceptions of popularity-as-quality, and has a tendency to separate children's attendance at preschool according to family access to financial resources. Extensive government policy development has occurred since the turn of the 21st century. However, curriculum frameworks and quality accreditation systems remain voluntary, which has resulted in corporations and specific brands not completing accreditation and certification processes. In a neoliberal market, these policies continue to pose issues of concern related to equity, including feasibility of access to early childhood settings and services for vulnerable children and families. It remains to be seen if a private and commercial ECCE market, with an appropriate degree of governmental control, can indeed improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of ECCE in Singapore. Much is yet to be learned about the strengths and limitations of the ECCE market landscape in Singapore. It will take time before the field is able to generate more systematic data and research activity to better understand interconnected realities facing teachers, families, and children. Intended policy outcomes have yet to be seen, but given a few more years, Singapore may eventually be able to achieve public goals with private means for a fair and just ECCE system.

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Chapter 3
Reconceptualist Work in a Colonising Context: Challenges for Australian Early Childhood Education

Melinda G. Miller

3.1 Introduction

Reconceptualist work in early childhood education remains fluid and challenging. Since the early 1980s, the Reconceptualist movement has provided new forms of praxis, particularly in response to critiques of developmental frameworks and universal ideas about quality that negate local and diverse articulations of early education and care. In the past decade in particular, reconceptualist work has bought into focus issues around colonialism, Indigenous education and decolonising approaches to research and practice. The theorising of Soto (2000), Soto and Swadener (2002) and Ritchie (2007) are some examples of reconceptualist work that highlight how colonialism produces historical silences and political and social invisibility for Indigenous peoples, and how centring Indigenous knowledge frameworks and perspectives in research and practice supports decolonising early education and care. As explored in this chapter, issues around colonialism are central to reconceptualist work in the Asia-Pacific context, particularly in Australia which remains a colonising context to the present day. In Australian early childhood education, reconceptualising requires engagement with interrelated concepts of colonialism, whiteness and racism. Exploration of these concepts is challenging for many educators due to their socialisation and gaps in education and training. Such challenges hinder the development of skill sets necessary for new forms of scholarship and activism that underpin reconceptualist work.

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In this chapter, I posit that a new maturity is needed for reconceptualising Australian early childhood education to enable understanding of how colonial effects are mobilised in practice, even with the best of intentions and when educators' work is seen to be high quality. The ability to identify and describe more fully what colonial effects look like in early childhood education and how they are reproduced in many forms, enables educators to initiate and engage decolonising pedagogy. In this sense, educators build capacity to identify how they inherit and mobilise colonial effects of whiteness and racism in daily practice, and how they can reduce rather than reinforce impacts of these effects within practices and interactions with others. Decolonising pedagogy counters the ways colonialism is always retold and recycled in Australian early childhood education, from western constructions of education and care, to policy development, and the talk and actions of educators working with community, families and children in early years settings.

To begin, I establish the relevance of colonialism to reconceptualising early childhood education in the Asia-Pacific region. This is followed by discussion about education as both a product of colonialism and a logical starting point for initiating decolonising pedagogy that challenges colonisation and its ongoing effects. Responses to Indigenous perspectives in Australian early childhood education are then outlined, with particular reference to policy expectations. Knowledge bases and theoretical tools that support early childhood educators to initiate decolonising pedagogy are suggested. The chapter concludes with discussion about conditions for ongoing professional development that support educators to meet and overcome challenges in reconceptualist work.

Throughout this chapter, I weave examples of educators' talk and actions from a doctoral study about embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in early childhood education curricula in two urban childcare settings in Queensland, Australia (see Miller 2013). The study employed an action research methodology and invited early childhood educators to engage in sustained professional development around themes of culture and diversity. Participants comprised 22 early childhood educators from two long day care centres (Centres A and B), who investigated a range of topics they related to broad themes of culture and diversity (e.g., embedding Indigenous perspectives, multilingualism, the role of Cultural Support Workers, sustainability). Twelve of the 22 participants were involved directly in investigating embedding Indigenous perspectives. This was the one topic chosen by educators at both participating centres. The 12 participants were employed in a range of professional roles, including directors, group leaders and childcare assistants.

Data were collected over a period of 10 months at Centre A and five months at Centre B during 2009–2010. Forms of data collected included: everyday conversations that took place in hallways, classrooms and coffee shops; communal journals; semi-structured interviews; photographs; inventories of resources; and, action plans. Analysis of the data set involved thematic analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994) of coding, categorisation and the development of four broad themes (embedding Indigenous perspectives; relationships with Indigenous

people; the Australian context; and researcher talk). These themes were re-read to ask further questions about the data set; for example, how racialising practices mediated the educators' work even when it was seen to be productive, inclusive and high quality. This was supported by Sara Ahmed's (2012) theorising of racism as a form of 'doing', rather than simply, inaction. Ahmed's scholarship provided entry points for examining racialising practices as forms of positive action as well as inaction, in the educators' work. In this chapter, I weave examples of talk and action from two educators (Gail and Sally) to highlight challenges in identifying and reducing impacts of whiteness and subtle forms of racism that are always present in educators' work, whether recognised or not.

3.2 Colonialism in the Asia-Pacific Region

The Asia-Pacific region is home to around two-thirds of the world's Indigenous peoples. The human and social dimensions of the Asia-Pacific account for much of the world's linguistic and cultural diversity, with approximately 280 million Indigenous peoples the custodians of the region's diverse lands and territories (United Nations Development Programme 2012). The geographic, human and social diversity of the Asia-Pacific parallels the continuing contribution of rich and distinct Indigenous knowledge, practices and perspectives that benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

In Australia, Indigenous groups comprise 3 % of the total population. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports that in 2011, 90 % of Indigenous people identified as having Aboriginal heritage, 6 % as having Torres Strait Islander heritage, and 4 % as having both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2013). Indigenous peoples are recognised as the First Australians and traditional custodians of lands and territories now known as Australia, although full constitutional recognition is yet to occur. Australia remains a colonising context to the present day, meaning the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has never been formally ceded (Chalmers 2005). Invasion by British forces occurred on the premise of peaceable settlement—meaning the colonial doctrine of terra nullius was operationalised to determine an area of land, now known as Australia, void of human inhabitants (Chalmers 2005). This doctrine relied on the biological classification of Indigenous peoples as primitive or sub-human, despite the existence of highly sophisticated societies, technologies, and social and cultural practices for 40–60, 000 years (Elder 2009). The strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples in Australia is obvious in light of ongoing colonial effects including systems of education and government dominated by use of the English language and a deep tradition of Christianity (May and Aikman 2003). Mainstream media is another social system that upholds marginalisation and discrimination through misrepresentation and mediation of deficit narratives about Indigenous peoples. Negotiating and

resisting colonial effects are common experiences for Indigenous peoples both within Australia and across the Asia-Pacific region (World Council of Churches 2009).

Due to high numbers of Indigenous peoples in the Asia-Pacific, the region is at the forefront of endorsing and achieving aims of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (hereafter the Declaration), adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2007, and in Australia in 2009 following initial rejection. The Declaration is premised on social justice principles and is described as "a clear and strong statement of hope, belief and purposes" (United Nations 2007, foreword). This premise aligns with reconceptualist goals and methodologies in early childhood education oriented toward "hope and possibility" within a "newly evolving, liberating 'third space' … of social justice and equity" (Soto 2000, p. 198). Articles 14 and 15 of the Declaration address education specifically, with statements concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples to "access all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination" (Article 14) and to have "the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations … appropriately reflected in education …" (Article 15).

In comparison with the aims of the Declaration, circumstances for Indigenous peoples in the Asia-Pacific region are identified as producing high-level concern in several recent reports. The EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2014), State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report (United Nations 2009) and State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples Report: Focus on Health (Walker 2013) all identify grim circumstances related to education, health and poverty for Indigenous peoples in the Asia-Pacific. In relation to Australia specifically, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student achievement and retention is outlined as an ongoing issue, as is effective training for educators who work with diverse student populations. The EFA Global Monitoring Report pledges quality education for all who face socio-demographic disadvantages and/or economic hardships (UNESCO 2014). It further urges raising teaching quality in early learning programs. While improvements in education for Indigenous children and families are prioritised in the Asia-Pacific, questions remain about the influence of constructs operationalised at the supra-national level in localised policy and practice, and how 'shared' understandings about social justice goals and outcomes are enacted across diverse regions and educational settings.

3.3 Colonialism and Education

In colonising contexts including Australia, education is a key social institution that upholds and reproduces white (western) institutional arrangements and knowledge traditions. Coté (2009) explains that historically in Australia, education has served to safeguard whiteness, or act as a reflection of European society as civil and advanced. In this sense, whiteness is a form of institutional racism that has chronically excluded, marginalised and forced the assimilation of non-white groups in

Australian education systems, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As Reynolds (2005) articulates:

> For almost 200 years, education has been tried as a solution to what has been termed Australia's "Aboriginal problem." As an institution, school has been used over the years to pacify, Christianize, and Europeanize the native population. It has been used to protect "white interests" and maintain segregation, and to assist in racial integration and encourage Aboriginal self-determination (p. 32).

Reynolds's comment illustrates a two-fold imperative: to identify how education systems reproduce debilitating colonial effects; and to consider how they become logical starting points for initiating decolonising pedagogy by addressing whiteness and racism directly. In the present day, this involves identifying more covert forms of whiteness and racism that operate at all levels of education through processes of governance, policy development, the enactment of curricula, and teacher/educator professional development (Fredericks 2009; Hambel 2006).

Questions about whether it is possible to decolonise Australian education institutions are valid, however there are useful entry points for undermining colonial hegemony and reconceptualising educational practices along more inclusive and egalitarian lines. One example is Nakata's (2007) theorising about education as a cultural interface. Nakata defines the cultural interface as a contested space between knowledge systems and perspectives that is not clearly Indigenous or western. It is bound by historical discourses which condition how individuals interpret the world and what knowledge they operationalise in daily activities (Nakata 2007). For non-Indigenous educators, it is critical to consider how their view of the world is bound by Australia's colonial history and present, and by proxy, how they position Indigenous peoples, knowledge frameworks and perspectives. In initiating decolonising pedagogy in educational sites, Nakata (2007) explains how Indigenous peoples and Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and symbols are "already discursively bounded, ordered and organised by others and their sets of interests" (p. 9). In this respect, entry points for centralising Indigenous knowledge frameworks and perspectives in educational sites are influenced at different levels. These include policy and institutional commitment and practices, but also the ways non-Indigenous educators interpret the purpose, scope and possibilities around this work in their professional and personal lives.

Working at the cultural interface requires several interconnected approaches that can propel educators' practices beyond tacit (or 'how to') understandings of their professional role. In a study by Williamson and Dalal (2007) that focussed on indigenising a university curriculum, the researchers identified the need for multiple and interconnected decolonising approaches. One approach focussed on connectedness between the work of embedding Indigenous perspectives and local Indigenous expertise and understanding, which can support a continuing challenging of western 'authority' in curricula design (Williamson and Dalal 2007). Building reciprocal relationships with individuals and organisations in local Indigenous communities is central to embedding Indigenous perspectives and ensures access to local knowledge and perspectives to inform curriculum planning (Department of Education and Training 2011; Dreise 2007). A second approach

considered institutional support for educators to engage in ongoing self-analysis about their own social positioning and how this impacts relations with Indigenous people; although the researchers identified that many non-Indigenous educators will find self-analysis "extraordinarily discomforting" (Williamson and Dalal 2007, p. 57). This particular finding has implications for building a culture of reflective practice within early years settings and for creating conditions for ongoing professional development that support self-reflective practices.

Combined, the approaches identified by Williamson and Dalal (2007) provide scope for unsettling technical forms of practice that uphold institutional norms and behaviours, or, how things are always done. However, with any approach, there is a need to consider how colonial effects are mobilised in curricula and interactions, even with the best of intentions. For example, in building relationships with Indigenous people and organisations, educators can fail to achieve reciprocity and may place restrictive boundaries around how Indigenous people can represent themselves in the life of the setting (Grace and Trudgett 2012; Kitson and Bowes 2010). In curricula development and design, there is risk of essentializing diverse Indigenous perspectives, relying on stereotypical or tokenistic representations, and continuing to position Indigenous perspectives on the periphery of educational practice (Battiste 2008; Nakata 2011). Non-Indigenous educators may also mobilise resistance to self-analysis in relation to culture and identity because this work can be discomforting and is rarely enforced on those who identify as members of a mainstream group (MacNaughton and Davis 2009; Phillips 2011, 2012).

3.4 Colonialism and Education: A Real-World Example

Here, I weave examples of an educator's talk and pedagogy to draw together key points outlined in the chapter so far. The three extracts below are taken from the aforementioned doctoral study about embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in early childhood education curricula (Miller 2013) and focus on Gail (pseudonym), a non-Indigenous educator, who had worked at one of the two participating settings for 10 years. Combined, the extracts bring to the surface issues around interrelated concepts of colonialism, whiteness and subtle forms of racism. They show how Gail's early education and developing worldview were bound by Australia's colonial history and present and, by proxy, how she positioned herself in relation with/to Indigenous peoples. The retelling and recycling of colonialism comes to light in how Gail transferred her worldview to curriculum development and design, with a tendency to rely on tokenistic representations of Indigenous cultural practices, even though she was strongly committed to reconceptualising her thinking and pedagogy over time. In this first extract, Gail explains how her early schooling experiences influenced her perception of Indigenous peoples and cultures.

Every photo or book or anything I was exposed to at school had an Aboriginal person in a life like with a spear, and it was scary. I was scared. I was scared of Aboriginal, I truly was. And you know, like that word savages, like the eyes … When I went to school, we were sort of never taught much about Aboriginal stuff at all. I mean I am older than all of you, but honestly I was not taught very much about it so now I just don't know. It was sort of waved under the table, nobody talked about it … And, like, when I went to school there was a lot of Italians and Greeks coming into the country at that stage, and Vietnamese people, so it was like I learnt more about the Greeks and Italians at school than I did about the Aboriginals. I can remember when they [migrants] all came, it was sort of like, "Oh gee, we're being invaded".

Gail's early experiences reflect the ways many Australian early childhood educators have been socialised (MacNaughton and Davis 2009). In this extract, Gail re-tells a history of Australia following European contact. Whiteness is woven through themes of savagery and invisibility, and deficit narratives around migration and threats to a white-nation space (Elder 2009). Gail's comment about being "scared of Aboriginal" because of the materials provided to her at school, speaks to how colonial narratives are retold and recycled in books and photographs presented as facts. These artefacts are products of white social institutions that filter representations and the visibility of Indigenous peoples and cultures (Nakata 2007). For Gail, exposure to colonial narratives and related imagery resulted in attaching fear to difference in a physical sense (i.e., "the eyes"). Reducing difference to biological characteristics is core to racialising practices that stem from the colonial doctrine of terra nullius and the rationalisation employed by the British for the invasion of Indigenous lands and territories (Chalmers 2005). Gail's comment about Aboriginality being "waved under the table" and her description of learning more about "Italians and Greeks" also re-told the erasure of Indigeneity amid stories of migration and a developing Australia (Elder 2009).

Colonial themes are mobilised by non-Indigenous people in the present in different ways, but usually with the result that Indigenous peoples and cultures remain largely unknown in non-Indigenous domains (Phillips 2011, 2012). In place of connecting with Indigenous people, non-Indigenous Australians will often freely embrace notions of 'acceptable' forms of Indigenous cultures including art, music and corroboree (Rose 2012). This is reflected in Gail's description of her interactions with Indigeneity as an adult.

Now, when we go up to Cairns like maybe every two years and we go up to Kuranda and they have a lot of shops up there with arts and I just love it. They also have an Aboriginal display where they dance their traditional dances and that. But I love looking in their galleries, their beautiful artwork.

As explained in the first extract, Gail's early education experiences upheld colonial values and exercised whiteness through the selective distillation of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge (Coté 2009; Nakata 2011). As an adult, she exercised this same power by accepting some forms of difference (i.e., arts, dances, books about Indigenous cultures), but with the condition of not needing to interact directly with Indigenous people or question her own racialised identity (whiteness) in relation with/to Indigenous peoples. Gail's standpoint of acceptance

and appreciation appeared to demonstrate a shift from her early perceptions, but her engagement with Aboriginal cultures attended to static (i.e., traditional, how they lived) and performative (i.e., arts, dances) aspects only. This transferred to her approach to curriculum.

> We could paint with dirt, make up a mud thing. Like, you know, use a stick or something to do like a dot painting or lines. We could make cardboard boomerangs. The kids do love art. I've only got to put things out on the table and they will swarm to the table. They just love it … We've got games … I thought about little story cards that have the Aboriginal artwork with them and the kids can hear the story. We had the jigsaw puzzles out on one table. They loved them. I love looking at them too.

With these ideas, Gail reproduced within the classroom space the selective approach to interacting with Indigenous cultures she employed in her personal life. Her suggestions for curriculum with young children were sound in terms of entry points for learning. The use of natural materials, engagement with games, puzzles and stories, and a focus on producing original art can provide young children with valuable learning experiences. However, Gail's ideas relied on 'safe' or 'acceptable' constructions of Indigenous cultures. As her ideas made use of cultural icons (i.e., boomerangs, dot paintings) embraced freely within broader society, she could maintain control over how Indigenous cultures were represented within the classroom space without scrutiny or critique (Rose 2012). Attending to the 'accepted' does not require a conceptual shift. This is because accepting, tolerating and including Indigenous perspectives and cultures in line with the broader national psyche detracts from engagement with deeper issues of colonisation. Rose (2012) refers to this as "racism by cotton wool" (p. 71), whereby educators project a culture of respect, but fail to apply rigour to their curriculum and pedagogical choices. Because of her choices, Gail could avoid engaging with Indigeneity on a level that implicated her in a mundane form of oppression. As her curriculum fitted with constructions of Indigeneity on white terms, she could maintain the status quo both in terms of the types of activities she made available to children and her own subject position in relation with/to Indigenous perspectives and peoples.

The three extracts presented above provide a real-world example of how colonial effects operate and are mobilised in talk, actions and experiences of early childhood educators. A key implication for Australian early childhood education broadly is that socialisation processes along the lines experienced by Gail result in educators carrying their own education and related deficiencies in understanding into their teaching practices (Lampert 2012). This is compounded by the broad category of racism being largely misunderstood in Australian early childhood education (Sims 2014), with few examples in literature and research of what racism actually looks like in practice. New forms of racism in particular are often denied and silenced, to the point that claims of racism are "treated as more extreme than racism itself" (Augoustinos and Every 2010, p. 251). This observation provides an interesting pretext for the section following where I outline responses to colonialism and Indigenous perspectives from the Australian early childhood education field. This includes discussion about expectations for early childhood educators and what it is they are to know and do to reconceptualise ongoing colonial effects.

3.5 Responses from the Australian Early Childhood Education Field

Early childhood education in Australia has prioritised a focus on Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives in national policy. For example, Goal 2 of the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) 2008) which addresses equity goals, including respect for the specific cultural knowledge of Indigenous peoples, is supported broadly in the recently implemented national learning framework for Australian early years services, catering for children aged birth—5 years. Titled Being, Belonging, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Commonwealth of Australia 2009), the Framework states that it supports Goal 2 of the Melbourne Declaration in that "all young Australians become: successful learners … [and] active and informed citizens" (p. 5); and further, endorses the commitment by the Declaration to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. As stated in the Framework, "early childhood education has a critical role to play in delivering this outcome" (Commonwealth of Australia 2009, p. 6), i.e., "closing the gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians" (p. 6). Further, the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2011) for formal schooling contexts catering for children aged 6–17 years, foregrounds intercultural priorities, with particular reference to recognising and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' histories and cultures. The Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) 2011) also require teachers to build competencies around reconciliation practices and to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.

More specific policies including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Policy and Action Plan 2010–2014 (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) 2010) draw attention to the role of early childhood education in addressing the imbalance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student retention and educational outcomes. This includes provision for culturally-inclusive high quality early learning programs, support during transition to school, partnership with families and communities, and learning of Standard Australian English while being recognised as multilingual learners. Integrated models of early childhood service provision, such as Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services integrating health, education and welfare services have also offered a pragmatic means of addressing the broader requirements of Indigenous children, families and communities (Sims et al. 2008).

The policy directives outlined above give rise to action, but there are limitations alluded to earlier in this chapter including the demographic of the Australian teaching service, the socialisation of many educators, and gaps in professional education and training. The majority of members in the teaching service with

formal qualifications in Australia identify as white, Anglo-Celtic, monolingual and female (McKenzie et al. 2011). Demographics for educators in the before-school sector are unavailable, although it is plausible to align these attributes with the teaching service in Australian early years settings. While Aboriginality is not an essential criterion for the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge in centre or school-based teaching and learning (Yunkaporta 2009), it is widely understood that non-Indigenous educators cannot be experts on Indigenous Australia and do experience challenges in relation to a lack of knowledge, fear of causing offence, and questions about the relevance of their pedagogical approach (Lampert 2012; Rose 2012). Overcoming such limitations requires a multifaceted approach incorporating theoretical and practical knowledge, and a culture of self-reflexivity. I now look to what is required to initiate and evolve decolonising pedagogy in early education and care.

3.5.1 Decolonising Pedagogy in Early Education and Care

Early childhood educators are well placed to initiate and evolve decolonising pedagogy in educational sites, but their work should not be viewed as a panacea for government agendas focussed on improving long-term outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and "closing the gap" (Department of Education and Training 2009) between Indigenous children and their non-Indigenous counterparts in later school years. As Rose (2012) explains in relation to Australian circumstances, "culpability should not be laid at the feet of teachers, for they are just as much the product of the 'silent apartheid' as the students in front of them" (p. 70). In response to directives in Australian early childhood education policy and related practice guides that call for "a strong approach" to "countering racism and bias" (Commonwealth of Australia 2010, p. 22), educators can think carefully about knowledge bases and theoretical tools foundational to decolonising pedagogy, as outlined below.

3.5.1.1 Knowledge Bases

For reconceptualist work in a colonising context, educators require deep knowledge about interrelated concepts of colonialism, whiteness and racism. In specific terms, this includes:

- Truths about Australian history that have been silenced and distorted through colonial narratives;
- The impact of colonialism and a shared history on relations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples;
- Understanding whiteness as a layered construction incorporating occupation and 'ownership', institutional practices, and identity;

- Understanding new forms of racism and how they operate subtly in early childhood education policy, procedures and practice;
- Long-term engagement with the broad range of practices that underscore embedding Indigenous perspectives at a curriculum, operational and community outreach level.

In developing knowledge bases around colonialism, whiteness and racism, it is critical for educators to access Indigenous scholarship and research, and for professional bodies and associations in the Australian early childhood education field to actively promote and support this aim. Engagement with Indigenous scholarship and research is a form of acknowledgement about how Indigenous peoples have direct personal knowledge about whiteness and racism as a result of European contact and colonisation processes. As journalist Debra Jopson noted (2000):

> Black explorations of whiteness began in the 1600s when William Dampier's ships loomed off Australia's west coast, and continued when Arthur Phillip and his pasty crew descended on the Gadigal people of Sydney Cove 212 years ago. Their whiteness was not just in the skin, but in their intent to seize, stay and exploit (p. 5).

Building knowledge bases around colonialism, whiteness and racism is a slow pedagogy. For many educators, engagement with these concepts will result in disruptions to their existing worldview that can produce a range of responses including resistance, denial, paralysis in moving forward, and feelings of shame or guilt (MacNaughton and Davis 2009; Phillips 2011). These responses are not static or linear. Some educators may even come to view themselves as an enlightened or good white person, a position that in itself reproduces colonial effects including distancing oneself from complicity in different forms of racism (Haviland 2008). Consider these extracts from the aforementioned doctoral study (Miller 2013) that show how Sally, a pro-active and informed educator, drew on the positioning of a good white person to implicate others in forms of racism.

> It's quite sad that people aren't really educated about Aboriginal culture, especially in schooling. Like, for New Zealand, we have the biculturalism and then the multiculturalism, so it's quite different and a lot of people study … I think there's a lot of animosity here too, about having to do it.

> … I'd personally like to learn more about Aboriginal culture, like languages and practices. I've been quite privileged to see some beautiful paintings down in the Hunter Valley and the caves down there.

On first reading, Sally could be identified as a socially-aware educator. She recognised issues of exclusion with Indigenous perspectives at the institutional level and drew comparisons between New Zealand and Australia—two colonising contexts. At times, socially-aware educators are most at risk of incongruence between what they believe, say and do because of a lack of critical reflection on standpoints and pedagogies that align closely with white constructions of inclusivity (Lampert 2012). For example, in Sally's comments above, there was implicit self-praise rather than self-challenge (Haviland 2008) when she positioned herself as someone willing to learn "more about Aboriginal culture" despite institutional

constraints and the "animosity" she suggested was shown by (some) other white people toward this task. In essence, Sally positioned herself as a 'good white' person and avoided a focus on her own subject position by attending only to racism in institutional structures (Green and Sonn 2006). This position was reiterated in how she spoke about the attitudes of colleagues and acquaintances.

> I think you need to be actually aware of what you're saying. Like, don't be saying something if you don't actually know anything about it. I cringe when I hear some of the girls [the staff] talking about Aboriginals and I just think I know more than you and I'm from New Zealand.

> You see, I cringe around my Dad's partner. She is extremely racist and of late I really do cringe around her. It actually borders on quite embarrassing as well at times.

Here, Sally attached the label "racist" to colleagues and acquaintances who spoke in overtly disparaging ways about Indigenous peoples. Greenhalgh-Spencer (2008) suggests that when individuals define what counts as racism, then perhaps they have a better chance of governing their actions so as to appear non-racist. Sally's responses of reproving institutional practices and cringing around colleagues and personal associates enabled disassociation from other 'racist' whites and behaviours. On the whole, Sally's focus on racism in institutional structures and the attitudes and actions of others deflected attention away from the ways racism structures the talk and actions of all white people in colonising contexts (Moreton-Robinson 1999, 2004). In this sense, Sally remained complicit in forms of racism by not being involved in interrogations of her own (white) subject position as part of her anti-racist efforts.

Generally, practicing teachers can be limited in their work in relation to constructions of race, racism, ethnicity, culture and so forth, partly because of a reliance on pervading developmental frameworks that underpin practice in Australian early childhood education (Robinson and Jones Díaz 2006). The Reconceptualist moment in Australia and elsewhere has been pivotal in deconstructing how developmental frameworks uphold white, western, middle class values and norms for teaching and learning that do not attend to diversity and related issues of power, silences and distortions that flow through to how educators frame their thinking and practices (Cannella 2005; Grieshaber and Cannella 2001; Lubeck 1994, 1996). The imposition of a dominant cultural lens for teaching and learning relies upon a unidirectional assimilation with western frameworks for early childhood education that are a hallmark of colonialism (Ball 2010). Battiste (2008) suggests that as a result, non-Indigenous educators can experience difficulties with initiating decolonising pedagogy because they typically have limited theory, research or tested practice to draw upon. This is of particular concern for educators in early years settings in the before-school sector who typically have fewer opportunities for indepth explorations of a range of theories, research and practices in vocationally-tiered education and training (Wheelahan 2011).

3.5.1.2 Theoretical Tools

In terms of theoretical tools, the Early Years Learning Framework encourages educators to draw from a range of theories and perspectives to challenge traditional ways of viewing teaching and learning (Commonwealth of Australia 2009). Theories outlined in the Framework include commonly applied developmental, behaviourist and socio-cultural theories, followed by critical theories and poststructural theories. It is the latter two that best support deep knowledge about concepts of colonialism, whiteness and racism because they enable new ways of studying and theorising a particular context in relation to knowledge, social and political structures, cultures and history. To this point, it is also the latter two that have been the most inaccessible to practicing educators due to the pervasiveness of developmental theories and a focus on tacit knowledge in professional education and training.

A key distinction between commonly applied theories in early childhood education and critical and poststructural theories is the focus on self-reflective practices or reflexivity. While critical and poststructural theories are broad umbrella terms and encompass a range of theorists and perspectives, they are both concerned with bringing into full view the reader's/author's investments in how they think about and construct their world. With support, educators can employ these and related theories (e.g., critical whiteness studies, postmodernism) to position themselves squarely as a focus of inquiry, in place of adopting a singular focus on children and developmental outcomes, even in the context of family and community. Reflexivity aids integrity in educational practice because it provides a balance between depicting practice in particular ways and being actively consciousness about underlying complexities that can be bought to the surface to encourage deeper understanding. As Mazzei (2007) explains, reflexivity allows for seeking places where there can be dissatisfaction and doubt about how things have always been done, and where constructions of identity are not secure. Reflexivity allows for cultural introspection which is central to educators initiating and evolving decolonising pedagogy in mainstream early years settings. It is also central to reconceptualist orientations that view educators/teachers as scholars who continually revise their theories of teaching and learning, and related practices (Cannella 2005; Lubeck 1994, 1996).

In line with reconceptualising goals, incorporating theorising into evaluations of self and practice moves decolonising pedagogy beyond a 'how to' model, to an approach that invites continual evaluation and is constantly evolving. In the final section of this chapter, I consider conditions for ongoing professional development that support this process.

3.6 Conditions for Ongoing Professional Development

As reconceptualising early childhood education is a slow pedagogy that incorporates sustained theorising, it is pertinent to conclude this chapter with discussion about conditions for ongoing professional development that support

reconceptualising aims. Findings from the aforementioned doctoral study (Miller 2013) point to ideal conditions for ongoing professional development built around a research-based approach that features attention to context, a sense of ownership, collaboration, personalisation and sustained inquiry. In a research-based approach to professional development, educators are seen to be "intellectuals who are doing knowledge work" (Lieberman and Miller 2011, p. 16) as part of their everyday practice. Intellectual competencies form the core of this work because an educators' own work becomes the impetus for challenges, the extension of thinking and, change (Rué 2006).

In the doctoral study, a research-based approach enabled informal modes of delivery, dedicated time and a whole-centre approach to professional development. Informal modes of delivery included visiting an Indigenous Education Centre, connecting with a local Indigenous childcare centre and working with a local Aboriginal artist—activities that deviated from advancing tacit or technical skills or accessing ready-made curriculum activities. These activities promoted direct engagement with Indigenous people who were sometimes denied opportunity for self-representation and reciprocal forms of participation over the course of the study, despite the best of intentions.

Time was critical to informal modes of delivery in terms of activities that occurred within and outside the two childcare settings. One interesting point is that time enabled reconfigurations of what professional development could look like in childcare. For example, time to use a computer for research, make phone calls, speak without interruption to colleagues and engage with literature, all constituted valuable professional development activities within both settings. Sustained periods of time to engage in research was particularly important for building relationships with local Indigenous people and organisations and to learn appropriate related protocols. Time can also be read through whiteness in terms of its facility to enable proximity to individuals and organisations not represented within existing institutional frameworks. In the doctoral study, time to connect with Indigenous people and organisations gave value to processes of embedding Indigenous perspectives, but the requirement for the action itself revealed the absence or failure to respond appropriately to this work in existing institutional practices. Thinking retrospectively, stepping outside the two childcare centres to 'locate' difference confirmed "the whiteness of what [was] already in place" (Ahmed 2012, p. 33). Difference had to be 'sought' and invited into the two centres, which showed how whiteness oriented who and what could reside in the buildings unnoticed, or without commanding special attention. It also showed how notions of difference can translate to a focus on 'others', rather than self-reflective practices.

A whole-centre approach supported change at the curriculum, operational and community outreach levels. Outside the confines of individual classrooms, a whole-centre approach attracted communal activity in spaces such as the kitchens, staff rooms, hallways and reception areas. These areas were accessed by all staff throughout the day and provided access to the research for staff employed on a casual basis, and those employed in professional roles including administration

and the kitchen. The communal areas allowed for a flow of conversation and a flow of contributors to conversations not available elsewhere in the buildings due to architectural design. By the same token, there were cautions about how educational contexts shaped on white terms make use of a whole-centre approach to carry the implicit message that all staff members are committed to the process, and that decolonising pedagogy is a given, despite hidden or unseen barriers including colonial attitudes, interests and structures (Ahmed 2012).

Overall, findings of the doctoral study confirmed that it mattered that concepts of colonialism, whiteness and racism as they relate to the Australian context were spoken in the two non-Indigenous childcare settings. When this occurred, it became possible to mobilise further conversations and pedagogical action that aligned more closely with decolonising pedagogy in early education and care. With appropriate support, non-Indigenous early childhood educators can reduce rather than reinforce colonial effects, at least in local sites. This benefits all stakeholders and enables early years settings to move beyond reconciliation rhetoric. Given reforms in the formal schooling sector with the introduction of a national curriculum and priorities around Indigenous perspectives, Australian early childhood education is positioned well to provide a seamless transition for young children in terms of appropriate frameworks for learning about and relating to Indigenous Australia. A new maturity comes in the understanding that in a colonising context this work will always reproduce colonial effects, thus creating both opportunities and challenges to more fully describe and respond to whiteness and racism in Australian early childhood education.

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Chapter 4
Has the Universal Free Childcare Policy Been Successful? Issues and Challenges for Early Childhood Education and Care in Korea

Eunhy Park and Hong-Ju Jun

In many countries, public expenditure on childcare increased in recent decades as the childcare has become one of the key policy areas. Underlying beliefs of the increased public spending on childcare is that investment in childcare is the investment for future that can help to raise the birth rate and contribute to increase female labor market participation by reducing the burden of child-rearing for parents (Kalwij 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011). In Korea childcare was proposed as a key solution to the complex problem caused by aging society and extremely low fertility rate. This chapter critically reviews childcare policy in Korea, outlining the main features of current early childhood education and care in Korea and discussing how the childcare policy has changed the lives of children and their families and as well as the landscape of childcare provision. Issues and challenges for Korean society posed by these policies are also discussed.

In Korea, childcare has emerged as a key policy agenda, expanding rapidly over the last 10 years. Government interest in early childhood education and care became apparent with the implementation of the 1st Childcare Support Policy in 2004. Aiming to expand public support for early education and childcare, the policy focused on reducing the financial burden of parents on child rearing by up to 50 %, depending on their income level. The policy includes one year of parental leave and a newly introduced accreditation system for childcare facilities. In 2005, the 2nd Childcare Support Policy announced a Standard Childcare Fee for

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childcare facilities and introduced a basic subsidy system for infant childcare. The Saessak Plan, implemented in 2006, is a long term strategy (2006–2010), providing for the expansion of numbers in public childcare by up to 30 % by 2010, as well as expansion of basic subsidies for infants in childcare facilities. In addition, the Plan supports childcare fees for low-income families. The Aisarang Plan (2009–2012) is a revised version of the Saessak Plan that strengthens government responsibility for childcare by increasing support for users of childcare facilities and by introducing a child allowance for families not using childcare facilities. Since 2012, free childcare for children under 5 has been even more strongly promoted to fulfill the president's election pledge.

Underlying the emergence of childcare as a major policy issue is a shared sense of crisis caused by rapidly decreasing fertility rates. In Korea, total fertility rate has decreased from 6.0 in 1960 to 1.08 in 2005, with a slight increase to 1.3 in 2012 (Office of Statistics 2013). Traditionally, Korean society has placed high value on fecundity, relying heavily on human labor both in the traditional agrarian society and in the labor-intensive modern industrial era from 1970 onward. In this context, the rapid decrease in fertility was viewed as a serious challenge that Korean society must overcome in order to survive.

Government concern about this issue is reflected in public spending on early childhood education and care, which has increased by a factor of almost 10 in the past decade, from 1,518,180 million KRW in 2004 to 14,865,752 million KRW in 2014 (Office of Statistics 2015). According to the OECD Family database, there are three categories of public spending on childcare: cash transfer, spending on services, and tax expenditure (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014). Cash transfer refers to child-related cash transfer to families with children and includes child allowance and income supports during parental leave and for sole-parent families. Public spending on services relates to childcare facilities, including direct financing and subsidies. Childcare-related tax expenditure includes tax exemptions and child tax allowances. In most countries, childcare is supported by various means, including services, cash, and tax. Although countries vary in this regard, most spend a higher proportion on cash benefits than on services or tax benefits. In contrast, childcare policy in Korea is heavily concentrated on services rather than on other benefits. Selective childcare support for low-income families was radically expanded in terms of targeting and scale from 2003 onward, extending to free childcare for all by 2013. A child allowance for those who do not use childcare services was introduced in 2009, but the amount of money falls short of the childcare services.

The effect of universal free childcare policy in Korea is a matter of controversy. Those who advocate the policy argue that it has alleviated the burden on parents in terms of child rearing cost, as well as contributed to children's positive development by providing care services at the time when they are needed. On the other hand, those who are critical of the policy have questioned its cost-benefit value. In particular, they argue that the policy may not support those who most need it; as childcare is free for all, enrollment of children of non-employed mothers has increased, limiting use of the service by employed mothers. The policy is also

opposed by local agencies, as central government has transferred the financial burden of free childcare to already underfunded local governments and local education authorities.

4.1 Context of Early Childhood Education and Care in Korea

In Korea, early childhood education and care has developed as two separate systems: kindergarten and childcare. Introduced to Korea by Christian missionaries at the beginning of the twentieth century, the main function of kindergarten was to educate young children. Childcare, on the other hand, aimed to support working mothers in order to help them to escape poverty. It became more systematic with the enactment of the Infant Care Act in 1991. As the two systems become increasingly similar in function, the boundaries have become less clear. With women's increasing workforce participation, kindergartens have expanded their care function to include afterschool programs while childcare centres have strengthened their educational function by developing Standard Childcare Curriculum to meet the need for education.

Serving children aged 3–5 years, kindergartens are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Childcare centres, serving children aged 0–5 years, are administered by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The overlap of age groups and functions highlights the ineffectiveness of the split system, and the need to integrate the two systems has been discussed. As a first step toward integration, a common curriculum, called Nuri Curriculum, was implemented for 5-year olds in 2012 and subsequently extended to 3- and 4-year olds in 2013. This common curriculum is applied for 3 to 5 year olds, regardless of the type of facility. At childcare centres, a Standard Childcare Curriculum is applied for 0–2 year olds. Kindergartens run four to five hours of Nuri curriculum each morning, providing optional morning and afternoon care before and after. Childcare centres provide all-day, 12 h care, including four to five hours of Nuri Curriculum for 3–5 year olds. Other aspects that remain split include supervising ministry, law, and teacher certification. Table 4.1 compares the main features of kindergartens and childcare centres.

There are public and private service providers of both kindergartens and childcare centers. Public providers are central or local education authorities while private sector facilities are run by corporate or individual service providers. As indicated in Table 4.2, the total number of childcare centers in 2013 was 43,770, which is approximately five times the total number of kindergartens. While 94.7 % of childcare centers are private and only 5.3 % are public, 53 % of kindergartens are public and 47 % are private.

Of 1,387,037 children aged 3–5 years in 2013, 654,821 children (47.1 %) enrolled in kindergartens. The kindergarten enrolment rate was 59.4 % for five-year-olds, 52.3 % for four-year-olds, and 30.3 % for three-year-olds. In all three age

Table 4.1 Comparison of kindergartens and childcare centres

	Kindergarten	Childcare center
Ministry	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Health and Welfare
Law	Early Childhood Education Act	Infant Care Act
Target age	3–5-year-old	0–5-year-olds (up to 12-year-olds)
Teacher certification	Kindergarten Teacher Certificate	Childcare Worker Certificate
Operating hours	Morning care (from 06:30) NURI (4–5 h) After-school Afternoon care (until 22:00)	Morning care (Starting at 07:00) All-day care (12 h) (NURI 4–5 h for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds) Night Care (until 00:00)
Curriculum	3–5-year-olds: Nuri Curriculum	3–5-year-olds: Nuri Curriculum 0–2-year-olds: Standard Childcare Curriculum

Table 4.2 Number of ECEC facilities by type (2013)

N (%)				
	Kindergarten		Childcare centre	
Public sector	National Kindergarten	3 (.03)	National/Public Centre	2332 (5.3)
	Public Kindergarten	4574 (52.7)		
Private sector	Private Kindergarten	4101 (47.0)	Social Welfare Corporation Centre	1439 (3.3)
			Corporate-Body Centre	868 (2.0)
			Private Childcare Centre	14,751 (33.7)
			Home-based childcare	23,632 (54.0)
			Corporate-Parents Centre	129 (.3)
			Employer Supported Centre	619 (1.4)
Total		8678 (100.00)		43,770 (100.00)

Sources The Ministry of Education and Korean Education Development Institute (2013)
Ministry of Health and Welfare (2013)

groups, the enrolment rate for private kindergartens was higher than for public kindergartens. For three-year-olds, enrolment in private kindergartens is approximately five times higher than public kindergarten enrolments. Similarly, childcare centres record higher enrolment rates for private services as compared to public services.

Among the total population of children aged 0–2 years, 63.0 % are enrolled at childcare centres, with 35.2 % of infants and 84.5 % of two-year-olds using

Table 4.3   Kindergarten and childcare centre enrolment (%) by age

Age	Population	Enrollment (Childcare center)	Enrollment (Kindergarten)	Total enrollment
0	421,465 (100.0)	148,273 (35.2)	–	148,273
1	486,655 (100.0)	325,921 (67.0)	–	325,921
2	474,098 (100.0)	400,781 (84.5)	–	400,781
0–2 Subtotal	1,382,218 (100.0)	874,975 (63.3)	–	874,975
3	472,047 (100.0)	255,786 (54.2)	143,069 (30.3)	398,855 (84.5)
4	447,055 (100.0)	184,513 (41.3)	233,926 (52.3)	418,439 (93.6)
5	467,935 (100.0)	161,877 (34.6)	277,826 (59.4)	439,703 (94.0)
3–5 Subtotal	1,387,037 (100.0)	602,176 (43.4)	654,821 (47.2)	1,256,997 (90.6)
0–5 Total	2,769,255 (100.0)	1,477,151 (53.3)	654,821 (23.7)	2,131,972 (77.0)

Sources The Ministry of Health and Welfare (2013)
The Ministry of Education and Korean Education Development Institute (2013)

childcare services. For children aged 0–2 years, enrolment rates for childcare centres increase with age. In contrast, most children (90.6 %) aged 3–5 years are enrolled at either kindergarten or childcare. While they may access either, older children tend to favour kindergarten (Table 4.3).

Despite differences in original function, government ministry, and teacher certification, it is clear that kindergartens and childcare centers are competing for children from an overlapping age group. For children aged 3–5 years, the respective enrollment rates for kindergarten and childcare in 2014 were 30.5 and 69.5 %. As children get older, they tend to move from childcare center to kindergarten. The inefficiency of this dual system of education and care has been noted, and integration of the two systems has become the key task in ECEC provision. Launched in 2014 under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, the Committee for Integrating Early Childhood Education and Care is progressing this integration, but many challenges remain to be overcome.

4.2   Universal Free Childcare Policy in Korea

Government expenditure on ECEC has increased dramatically since 2005. In particular, as shown in Table 4.4, the childcare budget shows a steep increase by comparison with the early education budget. In 2004, the total budget for all early

Table 4.4 Government support for early childhood education and care (Unit: millions KRW) (%)

Year	Childcare	Early childhood education	Total	Proportion to GDP
2004	1,061,733	456,447	1,518,180	0.17
2005	1,595,613	637,790	2,233,403	0.24
2006	2,038,102	824,220	2,862,322	0.30
2007	2,680,016	947,745	3,627,770	0.35
2008	3,308,840	1,012,089	4,320,929	0.39
2009	4,081,092	1,235,853	5,316,945	0.46
2010	4,943,803	1,500,018	6,443,821	0.51
2011	5,933,436	1,923,903	7,857,339	0.59
2012	7,291,515	3,021,225	10,312,740	0.75
2013	9,261,001	4,139,704	13,400,705	0.94
2014	9,561,484	5,304,268	14,865,752	1.01

Source Suh and Lee (2014)

childcare and education provided by central and local governments was 1.5182 trillion KRW. In 2006, this figure increased to 2.8623 trillion KRW, and by 2014 it stood at 14.8600 trillion KRW. Against GDP, the ratio increased from 0.17 % in 2004 to more than 1 % in 2014 (Suh and Lee 2014). Most of this expenditure is directed to childcare support to alleviate the financial burden on parents while the budget assigned to infrastructure development remains limited.

What social consensus has formed, then, around this support for early childhood education and care? Following the publication of studies confirming the effects of investment on early experience (e.g., Cunha et al. 2006; Heckman et al. 2006), government interest in ECEC began to increase. However, in the absence of any consensus on where to invest, the conflict between education and care deepened, and the discourse of free childcare was used competitively in the political arena to attract female voters. Leading candidates for the 2012 presidential election all promised to deliver free care for children aged 0–5 years, and government support is now concentrated on free childcare.

The government's commitment to lessening the burden on parents and giving all children a fair start through expanded financial support is well reflected in the recent policy to support childcare for all children aged 0–5 years. Eligibility has gradually been extended, and since 2010, full childcare support has been provided to all those below 70 % of average income. In 2012, free childcare was introduced for all children aged 0–2 years, and since 2012, all five-year-olds have received tuition support from government. In 2013, Nuri Curriculum was provided for three- and four-year-olds, so extending the childcare support policy to all children aged 0–5 (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2014).

A child allowance was introduced in 2009 as a cash support for infants not attending a childcare center. The initial provision of 100,000 KRW per month for low-income families was gradually extended to cover all children by 2013. As of 2015, there is a child allowance of 100,000–200,000 KRW per month for a child cared for at home. The level of support ranges from 200,000 KRW for infants to 150,000 KRW for one-year-olds, with 100,000 KRW for those aged two years and older.

Korea's childcare support policies differ from other OECD countries, where the realistic scope of assistance is first determined and the amount of coverage is based on the mother's employment status and family income level. For example, in Sweden, childcare is guaranteed for 40 h per week if a mother is employed or studying, or for 15 h per week if she is unemployed (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010). Another difference is that cost to the user varies with income.

4.3 How Free Childcare Has Impacted on Korean Life

This section discusses what has changed since Korea's free childcare policy was implemented, focusing on children's lives, mothers' employment, and the nature of childcare facilities.

4.3.1 Effects on Children's lives

With increasing government support for childcare services, enrolment rates have shown overall growth in all age groups. It is notable that enrolment of 0–2-year-olds exhibits significant growth with time spent at a childcare centre, up from 18.3 % in 2004 to 63.3 % in 2013. This sharp increase can be interpreted as an effect of extended childcare support policies; it may also be attributed to the fact that the value of childcare services exceeds the child allowance provided for home care (Table 4.5).

Overall enrolment rates for 3–5-year-olds are similar for kindergartens (47.2 %) and childcare centres (43.4 %). Looking at the data by age, three-year-olds show higher enrolment rates for childcare centres (54.2 %) than for kindergartens

Table 4.5 Childcare centre enrolment rate (%) by age (2004–2013)

Age	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
0	4.8	8.1	10.9	14.7	22.3	25.3	27.9	32.5	38.3	35.2
1	15.0	19.0	23.7	27.5	42.8	42.8	51.7	53.1	68.1	67.0
2	34.0	36.5	51.2	51.2	54.4	54.4	71.2	77.0	79.2	84.5
0–1 subtotal	18.3	22.0	30.6	30.6	41.6	41.6	50.5	54.1	62.0	63.3
3	41.3	45.3	50.3	50.3	50.9	50.9	49.3	58.3	58.1	54.2
4	33.4	39.3	42.1	42.1	44.6	44.6	40.3	37.0	41.6	41.3
5	29.7	30.6	36.3	36.3	32.2	32.2	34.3	30.6	30.2	34.6
3–5 subtotal	34.6	30.7	42.8	42.8	42.4	42.4	41.6	42.0	42.8	43.4
Total	27.4	37.8	37.0	37.0	42.0	42.0	42.0	48.0	52.4	53.3

Source Department of Health and Welfare (annual figures). Childcare Statistics

Table 4.6 Kindergarten enrolment rate (%) by age (2004–2013)

Age	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
3	13.8	15.2	15.8	19.7	22.9	22.4	22.6	28.7	29.4	30.3
4	26.4	31.7	34.5	34.6	38.9	42.6	40.5	39.8	49.2	52.3
5	47.8	44.9	52.4	54.9	50.1	53.1	56.2	52.1	50.9	59.4
3–5 total	29.8	31.8	35.0	36.6	37.9	39.6	39.0	40.0	43.5	47.2

Source Korean Educational Development Institute (annual figures). Educational Statistics

(30.3 %). 4 and 5 year olds tend to prefer kindergarten, showing kindergarten enrolment (59.4 %) rather than childcare (34.6 %) (Table 4.6).

With full financial support since 2012 for all children aged 0–2 years, regardless of household income, demand has increased for childcare services for the youngest children. One side effect of a free childcare policy that is 'universal'— that is, regardless of maternal employment or family income—is that those who really need childcare services are liable to be excluded. As the policy guarantees childcare services free of charge and regardless of employment status, childcare centres favour children of non-employed mothers rather than those of employed mothers, who are picked up relatively late. The available data suggest that real time-of-use for childcare centres, which provide 12 h care by default, is becoming shorter, and indicating the increasing enrolment of children of unemployed mothers. This view is further supported by evidence that Korea is the only OECD country with a rate of childcare centre enrolment higher than maternal employment rates (OECD 2013).

Whether the changes arising from this policy have made life easier can only be assessed in terms of children's and families' lives. Compared to the OECD average of 32.6 %, the infant enrollment rate in Korea is 50 %, ranking fifth among OECD countries. Korea is one of the few countries that has a maternal employment rate lower than the infant enrollment rate. In addition, studies investigating children's use of childcare centers have suggested that it is not desirable for young children to remain at these centers for extended periods. In particular, there is evidence that the age at which a child commences attendance at a childcare center and the time they spend at the facility can be related to infant behavior problems. According to these studies (Belsky 2001; Vandell and Wolfe 2000), the more time spent at a childcare center and the earlier the age at which a child attends, the more frequently behaviors are observed that interfere other children's play. However, it has also been pointed out that the higher quality of such a facility can have a positive impact on development and learning (Park et al. 1998).

There is as yet insufficient data to establish whether children's lives have become happier since implementation of the free childcare policy. It is to be hoped that when they grow up, these children will record high scores on the Korean Children's Happiness Index; for now, what matters is the provision of quality education and care for those in need.

4.3.2 Effects on Mothers' Employment and Birth Rates

It is also important to ask whether female employment rates increased as policy-makers intended, and whether the policy encourages women to become mothers. As of 2013, the female labor force participation rate in Korea stood at 50.2 %, and the employment rate was 48.8 %. This compares with 2003 figures of 49.9 % and 48.3 %, showing no significant change in that time (Office of Statistics 2014). These data stand in sharp contrast to the growth in enrollment rates of infant and toddlers.

According to Suh and Lee's (2014) analysis, the expansion of childcare support is not significantly associated with mothers' employment. Birth rates rose to 1.3 in 2012, falling back to 1.19 in 2013 when the free childcare policy and child allowance for all was introduced. At 1.4 in 2000 and decreasing to 1.1 in 2005, Korea's fertility rate remains much lower than the OECD average. Although showing a tendency to slowly recover since 2007, it remained at 1.3 in 2012 (Office of Statistics 2014). These data imply that the universal free childcare policy has not been successful in increasing mothers' employment and fertility rates, at least in relation to the amounts invested.

4.3.3 Effects on Childcare Facilities

The biggest challenge posed by the expansion of free childcare was a lack of facilities to accommodate children in need of childcare services. With the increasing demand for childcare facilities, significant numbers of profit-seeking childcare providers entered the market, eventually causing serious problems by degrading the quality of childcare facilities. The sudden expansion of free childcare also caused problems in terms of quality management systems and teachers' qualifications.

4.3.3.1 Increase in for-Profit Childcare Centres

From 28,300 in 2005, childcare centers increased in number to 43,770 by 2013; home-based childcare centers in particular more than doubled, accounting for 64 % of the total (Department of Health and Welfare 2013). This massive entry of providers reflects the expected return from growing government financial support, particularly in the last five years, with annual increases of 2300 to meet the demand created by the free childcare policy. On the other hand, the total number of kindergartens, which must meet more demanding requirements, stood at 8678 in 2013, increasing by only 400 in eight years (from 8275 in 2005).

The for-profit character of private childcare centers is reflected in the premium or key money that is paid at the time of the real estate transaction, reflecting expectations of a financial return. According to a 2012 survey of the childcare

industry in Korea, more than half of respondents reported that they paid premium for occupancy. Among those who did pay, fees ranged from 150 million KRW in Seoul to as much as 300 million KRW in other cities. For the childcare provider to make profit, then, they need to keep management costs—such as teachers' salaries or the quality of the meals—lower than the amount of government support. As a result, it has been noted that many of them receive additional cost from parents for extracurricular activities (Kim 2015).

4.3.3.2 Lack of Quality Management Systems

For quality management purposes, an accreditation system for childcare center was implemented in 2006, following a pilot study in 2005. The accreditation system is intended to improve the quality of childcare facilities through voluntary participation and evaluates whether the service has reached the standards set by government. However, the accreditation system has been unable to keep pace with the sharp increase in the number of facilities. The number of newly accredited childcare center between 2005 through 2015 is 51,169 as of August 2015, while total number of childcare centers are 43,742 at the end of 2014 (Korea Childcare Promotion Institute 2015). There is a significant gap relating to type of childcare center, and while the number of childcare center receiving accreditation has increased, questions are constantly raised regarding quality. One of the problems is that accreditation is not linked to financial support, which is a necessary element in upgrading quality of childcare, along with the need to develop further ways of evaluating diverse aspects of facilities.

4.3.3.3 Gap in Teacher Quality

Because of differing teacher training systems, there remains a gap between kindergarten and childcare teachers in terms of their education level. Even within childcare centers, disparities in teachers' education can be severe (Table 4.7).

In terms of level of education, 45.3 % of kindergarten teachers graduate from a four-year college course, with 53.6 % graduating from a two- or three-year course. Among childcare teachers, 34.7 % graduate from a four-year college, and 10.9 % are high school graduates. While kindergarten teachers tend to have at least a two-year college degree, and most graduate from a three- or four-year college, most childcare teachers graduate from a two-year college and some have only a high school diploma. Clearly, then, childcare teachers tend to have a lower level of education than kindergarten teachers. Kindergarten teachers also tend to have longer teaching experience; 25.2 % have more than 10 years of experience while only 12.7 % of childcare teachers match that level. The data also indicate that childcare teachers have higher turnover rates and less job security, which can be interpreted as evidence that childcare teachers have lower levels of job satisfaction and pride in their work.

Table 4.7 Education level and teaching experience of kindergarten and childcare teachers by percent

		Kindergarten	Childcare center
Education level	High school graduate	–	10.9
	2 year college	20.9	42.8
	3 year college	33.8	11.6
	4 year college	32.6	31.6
	Graduate school	12.7	3.1
	Total	100.0	100.0
Teaching experience	Less than 1 year	13.1	14.0
	1–3 years	21.2	25.6
	3–5 years	20.0	20.2
	5–10 years	20.5	27.5
	10 or more years	25.2	12.7
	Total	100.0	100.0

Source Kim et al. (2014)

Among childcare teachers, education level differs by type of facility. Teachers at national or public childcare centers tend to be more highly educated than those working at private facilities; approximately 25.0 % of national/public childcare teachers have completed a four-year university education as compared to 15.0 % of private childcare center workers (Park and Park 2015). Childcare teachers at home-based childcare were found to have the lowest education level.

As well as childcare teachers' education level, the diversity of training courses for childcare teachers presents challenges for quality assurance. Kindergarten teachers are certified by departments of early childhood education at three- or four-year colleges authorized by the Ministry of Education. Students must pass the competitive university entrance exam and take at least 140 credit hours, including general courses, educational science studies, pedagogical studies, child development, and practicum, to achieve teacher certification. In contrast, the law allows a childcare teacher certificate to be acquired by completing 51 credit hours through various routes that include community colleges, professional training institutions, and online courses. And while kindergarten teachers must major in early childhood education or child studies, childcare teachers do not necessarily need any such specialization (Table 4.8).

Childcare teachers, then, are certified in various ways and work in diverse environments, mostly in poor conditions with low pay. Excluding benefits, the average starting monthly salary for a childcare teacher is approximately US$ 1434 (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2013), which is lower than that of kindergarten teachers. In terms of working hours, childcare teachers work an average of 9 h and 34 min a day (Kim et al. 2013). As childcare centres run 12 h a day, teachers tend to be in contact with children throughout their entire working hours. The average work experience of the child care workers is four years and five months. 64.2 % of the child care workers have experienced turnover, which is higher than the for kindergarten teachers. In sum, childcare teachers are underpaid, work long hours, and experience a high rate of turnover, which means low job security.

Table 4.8 Requirements for childcare teacher certification

	Requirements
Third-level childcare teachers	1. High school diploma 2. One-year training program (by Ordinance of the Ministry for Health and Welfare Affairs)
Second-level childcare teachers	1. Associate or Bachelor degree 2. Third-level childcare worker certificate with at least two years of childcare experience and completion of in-service training course
	1. Certification without a special examination 2. Required to complete total of 17 courses and at least 51 credits related to childcare – Six courses of childcare major – At least one course in development and instruction – At least six courses in early childhood education – At least two courses in health, nutrition, and safety – At least one course in family and community cooperation – One practicum required

Source Ministry of Health and Welfare (2014)

The Korean government opened up multiple routes to childcare teacher certification principally to meet the demand for childcare by supplying more teachers, as well as to create new jobs for women in need of a career. The eventual effect was to exploit as cheap labour women who lacked a professional qualification and therefore had no prospect of a better job.

4.4 Discussion: Where Next?

Childcare policy in Korea has expanded rapidly over the last decade, with particular emphasis on childcare service support. While this means that more children have the benefits of early education and care services and parents' childcare burden has been reduced, challenges remain to be overcome. Clearly, the free childcare policy increased young children's access to childcare centers. But did the policy make children's and mothers' lives better? Did it improve the quality of care? The discussion above suggests that a free childcare policy can pose concerns in terms of the quality of children's lives and of childcare, which in turn presents the following challenges for the future. First, the rapid expansion of free childcare and the accompanying political discourse meant that there was no principled approach to policy scope and targets. In order to make the most effective use of limited resources, it will be important to support families more selectively around the principle of urgency. Second, there is a need to develop alternatives to child allowance and services as means of supporting childcare—for instance, Sweden practiced a variety of parenting support policy to actively reduce the burden of care by introducing equal parental leave provisions for father and mother. Balancing work and home, the policy focus was on compatibility between

parenting and improved labor force participation. Such policies help to foster a culture compatible with childcare and family life as well as work, making it possible to eliminate unnecessary spending on services and providing a stable care environment for children. Third, more effort is needed to improve the quality of childcare services. Current government support has focused on lowering parents' burden, with relatively little investment in improving the quality of early childhood education and care. Ultimately, in order to improve the quality of services, it requires a variety of policy imperatives such as linking accreditation and financial support. In addition, the accreditation system that can evaluate process quality as well as structural quality need to be developed. Fourth, efforts are needed to improve the quality of childcare teachers in order to improve the quality of care. Childcare teachers and kindergarten teachers, as discussed earlier, trained through the separate systems and thus different in terms of education level and qualifications. This could lead to gap in quality of services. Full-scale reorganization and integration of the teacher training system is urgently needed to ensure that teachers are properly educated to place high value on early childhood education and care.

Korea's current free childcare policy has been developed in the context of political discourse, but policy decisions must emphasize rationality rather than political considerations, especially where that policy can influence the lives of children. Instead, precedence must be given to where society is heading, and to who our ideal future citizens should be.

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Chapter 5
Prophesying Early Childhood Educational Care in India: My Insider/Outsider Postcolonial Vision

Parasanna Srinivasan

> *Religion, customs, age-old prejudices, etc. have put Indian women in a subservient and exploitable position in many domains of life. Low rates of participation in education, lack of economic independence, value biases operating against them etc., have resulted in the women being dependent on men folk and other institutions of authority like the family, neighborhood and the society.*
>
> (Sharma 2005, p. 375)

Time and time again early childhood educational care has been touted as being foundational for not just the future of those individuals, but for the wellbeing and the betterment of the world. I did not plan to talk about the women of India when I began writing this chapter. I justify briefly why I initially decided to talk about women's matters when talking about children's matters. Firstly, one common government department, the Ministry of Women and Child Development takes responsibility for the development and implementation of policies that concern both women and young children of India. Therefore, as the name implies, political action for and about women and children is developed by the same department; and this provides a political space to discuss women's experiences when discussing the educational care of young children in India. Secondly, India is the second most populous country in the world with around 158 million children between the ages of 0 and 6 (Census India 2011). Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGO) in both private and public sectors are investing in providing early childhood educational care, and also training educators to provide such care, as they are interested in influencing these foundational years (Chopra 2012). This chapter is the

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optimum temporal space to talk about investing in early education and it focuses on some of the current complexities faced within India. Thirdly, not so long ago the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2013) drafted a policy and a framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This framework details what is regarded as being most critical in teaching and learning for the young children of India. Hence, it is necessary to unpack how this framework addresses and responds to both women and children's matters. Most of all, as I became engrossed with literature on women and children of India, I came across some of the violent realities experienced by the women and children in India. I couldn't ignore that there is a very high incidence of sexual and physical abuse against women and children in India, and that one in every three rape victims is a child (United Nations International Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF) 2013). The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB 2015) reports that 92 women are raped on average in a day in Delhi, the capital city of India (cited in The Times of India 2014). I therefore felt compelled to talk about the violence and rape that women in India endure when talking about early childhood education in India. I discuss Indian women, gender disparity, male domination, objectification and exploitation. The focus of this chapter evolved to become criss-crossed with early childhood education, my approach to postcolonialism and feminism, along with the realities of women and children in India. Thus, this work became my troubled meanderings that hope to surface the compelling issue that many of the women and children of postcolonial India face.

Moreover, my status as a Non-Resident Indian currently living in Australia, the land of my coloniser makes this even more complex. As a woman of India, I feel with the subjects of India, especially the women and children and many other men, who strive to challenge gendered discourses of India's past and present. Yet, I remain an outsider due to my current non-residency status. However, I would like to defend my insider outsider knowledge as something that is not borne out of the coloniser's gaze, but as representing self-criticism (Rege 2003), in order to acknowledge my postcolonial complexity.

5.1 Early Education for Economic Participation: Making ECCE Children's Business

Early childhood education is believed to be the means by which marginalised groups can participate socio-economically in current societies, in order to share material wealth equally (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2013). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 1989), states that education is one of the fundamental rights of all children, and thereby compels state bodies to take responsibility for educating young children. In response, state bodies not only take responsibility for funding educational institutions, but also invest in developing standardised curricular material to provide universal forms of education. With economists and policy makers suggesting that early childhood education is highly

critical to the future success of the nation, state bodies are investing in universalising early childhood education. Caring and educating young children is not new to India or to any society for that matter, as young children have been educated by social systems formally and informally. India's education has been influenced and represented by Hindu philosophy, layered by the later advent of Buddhism, Moghuls and the British (Paranjothi 1969 cited in Jambunathan 2005). In India, the education of young children was the responsibility of the extended family and much of it was embedded in the spiritual context that spoke predominantly of the responsibilities of one towards their kith and kin and the rest of the members of the society (Sharma et al. 2014). However, currently young children's engagement with formal education is seen as a tool for future academic and economic success, and global participation (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2013). Jambunathan (2005) aptly points out that pedagogical policies, recommendations and training need to take into account the differences in the value system between Western nations and Eastern Asian nations. Hence, any new educational policy that universalises how young children are educated needs to engage with the past and present, and consider the historical complexities of the layered value system on India, along with current contextual needs required in a globalised environment.

Active and meaningful engagement in standardised education from a young age has been seen as the logical and rational path to one's social mobility and upliftment, and especially to address and respond to the large number of children 'at risk' in India (Sharma et al. 2014). Children 'at risk' are those from underprivileged and marginalised backgrounds with lesser capital to succeed academically (Sharma et al. 2014). In fact, Hazarika's and Viren's study (2013) confirmed that formal early childhood education has a positive impact on the school attendance of 'at risk' children, and this further contributes towards the economic growth of developing countries. Such findings highlight the criticality of the Indian government's political and economic investment in developing and implementing early childhood education for all. However, a study conducted by Chopra (2012) highlights the lack of uniformity in the curriculum offered in varied educational settings for young children. This study confirms that that the lack of uniformity results in the presence of under resourced early childhood educational programs that impacts on children's development and academic performance (Chopra 2012). The government has aptly responded to such conclusions by proposing the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2012), a universal framework for educating all young children of India, and formally documenting the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2013). As a ministry that oversees the well-being of women and child development, the policies of this government body make a commitment to focus on the well-being of both women and children.

These recently drafted National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India 2013), and the Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2012) consider early childhood as a critical period for development and learning. Most of all, these documents recognise the social context

within which the educational policy is situated, including India's evolving value system and the discrimination endured by some of the marginalised groups. One of the primary goals for drafting such universalised early childhood education care guidelines is highlighted as targeting gender bias, which impedes universal access to education for all children, especially girls. Beginning with health and nutritional needs from conception to the preschool years, the policy includes the health and well-being of mothers. The policy statements aptly specify the need for diversification within this universal recommendation in order to respect India's cultural diversity and varied contextual needs.

The documents more particularly seek to engage with some of the government and non-government organisations that have already invested in community development programs. Moreover, the policies specifically highlight the need for a holistic program that includes the provision of specific stage and age needs for all children and families. By highlighting the importance of play, it centralises play as the vehicle for teaching and learning. By engaging in continued research and training, the current ECCE policy strives to provide an organised universal system of 'Children's Rights' based early childhood education for all children in India. To some researchers, this ECCE policy and the curricular framework seems like a much needed response to the lack of consistency of such early childhood education (see Manhas and Qadri 2010; Chopra 2012; Sharma et al. 2014). Sharma et al. (2014) stress that the poor health and nutritional standards of children living under the poverty line in India require programs that address child mortality, malnutrition and education. These aspects are very important for all children in India. Yet, I can't silence the postcolonial me from repeatedly challenging the policy's primary focus on economic outcomes.

Young (2001) has argued that colonial domination is covertly propagated in the name of economic development. The postcolonial I declared that the commodification of early childhood education as a "cost effective" investment that leads to long-term socio-economic benefits is just another indicator of the colonial presence in postcolonial India. Here, the masked colonial presence compels postcolonial societies to engage in inequitable educational pursuits that allow particular groups to succeed without addressing the basic disparities that are already present in those societies. Hence, for me the ECCE policy and the curricular framework documents present an evasive, ambiguous economic model in the name of alleviating multiple disadvantages without providing socio-political spaces where the causes for such disadvantages are contested. Urged by my postcolonial prompts, I began to further unpack these documents using those concepts (colonialism; othering; imperialism; universalism).

5.2 My Prompts from the Postcolonial Me: Resist and Reject Universalism

Colonial education and the English language played a key role in subjugating and controlling India, to strategically unify and universalise what the diverse groups in India accessed as being relevant and 'appropriate' knowledge (Gandhi 1998).

The colonial masters achieved such control after trivialising or "othering" (Said 1978) the knowledge that was already there to superimpose it with their own system of supposedly superior intellect. This universalised system of colonial education epitomised the colonisers' world view, and such ideology was the primary tool to masterfully craft obedient disciples to rule the colonised subjects of India (Guha 1997; Gandhi 1998; Gupta 2006).

India now is independent and the minds of independent India should be free from the coloniser and therefore colonial education. Yet, the language used in constructing these ECCE guidelines mimicked those theoretical and philosophical partialities of the colonial masters in USA, UK and Australia. Firstly, after acknowledging the presence of early childhood educational care and its diverse nature for over thousands of years in India, the ECCE policy document (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2013) proceeded to highlight the inadequacy of these traditional early childhood practices in the current globalised world. After the construction of this deficit in the past early childhood educational practices, the document outlines how universal forms of developing, planning, delivering and assessing effective early childhood education will be achieved through the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2012). It further allocates funding to train early childhood educators, who will implement this universal form of educating all young children of India.

Most of all, the opening statement clearly underpins the necessity of such a unified system of education as an economic cost effective measure that the government needs to undertake. Such universalising language begins with notions of 'developmentally appropriate' education for all children's future academic success, and socio-economic participation is reiterated throughout the document (for example: universal pre-primary education; quality care and education; universal access; prepare children for elementary education; school readiness; age and developmentally appropriate child-centric programmes; play based experiential and child-friendly curriculum; assessment). Thus, the key factor that is central to this policy document and the curricular framework is its repeated attempts to universalise childhood, development, learning and assessment followed by acknowledgements of diversity and inequity within the society of India. For example, the ECCE policy document (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2013) begins by saying how the lack of 'developmentally appropriate' programs supported by standardised curricular frameworks in India has resulted in poor quality educational care for young children. In order to accommodate India's diversity it later acknowledges the presence of flexibility within this framework, and yet recommends age based 'developmentally appropriate' activities that universalise the experiences of all children in India.

Academics such as Canella and Viruru (2004) and Dahlberg et al. (2007) have challenged early childhood constructs such as 'developmentally appropriate', 'school readiness' and 'quality' by highlighting the arbitrary nature of these terms, especially in contexts that are traversed by ethno-linguistic and economic diversity. Moreover, notions of delivering child centred play based learning have been problematized by Grieshaber and McArdle (2010), as they argue play

is imbued with power and that what is considered play and work is culturally situated. In fact, one can argue that discovering 'child centred' is highly difficult, as these are predominantly based on adult definitions and interpretations of what is 'child-centredness'.

In particular, 'play' alone does not result in socio-economic mobility, as for many children who live below the poverty line in India, play is the only free activity that is available to them. They play with mud, sand and water and all things 'natural', but this 'play' does not automatically result in social mobility and improved life chances. Rather than 'play', these children may need explicit literacy and numeracy teaching to catch up with their more affluent peers, who do have family and financial support to extend 'play' into conceivable, formalised learning. And yet, ECCE policy document (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2013) centralises "developmentally appropriate play based pre-school education" (p. 7) and making available "essential play material and assessment procedures" (p. 17). Moreover, despite the policy document's recognition of the need for structured learning made available to 5–6 years old children, the Early Childhood Curricular Framework (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2012) lists such structured activities within the realms of abstract, play based pedagogical activities, rather than explicit, concrete literacy and numeracy teaching practices necessary for academic participation.

In order to unmask the subjective origin of such constructs one needs to ask: who has the power to determine how such constructs are defined; and on whose terms are they seen as being 'appropriate', and therefore should be universally recommended and circulated for all children in diverse contexts in India. Thus, by establishing 'quality' early childhood education for all children through 'developmentally appropriate play', current ECCE policy universalises not just education for all children of India, but also their childhoods. Is this why, Jambunathan (2005) proposed that early childhood education in India is still dominated by colonial values and expectations? And, such colonial control still seems to occupy the policy makers, who propose to educate India's children. However, Gupta (2003, 2006) highlights pedagogical practices of educators in an early childhood setting in postcolonial India that intricately weave some of India's traditional value systems with colonial forms of education into their everyday practices. I am not arguing against a place in early childhood education for such constructs. However, one needs to engage cautiously with the complexities of practising with those universal constructs, especially to eliminate gender discrimination and prejudice against girls and women.

I would like to ask the following questions to the current ECCE policy makers within the Ministry of Women and Child Development, whose primary focus has been to bring about gender equity in India,

- Why are the policy makers of independent India still looking to the colonial masters and mimicking their practices?
- Are we being (re)colonised to think that we need to match our colonial masters in developing an early childhood policy that can be deemed as universally viable?

- What are the probabilities of attaining socio-economic mobility without the eradication of prejudice and bias, especially in relation to the women and girls of India?
- If early childhood education is so critical to the development of young children, how will trapping the children of diverse India into a universal system negate historically entrenched prejudice and bias?

I further ask myself, will accessibility alone simultaneously protect India's girls and women from violent physical and sexual abuse? Due to the fact that a unified government body takes responsibility for supporting the women and children of India, I draw attention to the less palatable realities faced by women and children, and how educating young children should attend to these for an equitable future.

5.3 Early Education for Social Transformation: Making ECCE Women's Matters

The identification of a patriarchal system in India is not new, as sociologists, feminists and action groups in India have brought to note the historical presence of this system and its negative effects on women's social participation, mobility and economic independence (Rege 2003; Sharma 2005; Spivak 2006, 2010). The prospects that women have in terms of education, jobs, and professional training in comparison to men are very poor in many countries, including India and the so called developing countries (Pal et al. 2009). Fernandez (2009) adds that rather than looking at embedded discriminatory gendered discourses, the government usually highlights women's illiteracy, lack of professional experience and domestic duties as being the sources of their poverty. There are policy statements that specifically address such historical factors, as women's issues have been highlighted for many years. There are those that focus on allocating programs to make education accessible for girls. Such ideas began with a focus group discussion (National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) 2006) that was conducted before the development of ECCE policy and underpins the criticality of addressing gender:

> The deep gender bias and pervasive patriarchal values in Indian society are held responsible for the failure to realise the need for crèches and day care, especially for children of poor rural and urban working women; this neglect also has an adverse impact on the education of girl siblings (National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) 2006, p. 5).

However, gender bias is so profound that it also results in the perpetration of violence and abuse against women and children, girls. As highlighted earlier, nearly one of every three rape victims is a child below the age of 18, and in the year 2011, more than 7,100 children, including infants were raped in India (United Nations International Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF) 2013). This clearly evidences the undeniable widespread sexual abuse of women and

children in India. Some of the recent statistics released by NCRB (2015) are even more staggering, as the rate of reported crime against women has increased from 2,44,270 in the year 2012 to 3,09,546 in the year 2013, and those against children have risen by 52.5 % within the same period. With 94.3 % of the rape cases committed by those known to the victim (NCRB 2015), women are not safe within their own families and local communities. Many cases of physical or sexual abuse of women are treated as injuries and accidents by doctors (Yee 2013). Hence, these reported figures may reveal a partial image of the horrendous realties that many women and children endure daily.

I consciously shift my postcolonial stance to unmask my submerged Indian enemy, the patriarchal system etched in the land of India through historical traditions and customs of the past. The presence of violence and abuse faced by women and children anywhere globally is not normal and should not be accepted by any society or state. It is a colonising act that dominates and violates the physical, physiological, socio-emotional space of women and children. Any system of education that is preparing students to participate effectively in a globalised world needs to also prepare learners to stand up and act against such violence against women anywhere, including India. Deep rooted customs, religious values and traditional attitudes are the causes that allow such violent crimes to be perpetuated and tolerated (Sharma 2005; Babu and Kar 2009; Gupta 2014). One needs to ask therefore, what and who has educated the men and women of India to internalise, commit and justify such unjust and unwarranted violation of women's physical, psychological and social spaces? And, how can we (re)educate current and future learners to challenge such colonising education from within? To do so, I engage with recent events that drew attention and criticisms within and without India, and I also (re)engage with its past connections.

5.4 Who Educated the Men and Women of India: From Mahabaratha to Mukesh Singh

Not many events in postcolonial India drew as much attention as the brutal gang rape of Jyoti in Delhi, the capital city of India. Jyoti, a female medical student aged 23 years boarded a bus with her male friend on December 16, 2012. After beating her boyfriend unconscious, the six men in the bus, including the bus driver repeatedly raped her and viscously abused her physical body. Many protests took place in retaliation and the Indian government responded by having an enquiry into the incident and changed its past legal attention and response to such incidents. Nundy, a leading Supreme Court lawyer of India highlights that the new laws do include severe punishments for rape and the death penalty for repeated offences of rape and sexual assault against women (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) 2013). A documentary on this incident was filmed by Udwin (2015) and went to air on the March 4, 2015. The current government of India

chose to ban the screening of "India's daughter" (Udwin 2015), a documentary about the brutal gang rape of Jyoti. The court justified this ban by saying that some of the comments by the rapist can create "law and order" problems (Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and Agence France-Presse (AFP) 2015). In what follows, I am not arguing against this ban, but I try to tangle with the history of comments by the rapist. In particular, the storylines with which Mukesh Singh, the bus driver, justified the violent physical abuse of 'Jyoti', pushed me to seek its deep roots, its significance. Singh and other rapists stated they were educating not just Jyoti, but teaching all other women, the 'strayers' who chose to go out in the dark; women who chose to come out of their households. The lesson occurred by inflicting horrendous acts of sexual violence. These ideas about women are not 'real', rather a set of ideas or ideology; and are realisable when they are inflicted on the 'other'. Singh expressed his reasons for killing Jyoti,

> When being raped, she shouldn't fight back. She should just be silent and allow the rape. Then they'd have dropped her off after 'doing her', and only hit the boy (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) 2015).

Like Spivak (2010), I asked, "What does this signify?—and begins [I began] to plot a history" (p. 50). Does it signify an insidious ideological education that has historically and systemically permitted the violation of women's space by men? If so, how has the system educated the men of India to colonise women in this manner? I began to plot the historical storylines that educated the men of India with such ideas. I could not deny that the experiences of women in India have been varied since mythical times, and layered due to intercepting histories and social stratifications (see Sen 2005). India's mythical, religious and historical narratives of the past portray images of women in many roles ranging from domination to subjugation (for example: Kannagi; Madhavi; Rani Padmini; Rani Jhansi; Sita), with identities of both valour and submission attached to their gendered performances to show the interceptions of identity layers. In India's past there were repertoires that sometimes glorified and worshipped strong women on one hand, and maimed and abused them on the other (see stories from Ramayana, Mahabaratha and other Puranas). Nonetheless, these mythical and religious repertoires are still in circulation and validated time and again via socio-political systems of India, such as through film and television, religious and national celebrations, and both social and political dissertations.

I draw upon a narrative from the famous epic Mahabaratha that is circulated to educate the children of India in evoking one's absolute devotion and faith in Krishna or Dharma. While Krishna is one of the key Hindu gods central to the story of Mahabaratha, Dharma is an abstract construct that is related to one's sense of duty towards one's subjective identity, such as male, female, mother, father, wife, warrior, king and many more. The narrative of disrobing Draupadi has been unpacked by many authors many times, and I rekindle my memories of this particular narrative. This rekindling is critical, as I associate this narrative as being highly central in subjectifying and objectifying women with covert patriarchal ideologies masked by devotion and Dharma.

Draupadi is pledged by Yudhistra, her husband, the head of Pandava dynasty, as a bet in a game of dice against Duryodhana, the king of Kauravas. Having lost all of his possessions including his kingdom, Yudhistra has nothing else but his wife to bet to win everything he had lost. But alas, Yudhistra loses her as well. Dushadhana, Duryodhana's brother drags the reluctant Draupadi by her hair to Kaurava's courtroom to teach her a lesson for not accepting Duryodhana's command. Draupadi angrily questions Yudhistra's right to put her at stake in this game of dice. With an ultimate desire to belittle and shame the Pandavas, Duryodhana commands Draupadi to sit in his lap. Draupadi vehemently refuses and Duryodhana forcefully tries to remove Draupadi's saree to teach her a lesson. Draupadi repeatedly protests and tries to cover herself with anything possible and calls out to Krishna to protect her, to no avail. Eventually, she stops fighting and lifts her arms up and calls out to Krishna requesting him to save her. Krishna grants her never-ending reams of material that Duryodhana could never unveil and had to stop due to exhaustion. Later, Draupadi asked Krishna, "Why didn't you come immediately"? And, Krishna replied, "I waited for you to place all of your trust and devotion in me, and you never did when you fought repeatedly to cover yourself. But when you did place your trust in me and stopped fighting, I came". Thus, Draupadi was saved from shame and humiliation due to Draupadi's absolute devotion and faith in Krishna.

Growing up as children of India, the above narrative educated us, and we learnt to place absolute faith in Krishna to overcome any distress or hardship that came along. However, we weren't taught to identify how this act not only 'normalised' the violation of women's physical and socio-emotional space, or that it also educated women that only absolute acceptance of the same can save them from further humiliation and violence. Moreover, we were never allowed to ponder what else was implicitly conveyed by the lack of reprimand for Yudhishtra—an act that objectified and pledged Draupadi in a game of dice. Nor were we allowed to be shocked that Dushadhana's and Duryodhana's acts of violent intrusion of Draupadi's space were left unchallenged. Moreover, we were never encouraged to question the silence of other men in the courtroom, as they watched Draupadi being pledged like an object and later violated and humiliated by men in power. Colonisation is a hegemonic ideology that situates itself within the common sense of people, dictating their everyday discourses without their consciousness (Loomba 2005). If colonisation is an unauthorised ideology that dominates the political, social, cultural and spiritual space of the colonised, the 'other'; these are colonising acts of the colonised Draupadi's space. With his silence, Krishna seemed to condone these acts of undue infliction of abuse by men on a woman. I am unable to trust Krishna, especially after what happened to Jyoti; and hence, I ask Krishna the questions that were never asked by Veda Vyasa, the author of Mahabaratha:

- Hey Krishna, what actually was your purpose of granting Draupadi unending volumes of material to cover her body? Are you the 'black saviour', invariably creating the 'innocent other'?
- Krishna, you are God almighty and why didn't you rebuke Yudhistra for commodifying a woman, or Dushadhana, Duryodhana, and all those men who silently watched Duryodhana's uninterrupted desire to expose the body of a woman, to shame and humiliate not just her but other men, her husbands?

- Krishna, you claimed only her will to succumb could save her. You are a man after all Krishna, is that why you could not understand the way in which you justify absolute surrender to such male violence as the only act that can save a woman from being subjected to continued violence? Why did you render her with no power at all to protect her own self, her space?
- Krishna, can you see what identities you have created for the men and women of India? Don't women have the right to protect their own physical space? Shouldn't men be made to feel ashamed for their unauthorised occupation of those spaces? Isn't such occupation an act of domination and subordination of women by men? Why did you allow the past and the present women of India to be violently and silently colonised by the men of India?
- Tell me Krishna, should Jyoti put her hand up and accept rape, like Draupadi? Is that why Singh justified his violent physical abuse of Jyoti by saying she should have accepted rape? Could that act of absolute acceptance of sexual violence saved Jyoti from being gutted and murdered? Where were you when they raped and killed her?
- Krishna, you made Draupadi, Pandavas and Kauravas into 'vehicles' that mobilised the education and control of the behaviours of many. Your actions, inactions and silence educated the rest of India's women and men in self-governing their behaviour. Isn't this what the British Raj did (see Macauley's Minute on Indian Education 1835 in Sharp 1965); educated a group of men and women to act as their 'vehicles' in order to accept their illegitimate governance of India? The colonisers made the people of India believe it was for their own good. If ideology is a set of ideas that occupies and controls the everyday behaviours of individuals (Althusser 2008), you as Krishna or as Dharma, is the 'Other', the abstract ideological coloniser that colonises and dominates the discursive behaviours of both women and men even today, consciously and unconsciously.
- Krishna, listen to Mahaswetha Devi's version of Draupadi. This "Dropdi" was unclad and raped by men, but she refused to be (re)clad by men. In this counter narrative, "Dropdi" (Draupadi) walks out naked and mocks Senanayak, the man who commanded other men to disrobe and rape her by saying, "You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?" (Spivak 2006, p. 269). And the men stood powerless with fear. By cladding Draupadi you silenced the sub-altern from claiming her space and voice. I ask you Krishna, are you a man?

I watched the documentary "India's daughter" (Udwin 2015), and I understood who educated the men and women of India. It was Krishna or Dharma, the abstract ideology; a sense of duty that guides one's performance of subjective identity; it created identity storylines for the men and women of India. Otherwise why would Singh and his defence lawyers repeatedly put the women of India in their 'place'? These patriarchs believed it was their duty or Dharma to teach the (un)educated woman, the 'othered' who knew little and veered away from performing her prescribed duty, her Dharma. Hence, they chose to punish Jyoti with rape and violence. However, this ideology could not capture, entice and educate every man and woman of India to submit to this Dharma. There were many 'othered' men and

women of India, young and old, everyday people and those in power, who argued strongly against the insidious patriarchal system that is still present in India. These are the (wo)men, who stand outside this system of ideological submission to question and transform oppression and abuse in all forms. They acknowledge its ugly presence in gender discrimination, which not only results in abuse, but also prevents girls and women from leaving their domestic space to seek education and employment (see Sharma 2005; Pruthi 2013; Gupta 2014). Their voices to me are akin to Mahaswetha Devi's counter narratives of "Dropdi".

Baffled by the outcry within and outside India, that now overtly challenged the oppressing voices and images made visible by the film, the Indian government banned this film. By banning this film the government of India silenced those strong (wo)men's voices, the counter narratives that can rewrite the identity that has been created for the men and women of India by unchallenged ideologies in the name of tradition, culture and religion. Moreover, this ban also signifies that as Indians we should refrain from acknowledging the blights in our current societies and from having vociferous dialogues that can lead to collective awareness and action against the silencing past and present. Currently, children of India are not educated by Mahabaratha alone to learn what it is to be a male or a female. Violent sexual pornography is sold to the children of India as video games and these entice young teenagers to disrobe an animated female figurine, followed by violent sex (Gupta 2011). Hence, children of India are being educated to think of disrobing followed by violent acts of sex as fun and games. After all, the act of 'disrobing' is becoming 'normalised' with acts of sexual violence, as Gupta (2011) suggests. These are ideologies or dominant ideas about gender and sexuality, circulated to silently oppress women. The children, the future men and women of India require educational spaces that challenge ideological education that colonises gendered ways of being males and females of India. Education is repeatedly announced as the lever that can shift the status of women and girls. Let us ask, who else is educating the children of India, because we need to educate (other)wise.

5.5 Education (Other)wise: Prophesying ECCE with India's (Wo)men

Education and particularly early childhood education is seen as developing foundational patterns of behaviour for the future citizens of India by the ECCE policy (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2013). In order to outclass, subjugate and dominate, the imperialists or the British Raj discarded the knowledge that was imparted through traditional and religious discourses at the time as less relevant to rational thought and knowledge (see Macauley's Minute in Sharp 1965). Hence, the imperialists imposed their system of supposedly modern, universal education and scientific language to liberate the colonised from less worthy traditional knowledge. However, by excluding informal narratives,

those traditional stories of one's social conduct that are embedded in epics such as Ramayana and Mahabaratha from the education system, the imperialists also silenced all debates and dialogues that could have countered certain 'truths' that were propagated informally. Moreover, by positioning what was in colonised spaces as the cause of women's oppression, the imperialists excused their dominance and colonisation, as if they were offering an emancipatory alternative for the colonised women, who were otherwise silenced by tradition.

The postcolonial women, having become aware of colonial manipulation of their subjectivities, now want to overthrow imperialistic dominance. However, we, the postcolonial women are caught between succumbing to either their traditional past of unquestioning submission or current modernity, a seemingly emancipatory discourse offered by the imperialists. Most of all, such silencing limits the choice for women, as Spivak (2010) observes:

> Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the "third-world woman" caught between tradition and modernization (Spivak 2010, p. 280).

Spivak illustrates how imperialism and patriarchy render the "third world women" into invisibility and voicelessness. Hence, whichever option the postcolonial women choose to become visible and be heard, it seems as if their choice is dependent on the visibility and voice that is offered by either their defiance or alliance to either the so called modernity attached to imperialism, or the age old tradition attached to silencing devotion. Common to both traditional and modern is that both these spaces are dictated and dominated by patriarchy, which creates subjects and objects out of "third world women" in particular ways.

Postcolonial India, which is striving to assert its freedom from the colonial past is educating its children more than ever by informal narratives from those traditional epics via socio-political institutions (e.g., families, television and other social media). Such re-kindling of age-old traditions and customs is desired as a show of postcolonial India's resurgence from the clutches of past British imperialism. Whilst the formal educational system is still dominated by colonial values, as Jambunathan (2005) aptly points out, the informal system, still entrenched in patriarchy, is left to be propagated unquestioningly as before. Thus, imperialism and patriarchy still grip the education of future India. This need not necessarily be problematic if the resisting voices of women from the past and the present are also made visible and heard. However, when this isn't the case, such informal education that is left unchallenged, can render the women of India to be and become invisible, locked in houses as utilisable, voidable objects with no power or control over their own selves and those of others. Moreover, any voices that question these traditions are seen as those that are disloyal, as they have taken the sides of the colonisers, the outsiders.

Let us not colonise women again by educating the young children of India for economic mobility, as economic mobility alone does not eliminate gender bias and prejudice. Moreover, violence against women is global, and not just India's problem. Hence, education that prepares children for a globalised world needs to

address and educate children to stand united against the abuse of women and children anywhere in the world. This education needs to be layered with knowledge that can shift patriarchal attitudes, the ideologies that control men and women; and thus enable women to take control of their own lives. Ideologies are abstract, and yet they remain powerful and realisable when left uninterrupted by committed subjects (Althusser 2008). This gives us hope that spaces of ideological disruption exist, as we as subjects can commit to educate other(wise). The men, women and children of India need to ask ourselves, do we want to be colonised twice?

Jyoti was educated, but that did not stop her from being abused. Hence, developing policies that optimise women and girls to access education alone to become economically independent is insufficient and does not guarantee a community where they feel safe. Wong (1991) defines actions that economically and socially liberate women as engaging in "socialist feminism" (p. 290). "Socialist feminism" is a purposeful action that is geared towards enabling women all over the world to not just become economically independent, but to be 'free', free of all forms of oppression and abuse (Wong 1991). For this, the pedagogical practices of educators need to contest ideological spaces that overtly and covertly colonise young children's current understandings of gender discourses. Taylor (2013) contends that educators need to engage in collective inquiry with children in order to shift current practices that separate children from the rest. Young children are seen as socio-political enactors by many today (see Derman-Sparks and Edwards 2010; Sensoy and DiAngelo 2012). When viewed as socio-political enactors, children are seen as using the social knowledge available in the society to arbitrate ideological 'power'. Children strategically engage with 'power' to perform narratives of compliance and resistance depending on their ideological investments (Srinivasan 2014). Hence, what is essential is an educational policy that provides spaces for children and adults to contest any ideology that propagates bias, discrimination and oppression anywhere in India and beyond.

I am prophesying ECCE with the men and women, the (wo)men of India, who can shift the identity of India with 'other' wisdom or (other)wise. Counter narratives come from the margins to resist dominant discourses, in order to constantly contest gendered ways of being Indian. Gupta (2003, 2006) identified that early childhood educators practised 'hybridity' by enmeshing formal and traditional repertoires into their pedagogy. However, here, we practice hybridity (Bhabha 1994, 1996) with a purpose. This purpose is to pull down the master's house with his tools (Morgan 2000); hence the use of traditional narratives to contest the hidden discourses of male dominance. I engage (other)wise with Veda Vyasa, the author of Mahabaratha, a man. If Veda Vyasa, who wrote Mahabaratha was a woman, how would she write that narrative? What would she make Krishna do, and what identities would she create for men and women of India? Would she have regarded children as being capable of having complex understandings of enactments of power and ideology? Therefore, will she pause to ask children, what do you think Draupadi should do? Is it fair that she was dragged and disrobed? What else can Krishna do? Most of all, is it just that she was used as a possession by the men in Mahabaratha? To ask these questions, we need to make women's matters children's matters.

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Chapter 6
A Hong Kong Version of Early Chinese Literacy Education: A Sinophone Perspective

Po Chi Tam

This chapter adopts a cultural perspective to report on a study of teaching and learning early Chinese literacy for young children in one Hong Kong kindergarten. Instead of viewing literacy education as a neutral and standardised cultural process across Chinese speaking communities, I draw on a Sinophone perspective and post-colonialism to investigate how the linguistic dissonance and cultural hybridity of Hong Kong influences teaching practices in one local kindergarten. There are two dominant discourses to conceptualise post-colonial education in Hong Kong. One emphasises that Hong Kong is a Chinese community which inherits Confucian culture. Rote learning, an examination-oriented education system, authoritarian teachers, and student learning motivated by external and social rewards are counted as its critical characteristics (Watkins and Biggs 2001). The other argues that after more than 150 years of British colonial rule (1984–1997), Hong Kong education has been influenced significantly by Western educational ideologies and practices, mostly from the UK and the USA (Dimmock 2000; Kennedy 2004; Pearson 2011). Both discourses ignore the locality and heterogeneity of the native cultures and languages of Hong Kong, which reveal a much more complex interplay of forces including traditional Chinese and Western cultures, and the increasingly dominant impact of Mainland China after the handover of the territory to its new sovereign power.

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In early Chinese literacy education, drilling young children begins mostly from the age of four. While the teaching of written Chinese (WC)[1] is a prevailing classroom literacy event (Ho et al. 2002; Tse et al. 2013), the local vernacular language, Cantonese, is used as a means and also ends of instruction in Hong Kong. Alternatively, a wide range of initiatives borrowed from Western classrooms has been introduced for reform purposes. These literacy practices reveal a hybridity of languages, cultures and ideologies. To further explicate this phenomenon, this chapter traces the development of policy of early Chinese literacy education in Hong Kong from Sinophone and postcolonial perspectives. It uses an ethnographic case study conducted in a local kindergarten classroom in Hong Kong to show that hybridity can be understood as a mixture of classical and globalised literacy practices; and a transgressive use and learning of written Chinese and Cantonese in which both Chinese and Western educational theories that underpin the practices are interwoven.

6.1 Sinophone, Hong Kong Chinese Languages and Western Borrowings

Sinophone is a calque on Francophone which basically means Chinese speaking or Chinese speaking communities at the edge of China (Shih 2007). Scholars in cultural studies and comparative literature use it to conceptualise the heterogeneity and multi-vocality of the Sinitic languages, cultural practices, identities and subjectivities outside or at the edge of China, which includes a broader network of places of cultural production; as well as the historical and political process of localising and also heterogenising continental Chinese culture (Shih 2007). The notion of Sinophone resists not only the discourse and imagination of a monolithic Chinese culture or universal Chineseness, but it also values the distinctiveness and differences within Chinese culture; its production and diversified practices outside and at the margins of China.

The studies of Shih (2007) are devoted to the multiple accents of Putonghua found in Chinese cinema. Shih (2007) argues that these multiple accents "indicate(s) living languages other than the standard one, whose hegemonic projection of uniformity is subverted through a straightforward representation that refuses to cover up dissonance with uniformity" (p. 5). Taking the perspective of a foreigner who learns Chinese, McDonald (2011) argues that learning Chinese is a process of becoming Sinophone. It is not just becoming linguistically proficient in using various Chinese registers in a wide range of contexts but also being able to access to the related culture and ways of life. The process is complex and

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[1]Chinese people even speak different dialects they share the same writing system to communicate. The written Chinese or modern standardised Chinese is based on Putonghua, originally a northern dialect which was also named as Mandarin, was endorsed by the People's Republic of China as the official language after 1949 (Shih 2007).

dynamic as it involves building a Sinophone identity in negotiation with the learner's mother tongue. In this light, Shih (2007) challenges a "mechanical standardised model that treats both the language input and the recipient of that input as conforming to a fixed common set of specifications" (p. 75), as it pays no heed to the complexity of individual learners and Sinophone spheres.

In studying Chinese language and the cultural identify of Hong Kong, the notion of Sinophone helps to foreground the locality of Hong Kong's Chinese cultural identity and its uniqueness and heterogeneity, which has been under-estimated in local research on children's language education. Teaching of Cantonese as well as traditional Chinese characters enables Hong Kong children whose first language is Cantonese to develop distinguished features and identities different from both Mainland China and Taiwan. While this linguistic and cultural dissonance has been casually assumed as a result of geopolitics between China and the West, the idiosyncratic Cantonese vis-à-vis standardised written Chinese and the evolution of their mixed usage in the local context has not been adequately recognized or investigated. The perspective can inform the development of the early Chinese literacy curriculum and pedagogy in Hong Kong.

Cantonese is the lingua franca in Hong Kong. Although most of it could be written in Han characters of WC which is based on Putonghua, some of it does not find corresponding characters with WC. Apart from colloquial words and expressions, Cantonese is further marked by the use of English words or other loanwords that are considered vernacular, low-function and hence unacceptable in WC (Chow 1998a, b; Leung and Wong 1997; Lin 2008; Snow 2004). To describe the heterogeneity of the orality of the Hong Kong language referring mainly to Cantonese, Lo (1998) names it as "a schizophrenic contextual combination of the vernacular Cantonese, the written form of Chinese, and verbal, written and broken English" (p. 157). Thus, although Cantonese is the everyday life language and mother tongue of most of the Hong Kong people, it is barely taught in school as a written language. The native Cantonese-speaking children in Hong Kong learning WC are to a certain extent approaching a different language (Chow 1998b; Snow 2004). Lin (2008) further pinpoints that the children need to be "socialized into ways of converting formal Chinese writing into spoken Cantonese and vice versa" (p. 293).

In this view, the Hong Kong Chinese language education, particularly for young children is not only about teaching and learning WC. That is, Cantonese serves as both a medium of instruction as well as a target language. Children are taught Cantonese firstly to listen, speak and communicate; and secondly, to read and write in WC. In terms of the writing system, we teach and learn the traditional form of Chinese characters which was established in the early Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD), and has been used stably for centuries. The use of the traditional form remains unchanged in Hong Kong and some other Chinese speaking communities, and its teaching and learning is greatly emphasised in the local preschools and the wider society. In contrast, a simplified version was adopted in Mainland China after 1949 for the elimination of illiteracy and the political agenda (Tao and Qian 2012). This heterogeneity of language teaching is not only a result of the language features of Hong Kong but also the British colonial agenda.

6.2 Appropriation of the West

In order to prevent Hong Kong people from developing a national and cultural
identity with Mainland China during the Cold War era, and particularly after the
riot in 1967, a Hong Kong identity was designed and cultivated by the British
colonial government through promoting westernised popular culture and life-style
(Chow 1998a; Shih 2007; Turner 1995). This political agenda also shaped edu-
cational policy and the language of educational practice under colonial rule. In
order to resist and segregate from the influence of the New Culture Movement in
Mainland China and the infiltration of Communist ideology, traditional Chinese
culture was preserved and classical Chinese literature was taught as the core con-
tent of Chinese language education. It helped to project an imaginative, distant and
ambiguous China or Chineseness amongst the youth in Hong Kong (Shih 2007).
In early literacy education, traditional Chinese character instruction that empha-
sises imitation of role model and practice for excellence was recognised by the
colonial government:

> The nature of Chinese is such that most Chinese pupils need to devote more time and
> energy to learning their mother tongue than do pupils elsewhere. The main reasons are
> that rote learning is unavoidable, especially in the preliminary stages of language learn-
> ing; the basic language skills can be mastered only by constant practice, pupils must
> become aware of and understand the implications of the sound, form and meaning of
> certain characters in order to achieve a satisfactory minimum standard. (Government
> Secretariat 1981, pp. 260–262)

In this sense, educational policy towards Chinese character instruction pri-
oritised teaching of the traditional forms using a decontextualised and repetitive
approach. This approach persisted despite the many educational reforms since the
mid-1980s introduced seemingly to shake the inherited practice of 'rote learning'
and 'constant practice', and attempts to systematize the practice with a cognitive
developmental paradigm, namely concepts and training about fine motor skills,
hand-eye-coordination, scribbling and line drawing, and so on (The Curriculum
Development Committee Hong Kong 1984; The Curriculum Development Council
1996, 2006). Regardless of this developmentalist reform systematizing repetitive
Chinese character writing, it remains the core literacy activity in the curriculum.
A survey that sampled 80 Hong Kong preschool teachers found that teaching
and learning Chinese characters took 40 % of teaching hours, and in some cases
children started writing when they were 3 years of age (Ho et al. 2002). In con-
trast, Chinese character instruction in early childhood education ECE is forbidden
in Mainland China because it is regarded as a sign of backwardness and elitism
(Blaise et al. 2013; Pine and Yu 2012). Moreover, pinyin, an official phonetic sys-
tem for transcribing Putonghua pronunciations of Chinese characters into Latin
alphabets, is also commonly taught as the foundation of reading (Pine and Yu
2012).

Nevertheless the preservation of 'old school' Chinese character instruction did
not necessarily mean the predominance of traditional Chinese culture in early

literacy education in Hong Kong. The other side of the coin was the design and cultivation of "Hong Kong's modern identity" in the colonial education agenda (Turner 1995, p. 20). This occurred first and foremost by advancing the privileged status of English over Chinese, and the introduction of Western education theories, models and practices (Bray 1997; Law 1997). These two pillars of western influence were further enhanced in the mid-1980s when the Sino-British negotiation over Hong Kong's future was looming. Preservation of Hong Kong's competitiveness as an international financial centre was important given economic globalisation and the handover to Communist China in 1997.

It was then that the cognitive-development paradigm and the idea of progressive and predictable language developmental stages were first introduced to Hong Kong, which became the prevailing discourse in the education sector (The Curriculum Development Committee Hong Kong 1984; The Curriculum Development Council 1996, 2006). Education Commission Report No. 6 (Hong Kong Education Commission 1996) advocated "realistic language goals (set) for kindergarten, primary, junior… There should be clear objectives to develop language proficiency on a life-long basis, resulting in better articulation of the language requirements for the various levels of a child development, including kindergarten, primary…" (p. 11). Following this rationale, the 1996 Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum (The Curriculum Development Council 1996, p. 4) further elaborated the observable characteristics and proposed specific goals of language development for children aged between 2 and 6 years. The systematisation and rationalisation of Chinese character instruction illustrated these grounds. Preschool educators were required to implement this reform mandate by setting teaching activities, pedagogy and assessments accordingly. Indeed, language developmental stages and attainment targets originated from and fitted well with Thatcherism and neo-liberalism, whose agenda in education prioritises accountability, quality assurance, management and cost effectiveness (Tsang 1997). Mainstream western discourses of education in the 1990s were steered towards quantitative, ends-oriented pedagogies emphasising teaching goals, effectiveness and school performance assessment of not only competent language users, but also education administration as a whole.

Other examples of appropriation of western theories and practices can be tracked in local curriculum and pedagogy. The curriculum guides for pre-primary school enforced during the last three decades have consistently advocated a number of reform initiatives such as the application of integrated curriculum, picture books instruction, whole language approaches, learning through play, and different kinds of child-centred and progressive pedagogies. Shaped by inter-disciplinary influences brought by constructivism, sociolinguistics, emergent literacy, and psycholinguistics, these reform initiatives generally affirmed early Chinese literacy as functional and social, and not to be broken down into abstract and meaningless units such as letters, combinations of sounds; or merely drilling and reciting. Rather, teaching of early Chinese literacy should be viewed as a holistic and situated cognitive meaning making process with respect for learners as real readers, writers, and language users in a wide range of social contexts (The Curriculum

Development Committee Hong Kong 1984; The Curriculum Development Council 1996, 2006; Pearson 2011).

These reform initiatives also called for promoting children's agency, individuality and autonomy in learning and development. They were maintained and repackaged in 'Learning through Play' in the Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum in 2006 (The Curriculum Development Council 2006). Continued emphasis have been placed on the progressive and child-centred pedagogies, such as building a language-rich environment, designing a variety of play activities, promoting interaction with children, and so on. Despite this, there is a lack of integration of these western appropriations with local traditional approaches. It is questionable as to how far western borrowing can address the needs and features of the local education context (Dimmock 2000; Fung et al. 2008), particularly the complexity and heterogeneity of the language, culture and identity of Hong Kong.

Notwithstanding, many studies have warned of the danger of partial appropriation of Western educational attributes adapted in or with ignorance (Cheng 2006; Li 2004). Given the different cultural backgrounds in Hong Kong, and the lack of comparable institutional and educational resources with western counterparts, adaptation discrepancies are inevitable. To name but a few, the authoritarian role of teachers in Hong Kong classrooms, the academic-oriented education system, and a relatively stronger culture of collectivism rather than individual participation in classrooms, are elements exotic to western practices (Li 2004; Cheng 2006; Dimmock 2000). In this sense, western borrowings are not necessarily leading to changes or subjugation of the local qualities. Nevertheless, rather than assuming an authentic adaptation or the existence of a Western education orthodoxy, partiality is a facet of the phenomenon but not a problem to be solved, especially in the context of Hong Kong where languages and cultures are a hybrid of the East and West. The peripheral position of de-colonised Hong Kong vis-à-vis the former colonial power and the new sovereign creates a particular context where local knowledge is recovered and reconstructed. As Canagarajah (2002) has put it, "the local has negotiated, modified, and absorbed the global in its own way" (p. 9). On one hand, in-depth investigation of the hybridity and partiality of adaptation of western practices should continue even though a number of research studies have been carried out since the 1997 handover. On the other hand, the heterogeneity of Chinese language education in post-colonial Hong Kong, and the post-handover evolution under stronger economic integration, political domination and deeper social integration with mainland China remains, up till now, an un-explored area.

The perspective of Sinophone shifts the focus of study from evaluating an authentic appropriation of Western attributes to revealing and reclaiming the hybridity of the West and the local. In this light, the complexity of the heteroglossia of Chinese early literacy education in Hong Kong is a result of the interplay of various factors of traditional Chinese culture, Cantonese culture, geopolitics and postcolonial legacy. Instead of viewing Chinese early literacy education as a monolithic practice of western theories for learning standardised Chinese, a more elaborated discourse without oversight of the Hong Kong-ness in the cultural mediation should be pursued. The question could be approached by investigating

the linguistic dissonances and cultural hybridity identified in local kindergartens, as well as their impact on the actual practice of teaching in the local context.

6.3   Ethnographic Case Study

This study assumed that literacy education is a social and cultural practice and process. The mode of literacy endorsed by the government and practiced in school is historically, economically, socially and culturally constructed, which in turn shapes people's ways of reading and writing. In this view, what is chosen for teaching and how it is taught is not neutral or a mere cognitive process of the individual. To understand local Chinese literacy education from a social and cultural practice perspective means investigating the "common patterns in using reading and writing in a particular situation"; and examining how and why people bring their cultural knowledge to the activity (Barton 1994, p. 37). In practice, it includes firstly identifying critical literacy events, the basic constituents of literacy practice, which means any occasion in which a piece of writing is involved (Heath 1982); and secondly, the "folk models of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them" (Street 2014, p. 2).

In Chinese literacy education, teaching and learning Chinese characters, storybooks, rhymes, and so on are common literacy events found in local preschools. However, more local study is needed to explore and explain how they are taught in relation to traditional and borrowed language pedagogies and theories, albeit the heterogenic language and cultural features of Hong Kong. Considering that, ethnographic case study (Merriam 2009) fits this purpose. Ethnographic methods allow researchers to examine the practices and perspectives of insiders of the social group studied; while case study is the best 'vehicle' for going deeply and holistically into a specific aspect and phenomenon of practice (Cohen et al. 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). In case study, researchers can apply and test their "personal view" throughout all aspects of the study (Stake 1995, p. 41). Therefore, by identifying and generating the routines of practice of the most frequently used and critically significant literacy events to the insiders in the everyday classroom, this study aims to describe, interpret and represent local literacy education in relation to both the postcolonial and Sinophonic perspectives.

This study took place in a government-subsidized kindergarten which is located in a new satellite area in Hong Kong. I chose a full-day class to study, which enabled me to observe and investigate a full range of literacy instruction practices used by Miss Lo (pseudonym) in comparison to a half-day class. Miss Lo has been a kindergarten teacher for 17 years and is currently enrolled in a bachelor degree in early childhood education. Miss Lo is deeply influenced by the western education theories she studied. She believes that education should be child-centred to empower children in acquiring their own knowledge, and to experience through participation, free exploration and expression. However, regarding Chinese literacy instruction, she prefers adaptations tailor-made for children based on her

observation of their capacity and character, but does not restrict herself to any language theories and pedagogy, whether traditional or western. She is currently teaching a class of 20 children aged from 4 to 5 years.

Before the fieldwork, consent of the school, the teachers and the children's parent were obtained for conducting the study. I paid on-site visits of 2 h per day to Miss Lo's class for 2 to 3 days a week over a period of four months. During this time, I focused on classroom teaching and learning of different literacy events using various approaches and pedagogies. Apart from taking field notes, I video recorded to capture both the verbal and non-verbal language of the teacher and children in class, and also interviewed the teacher and nine children.

Teaching early Chinese literacy education in the university, I was challenged to de-familiarise myself with the topic, people, phenomenon and the social context of the ethnographic study and qualitative interpretative approach (Kamsteeg et al. 2013), and avoid 'epistemic privilege' (Mannay 2010, p. 92). I intentionally looked for responses and practices that were beyond my expectation and even surprising, or quite the opposite, over-familiar to me. To achieve this aim, I used photo elicitation (Harper 2002) in the interviews with the teacher and the children. The photos about Chinese character instruction, Chinese children rhyme activity, language experience approach (LEA) and drama education with the use of picture books were taken from the classroom video which were identified in the preliminary analysis of the classroom observation data as the most frequently used and time consuming literacy events in Miss Lo's classroom. In the interview, both the teacher and the children were asked to describe, explain and comment on the pictures taken in the literacy events in which they participated. The teacher interview lasted 1 h. Nine children voluntarily participated in interviews, and each took around eight minutes. The exercise allowed me to further foreground the literacy events of significance and special meanings to the participants.

A coding scheme was developed based on the competing and even conflicting processes and forces of the Sinophonic and postcolonial frame. Interview data from the teacher and the children, and classroom observations were coded, analysed and interpreted against this frame to examine how these processes and forces were working on the practices of the identified literacy events. By comparing the codes that were consistently and frequently identified in the three data sets (Patton 1999), it was found that the dominant codes fell into Chinese character instruction and the language experience approach. In the coming section, I portray and analyse the critical features and incidents of these two literacy events to represent the language dissonance and cultural hybridity of the classroom being studied.

6.4 Findings and Discussion

The instruction of Chinese characters and the language experience approach are commonly found in the local preschools. Their practice in Miss Lo's classroom give us a snapshot of the hybridity and complexity of the early Chinese literacy

education in Hong Kong. They also show how the teacher oscillated between different languages and cultural paradigms with active consideration of the Chinese language system, local contextual features and the mandates of western reform initiatives. Each is discussed in turn.

6.4.1 Traditional Chinese Character Teaching and Learning

In the period of data collection, the routine Chinese character instruction began with 10 min of whole class teaching and another 10–15 min of individual penmanship (sic) for practicing the characters that were taught. One character was taught in each session but vocabularies related to each character were introduced and discussed. A highly stable prototype of Chinese character writing instruction was generated, which began with the teacher:

- Reading aloud the character;
- Explaining its meaning by drawing on the children's everyday language experiences and discussing the related vocabularies;
- Writing the character on the white board, illustrating the ways to write the character and the steps to follow, such as stroke order and spatial composition by using a formula or rhyme;
- Drawing the character in the air with the finger (named as 'finger pen' by teacher) and body movement; guiding the class to follow the above processes;
- Assigning individual seat work using individual copybooks.

Miss Lo asserted that this prototype was largely determined by the rules and norms of writing Chinese characters and the purpose was to enhance the children's memory and practice of those objective standards. According to her, it could not be taught solely using Western language pedagogy because it originated from a completely different language system and cultural values that are less liberal in terms of children's individual and spontaneous exploration. She explained,

> This is Chinese culture of teaching which has been used for years. This teaching of writing, I believe, should be guarded by certain rules. I won't write the vertical stroke before the horizontal one. Moreover, while learning writing we are learning component order as well. For example, first, the horizontal stroke, then the vertical stroke; first, the diagonal stroke falling from right to left, then the diagonal stroke falling from left to right. You have to know which comes first, then what follows. That is the construction of characters. The kids should realize that characters are built with different components, or from other characters [that are] discernible. The character 星 (star) is formed by 日 (said so) and 生 (to give birth, to bear) in a component order from top to bottom. Chinese characters are learnt by memorization. It is different from English language. (Interview note, 11/11/2014)

Photographs 1–4 demonstrate the stroke order of 水 (water) by drawing the character in the air using a finger pen, body movement and formula.

1. First, a vertical stroke with a hook (finger pen pointing from the top, moving down and going up again for the hook)	2. Then, a horizontal stroke followed by a diagonal stroke from right to left (finger pen moving horizontally from the left, then falling diagonally from right to left)
3. Next, a short diagonal stroke falling from right to left (finger pen falling from right to left)	4. A diagonal stroke falling from left to right (finger pen falling from left to right)

One may critique the objectives of memory and reproduction as situating the children as passive learners. However, in Miss Lo's view, the prototype indicates an active, serious and embodied learning process instead of mindless repetition and mere reproduction. She also claimed that scaffolding (Wood et al. 1976) is the major strategy currently applied which highlights listening, watching, speaking, chanting, drawing, and writing of a character using a holistic sensory approach. It supports children repeatedly but actively to experience and practice the same character from different dimensions and various modes of learning. As seen in photographs 1–4, Ms Lo combined hand gesture, body movement and formula to demonstrate and illustrate the stroke order of the character of water while engaging the children in collective imitation of it. In this process, the children could embody and develop a sense of the stroke movement, space and tempo of writing the character. Similar methods were applied in group and individual learning activities such as "you may write on your palm, on the sand or the back of another child". In Ms Lo's terms, "We have to get the kids to feel about Chinese writing" (Interview note, 11/11/2014). Miss Lo believes that day-to-day practice builds bodily rituals amongst and assists the children to internalize the rules and standards of Chinese character writing.

A cultural account of the origin of Chinese character instruction also reveals that the emphasis of ritual development is deeply rooted in the tradition of Chinese calligraphy. In the old days, the Chinese used brush and ink to write. Children started doing calligraphy practice once they learned to write. In Howard Gardner's

(1989) understanding, the ritual of doing Chinese calligraphy goes beyond a cognitive activity, as it is an aesthetic act.

> The strokes, the visual effects, the movements, and the meanings were all blended together to form a total artistic experience… For centuries, strict procedures have been devised for producing the various Chinese characters: how to apply the ink; how to hold the brush; how to move the brush; dancelike, across the paper; how to follow through, re-ink the brush, apply the seal; how to achieve a harmonious compositional structure… It is a ritual (p. 179).

Regardless of the fact that brush and ink are rarely used in local early childhood education classrooms, as evident in Miss Lo's case, the principles and aesthetics of Chinese calligraphy still prevail. However, based on Gardner's interpretation, the delicate and sensory nature of the pedagogy should not only be interpreted as a ritual for promoting accurate reproduction, as the production of Chinese characters is also aesthetic.

Copybooks serve as the major tool for children to practice Chinese character writing in local kindergartens. In Miss Lo's classroom, the copying task is composed of three parts: copying the strokes in order; completing the character by following the dotted lines in the correct stroke order, and writing the character in the empty box (Fig. 6.1). The scaffolding guidance therefore ensures that the children follow and internalise the rehearsed rules and the standard. At the same time it is building the ritual for children's development of the objective aesthetic standard in writing Chinese characters.

The children in Miss Lo's class generally liked character writing (Interview note, 17/11/2014). They were committed to striving for quality handwriting in a serious manner. They were writing the character and following the formula for writing joyously. If something went wrong, which could be the stroke order, spatial presentation, etc., they were serious about making a correction and rewriting the character. I asked the children to explain every time I saw them erasing and rewriting the character. The reasons they gave were almost the same: "Not beautiful!" (ng leng) or "Ugly" (wat dat). In most cases, they were able to apply the rules and norms that they had learnt to judge the aesthetics of their own and peer's scripts.

Fig. 6.1 Chinese character copybook (花 *flower*)
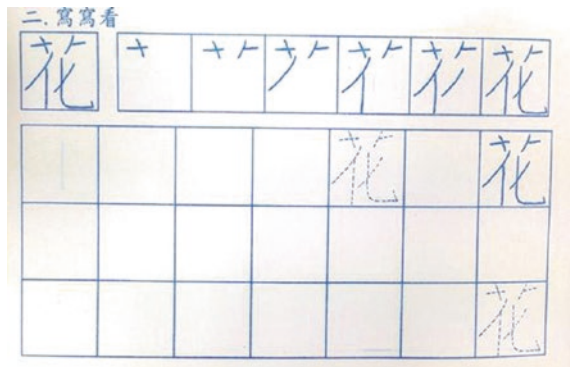
An extract of children's writing of 豆 **(bean)**

L1 C1:   (Use the eraser to rub out the tilted word)
L2 R: Why rubbing it out?
L3 C1:   The mouth is too big, not nice!
L4 C1:   (Rewriting it.)
L5 R: Need to rub this out, too?
L6 C1:   A little bit better
L7 C1:   Did you have this? (Pointing to the examples) So pretty. (Asking the
           child next to him)
L8 C2:   (Throwing a glance towards the example, then writing again, rubbing
           it out later and rewriting it.)
L9 R: Why did you rub it out?
L10 C2:   Have you followed the upper line there. (Pointing to the table of the
           stroke order)
L11 R: I see. Did you do that?
L12 C2:   Do it like this. (Using fingers to mimic the stroke order)

As shown, the children's self or peer review and evaluation of the spatial composition (L1–L6) and stroke order (L8–L12) of the character writing is self-initiated and governed. A closer look at the iterative practice of writing-reviewing-rewriting, shows the practice shares the features of children's "craft of plays" (2008, p. 271). Richard Sennett suggests there is a strong link between children's play and a craftsman's (sic) work as both parties engage in an active dialogue with the physical materials on hand. It is a repetitive and rhythmic process of exploring and practicing coordination of hand, eye and head, which aims to work and rework the rules of playing/crafting, and hence striving for a higher standard of work. In view of this, Sennett challenges the devaluation or superficial understanding of the repetitive learning practice as rote learning. In Chinese education, there is a belief that "an act for a child becomes meaningful at the time when it is ritualized" (Regni 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, Figs. 6.2 and 6.3 show the different styles of children's script and how they were striving for "leng" in this crafting process. It is a negotiation of the objective standard along with individual aesthetic pursuit, which is characterised by children's personality and is not a normalised reproduction (Tao and Qian 2012). With all this considered, both the ritualized pedagogy and scaffolding of copybook practice in Miss Lo's class reflects a mixture of traditional Chinese aesthetic and western scaffolding. They work together to promote children's commitment to the craft of excellence in writing Chinese characters.

6.4.2 Language Experience Approach

Along the line of borrowing western cultural practices and pedagogy in the 1990s, a Language Experience Approach (LEA) was introduced in Education Commission Report No. 6 (Hong Kong Education Commission 1996, p. 11) as

Fig. 6.2 C1's script

Fig. 6.3 C2's script
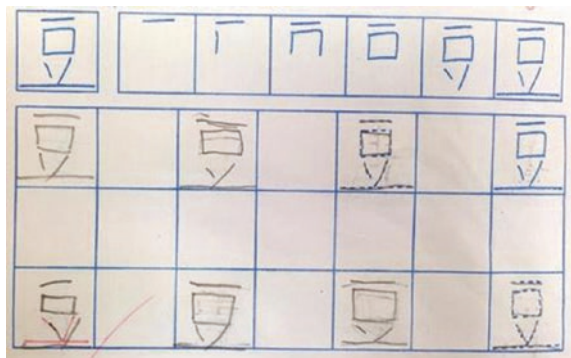
an aggregate approach encompassing personal knowledge and experiences, thinking, reading, listening, writing and speaking, to reach the goal of better mastery of a language. Its application includes children's voice and individualism; and at the same time disarms teacher authority and pre-sets answers found in traditional Chinese literacy classrooms. Since then, LEA has become a common pedagogy for promoting children's participation in their own language learning in Hong Kong. The premise of LEA is to make use of children's natural and oral language experiences as the basis for reading materials (Hall 1981; Nessel and Jones 1981). In practice, it involves instructional steps of discussing, dictating and reading children's language experiences. As Hall (1981) argues, LEA "starts with and values the reader (child)—his [sic] thoughts, his experiences, his language, his products, his uniqueness" (p. 4). This validation of child voice suggests a shift of power relationships between teachers and children as the latter participate in the process of knowledge production in their own language, culture and identity. Teachers are less dominating and serve mostly as facilitators.

However, in local ECE classrooms, the gap between Cantonese and WC underlies the difference between children's talking and reading and hence poses an immediate challenge to the tenets of the pedagogy of "I write what I say. I write what I read" (Allen 1976, p. 3). A translation or conversion between what children

say and what they write in WC is needed for Cantonese speaking students, which is supposed to be part of the learning in local language classrooms. Lin (2008) suggests that translation develops children's binary translation skills in learning WC. Unfortunately, it is difficult to make a translation that is comprehensible to young language learners while fulfilling the goal of teaching standard and formal WC. Conceivably, teachers may struggle between the tenet of child-centeredness using Cantonese and the teaching effectiveness of written Chinese instruction. In the example in Fig. 6.4, instead of an accurate and allegiant appropriation of LEA, Miss Lo has localized it to address child-centeredness and written Chinese instruction by making use of written Cantonese.

Fig. 6.4 The written Cantonese used in LEA

Extract 1. Ms Lo's teaching of LEA with use of written Cantonese

L1 T: Wow! All the children have helped Meimei come up with a lot of food that she loves to eat. Let me jot them down. Here we have 牛肉 (beef), 飯 (rice), 麵 (noodles). What's it? 蘋果 (apple) (The vocabularies written at the bottom left corner of the page). Good gracious! … Then, let's see the food she hates to eat. 橙 (orange), 檸檬 (lemons). (The vocabularies written at the bottom right corner of the page)… OK. Besides oranges and lemons, let's see what Meimei doesn't like to eat in this story. I will draw

L2 Cs: Grapes, strawberries, veggies, carrots, choisum, tomatoes, broccoli, fish… (The children read aloud the teacher's drawing at the bottom right corner of the page that had she has drawn previously based on their dictation)

L3 T: Hold on, what does she do at home?

L4 C5:   Play on the street (Teacher wrote down 去街玩 go street play)

L5 T: Ok, what else? Where do they go?

L6 C1:   Go to Disneyland (Teacher wrote down去迪士尼 go to Disneyland)

L7 T: Wow! But they can't go to Disneyland very often. What do they do at home?

L8 Cs: Watch TV, read books (Teacher did not write it down)

L9 C7:   Play (Teacher did not write it down)

L10 T: Does she play with her younger sister?

L11 Cs: No

L12 C4: Swim in the clubhouse

L13 T: What do they do?…Ooops! Swimming (Teacher wrote down 游水 swimming). OK! That's it…

As shown above, although Miss Lo is supposed to teach WC in the pedagogy, no translation from Cantonese to WC was made as she has simply accepted the children's Cantonese vocabulary and phrasal dictation that is called written Cantonese. There are three types of written Cantonese found in her teaching (Table 6.1).

The written Cantonese is hardly vernacular or vulgar. Nor is it informal and inaccurate. Many words in written Cantonese such as 飯rice, and 游swim, are shared by WC. Instead of regarding it as grammar or word choice mistakes or impurities, it is a hybridized language, which serves as a bridge to assist Hong Kong children to learn WC and expand and prepare their written Chinese lexicon. Learning in and with Cantonese is closer to children's language, experience, style of expression and identity. This is preparatory to the future learning of WC when children will move onto advanced steps by adding one more syllable, changing the word order and replacing the choice of words that turn Cantonese to WC. Torn between teaching WC and child-centred instruction, as explained by Ms Lo, she has chosen written Cantonese to embody the child-centeredness since she believed that the instruction of WC might be conducted at the expense of children's participation, interest, autonomy and ownership. The decision to accommodate the

Table 6.1 Three types of written Cantonese in Ms Lo's teaching

Line no.	The children's Cantonese response	The teacher's dictation in written Cantonese	Written Chinese (WC)	Remarks: types of written Cantonese versus WC
L1	飯(rice)	飯(rice)	米飯 (rice, cooked rice literally); 白飯 (white rice literally)	① From monosyllabic to polysyllabic
L4	去街玩 (Go street play)	去街玩 (Go street play) in	到外面去玩 (to outside go play)	② The syntax and the vocabulary of the Cantonese expression is modified, and the cultural connotation of "street play" is also lost in WC expression
L13	游水 (swim water)	游水 (swim water) in	游泳(swim swim)	③ Different choices of words in Cantonese and WC

hybridized language of Cantonese and written Cantonese in teaching WC shows the teacher is striking a balance which realizes the tenets of LEA, that is, following Western pedagogies with respect to individualism and full awareness of the contextual features of Hong Kong early childhood education.

6.5 Conclusion: A Hong Kong Version of 'Chinese' Early Literacy Education

The Sinophone perspective shifts the focus of early Chinese language education from the centre to the margin and from a monolithic understanding to a heterogeneous one. It suggests that various Chinese speaking communities outside or at the edge of Mainland China should have their own language and cultural features. Given their distinctive social and historical background, they should also have their own geopolitical relationships to China or Mainland China. These factors give birth to diverse approaches in teaching and learning written Chinese to young children in communities where hybridity of languages, cultures and experiences are part of life. In fact such hybridity is justified, sustained and reproduced endlessly in those communities. This perspective not only contributes to demystifying both the post-colonialist and Sinocentric representations of Chinese language education, but also ends suppression of the local oral language and culture in Hong Kong and other Chinese speaking communities. The case of Miss Lo projects a Hong Kong version of Chinese language instruction and curriculum in a local kindergarten. It is partly rooted in traditional Chinese culture, partly mixed

up with the indigenous languages and cultures, and partly a replication of Western theories. Although the case study does not aim at making a generalisation, various aspects and kinds of hybridizations identified in the instruction of Chinese characters and LEA give a snapshot of the celebration of Sinophone of early Chinese literacy education in a local kindergarten, which may well be occurring in other kindergarten classrooms.

Chinese character instruction and local education in Hong Kong have long been viewed as a kind of Confucian rote learning in colonial discourses (Watkins and Biggs 1996, 2001; Government Secretariat 1981). Scholars challenging this orientalist representation since the 1990s have argued that the repetitive and memorizing approach of Confucian teaching and learning also contributes to students' cognitive understanding (Watkins and Biggs 1996; Marton et al. 1996; Dimmock 2000). Despite that, there is a lack of discussion of the influences of western borrowings in transforming the repetitive and memorizing approach. Locally, embodied teaching and sophisticated scaffolding is followed by Ms Lo's intention to save the constant practice of children's aesthetic crafting of Chinese characters from being a mindless drilling exercise. In this case, Miss Lo places the Chinese writing system at the heart of hybridisation but not the theoretical underpinnings of western innovations.

The hybridised appropriation is also noticed in the use of hybridised language of Cantonese and WC. Apart from the LEA analysed here, another example can be found in using the first language Cantonese, instead of Putonghua, to read aloud the WC of rhythm and storybooks (Lin 2008). Such approaches to reading aloud may be viewed as unorthodox by Mainland literacy educators. Despite that, To-Chan and Chan's (2001) study pinpoints that this mixed application of two languages in teaching reading aloud in local preschools ascertains children's reading comprehension capacity. Cantonese is the first language of most children in Hong Kong. Even when it is mixed with WC, Cantonese is easier for communication and understanding since it is used in children's everyday experiences and is part of their cultural identity. In Miss Lo's classroom, the language hybridization makes the characters of the story more accessible and closer to the children's daily experiences. The rationales of validating and embracing children's voice and language of the LEA are highlighted.

The flexibility and tactful expediency of hybridization used by Miss Lo reveals her agency and capacity to mediate various methods, languages, teaching theories and cultures from the west, Chinese and indigenous traditions. Behind this hybridisation is a struggle or oscillation between the paradigms of teacher-centred and child-centred education; collectivism and individualism; standard language and everyday language; literacy and orality and so on. Further study about how local preschool teachers navigate, negotiate and hybridise languages and culture partialities and complexities can be developed from the study. The result may inform teacher education and also the development of early literacy education in Hong Kong or other Chinese communities.

In the post-colonial (and colonial) regime, oral culture and the orality of the locals are always undervalued or even suppressed, whereas writing is hegemonic

(Ashcroft et al. 2007). In this chapter, the emphasis on the role of hybridised practices and languages is not just for language learning but also significant to local identify building (Snow 2004). It is particularly important as Cantonese and the hybridity of Hong Kong cultures have come under threat in the last decade due to integration with Mainland China and the rising influence of Putonghua in local Chinese language education. However, McDonald (2011) regards learning Chinese as becoming Sinophone: "you yourself must develop your own Chinese 'voice', quite literally in terms of mastering the sounds and wordings of the language, but also in the sense of finding an identity for yourself, of establishing a reference point for yourself in the sinophone world" (p. 6). Further study is needed to explore the practical and cultural values of the hybridity identified in the literacy practices of teaching and learning written Chinese, and how it contributes to developing a Hong Kong version of Chinese language education, as well as the culture and identity construction of the children.

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Chapter 7
What Does the Gap Between Advocated Theories and Realistic Practice Mean: A Re-Conceptualization of the Early Childhood Curriculum Reform in China

Jie Zhang and Jiaxiong Zhu

7.1 Introduction

The Chinese economy, society and culture have experienced rapid transformation since the 1980s. All areas of education have undergone theoretical, philosophical and systematic modifications. Significant to the Chinese education system is the field of early childhood education and care which has also experienced monumental change. One of the most significant changes that have influenced early years care and education has been curriculum reform. This chapter provides a comprehensive and critical review of curriculum, key changes and reforms that have provided stimulus and challenge for early childhood educators in China. While describing the main changes and challenges of early childhood curriculum, our aim is not to just present an encyclopedic description of how early childhood curriculum has developed in China but rather to critically analysis the curriculum reform within the Chinese socio-political-economic context. Therefore this chapter also provides a discussion about the future of early childhood curriculum reform in China considering curriculum reform history and influences of western theories & thoughts.

The review presented is qualified by based relevant research literature, qualitative data from interviews and our own experience. During June to August 2015, interviews were conducted with twenty-eight kindergarten teachers, kindergarten

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directors and professors from different provinces of China (Shanghai, Yunnan, Guangxi, Sichuan, Shanxi and Xinjiang). We mainly asked them to comment on the reform and changes of kindergarten curriculum in China.

Using a postcolonial framework and educational anthropologists' concepts of education, this chapter provides insights into the roots of some challenges or problems existing in Chinese early childhood curriculum reform, and challenge some prevalent assumptions in China that characterize much of the Western discourse about early childhood education and curriculum. In this way, we hope to offer new thinking for the future curriculum reform and implementation in China and inspire some further discussion and reflection among other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

7.2 The Reform and Main Changes of Kindergarten Curriculum in China

In China, formal early childhood education is primarily provided in kindergartens (called as "You'eryuan" in Chinese, full-day programs serving children 3–6 years old). So the discussion in this chapter will focus on the kindergarten curriculum reform.

From the late 1980s, China started to carry out the reform in the whole society. The overall development of the opening up of China's education greatly modified traditional education concepts. Foreign educational theories, such as those of Dewey, Montessori, Bronfenbrenner, Bruner and especially Piaget and Vygotsky, began to spread widely in China, and the thoughts of recent modern Chinese educationists were brought to the fore again. These ideas challenged the early childhood education system that had existed for more than 30 years. Early childhood educators in China began to consciously and critically reflect on the kindergarten curricular practices in the country (Pan and Liu 2008; Shi 1992). The early childhood curriculum reform began with spontaneous experiments in different parts of the country, gradually expanding from a single subject to the whole curriculum, progressing from city to village, and actively propelling the early childhood curriculum reform on a large scale.

Since the late 1980s, the Chinese government has promoted early childhood education reform throughout the country, using curriculum reform to promote the change agenda. The most influential policy of this reform is the "*Kindergarten Work Regulations and Procedures*", issued by the National Education Committee (the former Ministry of Education) in 1989 (National Education Committee of the People's Republic of China 1989). The regulations reflect the original aim of the reform; that is, that early childhood education should face the world, face the future and face modernization. Through administrative policies, this document was immediately and widely disseminated throughout the country, and reform was implemented at all levels of administration and in all kindergartens.

According to this document, the spirit of the early childhood education reform is mainly reflected in the following aspects of curriculum:

- It emphasizes child-initiated activity.
- It emphasizes individual differences.
- It emphasizes the importance of play.
- It emphasizes an integrated curriculum.
- It emphasizes the process of activities.

In contrast, the kindergarten curricula in use presented and portrayed a very different teaching and learning program. In particular the five emphasized aspects were not represented in the kindergarten document that had guided teachers for many years. The kindergarten curricula before the reform promoted:

- Learning that was teacher-initiated.
- Were uniform for all of the children. Observations conducted in the late 1980s (Li 1991; Shi 1992) revealed that in most classrooms, children did the same thing at the same time and there were few small group activities and few opportunities for free play.
- Emphasized teachers' direct instruction more than children's own play. Many kindergartens had little time for children's play (Spodek 1998).
- Were divided into six independent subjects (math, language, physical education, music, art, and general knowledge which is a combination of science of social studies). Teacher taught these courses separately, and each class session focused upon a particular curriculum area.
- Emphasized the results of educational activities.

The Regulations adopted theories and practices from different cultures and presented progressive ideas and practices to early childhood educators in China. However, it has been difficult for practitioners to fully embrace this progressive ideology so long as powerful and deep-rooted cultural traditions run counter to modern scientific and democratic ideas (Wang and Mao 1996). For example, the traditional values of obeying authorities and upholding unity are contrary to the goal of establishing a unique and democratic relationship between a teacher and each individual child. In addition, the lack of practical guidelines left many teachers not knowing how to implement the regulations.

To solve these issues, the Ministry of Education issued *the Guideline for Kindergarten Education* (*trial version*) in 2001 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2001). The Guideline takes into consideration the gap between progressive ideas and reality and offers compromise solutions by stating some specific guidelines and very brief contents in five different content domains (Health, Language, and Science, Art, and Sociability domains) for curriculum implementation. While the contents of curriculum seem a little more concrete in different domains than before, content integration is still advocated and emphasized. The government tries to let teachers understand that the contents of the five domains are interconnected in children's learning although they are separately described for teachers' reference in the Guideline (Ministry of Education of the

People's Republic of China 2002). So implementing an integrated curriculum is a basic guideline for kindergartens.

Except for emphasizing the integrated curriculum, the other key ideas of the Guideline are also consistent with the spirit of the "*Kindergarten Work Regulations and Procedures*". The key terms of the reform, as summarized in a review written in 2005, are: "respecting children," "active learning," "teaching for individual learning needs," "play-based teaching and learning," and "teaching and learning through daily life" (Liu and Feng 2005).

The reform movement is ongoing. Curriculum approaches are becoming more diverse and aligned with the increasingly open and diversified society. Different curricula such as the Project Approach, Reggio Emilia and Montessori have been widely adopted and localized (Li and Li 2003). Many new curricula have been developed at the province, city, and town or kindergarten level. For example, the Integrated, Theme-based Curriculum in Shanghai developed by the Shanghai Municipal Educational Commission represents a localized progressive early childhood education approach (Zhu 2002). The curriculum provided an interdisciplinary framework for planning and implementing a program with an emphasis on the process of learning, developmentally appropriate practice and building on children's experience and interests. Different theme-based units were presented in the curriculum guide and accompanied by simple suggestions on appropriate activities. It urged teachers to combine teacher-directed instruction with child-initiated learning (especially with play) in different ways (Zhu 2003). At the same time, many kindergartens were required to develop their own school-based curricula by the local administration department no matter whether they could do it or not.

However, many teachers still complain that it is very difficult for them to put *the Guideline for Kindergarten Education* (*trial version*) into practice. Mainly aiming to solve this problem, in the end of 2012 the Ministry of Education of China issued the "*Guideline for Learning and Development of* 3–6 *Aged Children*" (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2012), which is developed with the help of the United Nations Children's Fund and some foreign experts. Based on the philosophy of protecting children's rights and through developing the standards of children's learning and development, this document aims to reach consensus on expectations about young children's learning, help teachers and parents to educate more purposefully and appropriately, improve the quality of teachers' teaching, promote pre-school education fairness, and to help teachers develop appropriate observation and evaluation tools. Now teachers all over the country have been studying this document and learning how to relate it with their curriculum design and implementation via different ways of professional development. The government also hopes that the quality of kindergarten education can be highly improved and teachers' professional abilities can be developed via putting the Guideline into practice (Li and Feng 2013, p.14).

Compared to the former official documents issued in the course of the curriculum reform—"*Kindergarten Work Regulations and Procedures*" and "*the Guideline for Kindergarten Education* (*trial version*)", "*Early Learning and Development Guideline for Children Aged 3–6*" develops more concrete contents

and aims of the five children's learning domains (Health, Language, Sociability, Science and Art), It also provided more practical suggestions for kindergarten teachers. So the new Guideline seems more comprehensive for teachers to put into their curriculum implementation. But certainly, the philosophy of the new Guideline is still consistent with the spirit and ideas of the former documents. For instance, the government still emphasizes that teachers should implement the content of five domains in an integrated way, with play-based teaching and learning and within the children's daily life. Another example is: when many teachers are inclined to conduct evaluations on children's development by using the new Guideline as assessment criteria, the government tries to urges them to shift from only assessing the results of learning and developing to paying more attention to children's individual differences and development processes.

7.3 The Tremendous Gap Between Advocated Theories and Realistic Practice: Teachers' Low Professional Level is Believed as the Root Cause

However, although the curriculum reform has gained a lot of achievements, people have gradually recognized that there is always a huge gap between the advocated curriculum theories of the reform and the educational practice in kindergartens, even the reform has been spreading for a long time and the educational practice in kindergartens has indeed changed a lot. People began to notice that there are still many challenges and problems facing educators and policy makers in China. Among those challenges, the teachers' low professional level is assumed as the most important issue according to the popular discourse about the Chinese early childhood curriculum reform.

Generally speaking, the professional level of kindergarten teachers in China is not high enough to meet the requirements of the current curriculum implementation which emphasizes on children's abilities, learning process, individual development levels, interests and needs. Teachers play a central role in the curriculum reform, which requires them to study the educational processes and the experiences of children. It requires early educators to examine children's experiences, interests and needs, engaging children in the activities that teachers and children collaboratively initiate and select to carry out. To implement a new curriculum, teachers must perform at a much higher level than executing a standardized curriculum because the new curriculum places teachers in a decision-making position in both curriculum design and implementation. Decades of living and learning in the traditional education system and having been accustomed to be "faithful technical executors of standard designed curriculum", many teachers have been in resistance to change and also found their traditional practice very hard to change.

In addition, although the government has tried to make the Guidelines for kindergarten curriculum more and more concrete, the Guidelines are still relatively

generalized and not specific enough for teachers, which does not give clear and concrete statements on how to act in practice. A professor said:

> The comment I often hear from teachers about the reform is: "We can understand the theories and spirit of the curriculum reform, but we still don't how to put them into practice"; "We have studied the Guidelines for many times, but we are still have many questions about 'how to do'." (Professor A, Personal Communication, August 20, 2015).

Therefore, there is also much misunderstanding about the reform ideas among teachers, even in the well-developed areas with high-level kindergarten faculty, such as Beijing and Shanghai. This situation brought many difficulties during the process of the curriculum implementation. For example, a teacher wrote down her reflection about children's' play in the interest areas after her own study:

> I though children's play should be free and teachers should do nothing except for providing some basic play materials such as wooden blocks. But after studying, I notice that I was wrong. Teachers should design and make materials with educational aims, and intentionally guide children's learning in their play in the interest areas. Then children can have a more meaningful learning in play. (Teacher A, personal communication, July 2015).

As same as the teacher, many teachers provide high-structured materials for children in the interest areas according to their educational aims. They are eager to see children can learn something in play. But in contrast, children's play became unreal play but structured study.

On the other hand, China is undergoing a massive urbanization process at present. A large number of farmers and their children have moved into cities from rural areas. At the same time, for the reason of pursuing equity of education, the government are trying to getting more 3–6 aged young children enrolled in kindergartens and finally achieving the goals of universal access to early childhood education. So more kindergartens have been founded all over the country especially in undeveloped areas, and consequently more and more children have entered kindergartens. In a result, huge pressure is brought to kindergartens and governments in both urban and rural areas, especially in the terms of cultivating enough qualified kindergarten teachers. One solution is to train persons without ECE professional background to be ones who can implement the current curriculum in a short time, but obviously it will be a great challenge. When we went to interview with some directors of the kindergartens located in the poor mountain areas of Yunnan Province, a typical comment is:

> As you know, we not only lack qualified kindergarten teachers, but also lack kindergarten teachers. It is not easy for us to find enough teachers. Many of our teachers have no experience of professional training on early childhood education. They are just trained by us in our kindergartens. So it has been very difficult for them to teach well in a teacher-initiated activity. For them, the demands of the curriculum reform are too high. (Director A, personal communication, July 2014).

After having a deep insight on contradictions between high requirements of the curriculum reform and teachers' low professional level, the researchers and policy makers began to rethink on the training of teachers. They believe that strengthening and promoting the teacher training is a good and effect way to fill the gap

between the advocated curriculum theories of the reform and the educational practice in preschools.

Liu and Feng (2005) reach a similar conclusion:

> The top-down approach has been one of the main features of the kindergarten educational reform since 1989. This approach has led to a division between those involved in initiating the reforms and those expected to carry them out. This latter group was composed of practitioners who lacked motivation to make these challenges, due, in part, to the absence of consultation. In other words, the need to implement the reforms was impose on the practitioners, whose participation in making the reforms led to the abandonment of their own familiar ideas and skills. This, in turn, was probably followed by a loss of confidence experienced by the practitioners in their capacity to teacher. (Liu and Feng 2005).

So aligned with the curriculum form, more and more measures and policies about teacher training are issued by the government. On November 3 of 2010, the State Council of China issued five policies and measures for early childhood education, one of which is "to strengthen the construction of teaching staff in kindergartens". The concrete measures include: to determine a reasonable child-teacher ratio, gradually cultivate adequate faculty for public kindergartens, improve the training system for kindergarten teacher, build high-quality normal schools and majors for kindergarten teacher education, provide national training to 10,000 selected kindergarten directors and elite teachers during 3 years, and extend the training at the local level to all of directors and teachers during 5 years.

However, many directors and many teachers of kindergartens who are used to the traditional subject-based curriculum and teacher-centered pedagogy are experiencing great difficulties in implementing the new curriculum, pedagogies.

All of these problems need to be dealt with urgently by governments and training institutes in order to improve the quality of teachers and eventually to improve early childhood education in China. Actually, The Governments' policies are now beginning to pay more attention to guide and improve teachers' professional development (Zhou 2011). More money has been invested in teacher training and the training programs put more emphasis on teachers' practice such as teachers' daily interaction with children rather than on theories.

7.4 Reconceptualizing the Gap Between Advocated Theories and Realistic Practice: Teachers' Low Professional Level Is not the Only Root Cause

While acknowledging that improving teachers' professional level is important for the curriculum reform, we propose that teachers maybe are not the only root cause of the huge gap between the advocated theories and the realistic educational practice. We should also pay attention to the issue of culturally appropriate of curriculum reform, among which the appropriation of borrowing western educational ideas and models is a key topic.

7.4.1 Western EC Curriculum Ideas Strongly Affected Chinese EC Curriculum Reform

Obviously, the early childhood curriculum reform in China from the 1980's has been deeply influenced by the western educational ideas. Just as what Professor Hua of East China Normal University explained, the Guidelines borrowed heavily from ideas from abroad (Tobin et al. 2009, p. 83):

> Let's be clear, the basic idea of preschool education reform is meant to assimilate international experiences. While in the drafting stage, ideas from different parts of the world were widely discussed such as the Project Approach, Reggio, Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, and Multiple Intelligences, there is no question that this modification bears the traces of having assimilated these ideas as well as many key ideas from Japan. However, none of these theories and ideas was explicitly named in the 2001 guidelines. Instead, all of these were integrated under the concepts of "respecting children" and "children's life-long learning" (Tobin et al. 2009, p. 83).

Although none of western theories and ideas are mentioned in the guidelines, many western pedagogical theories especially the progressive educational ideas have been introduced to Chinese educators, as well as different kinds of western curriculum models including the Project Approach, the Montessori curriculum, Reggio Emilia, High/Scope, the Whole Language Approach, and especially DAP (Developmental Appropriate Practice). Many kindergarten directors and teachers have tried to imitate or adapt these models. Although finally some of them have failed to imitate (Li and Li 2003), most people strongly believe that borrowing those "advanced" ideas and practice will be benefit to produce the kind of creative, individualistic, entrepreneurial citizens needed by China's new economy.

7.4.2 A Hybrid of Three Cultures in Chinese Early Childhood Curriculum Reform

Consequently, there are three distinct cultural threads in the process of early childhood curriculum reform in China—traditional culture, communist culture, and Western culture, which have combined to profoundly shape Chinese people's lives and also different aspects of Chinese early childhood education (Wang and Spodek 2000). Thus, the contemporary early childhood curriculum in China can be seen as reflecting a hybrid of these three cultural threads (Zhu and Wang 2005).

Traditional Chinese culture has greatly influenced Asian countries from ancient times. Chinese people are more group-oriented, or social unit-oriented as opposed to individual-oriented, and more extrinsically motivated as opposed to intrinsically motivated (Liu 2003; Tobin et al. 1989). Chinese people also tend to value drilling, memorizing and discipline rather than creativity, understanding and freedom (Chan 1996; Cheng 1996). Confucianism has greatly influenced Chinese

educational ideas. In the context of globalization, it may be good for Chinese people to modify their traditional culture, but not to change their own culture totally.

For example, in China, the emphasis, traditionally, in language development has been on enunciation, diction, memorization, and self-confidence in speaking and performing. Chinese children learn in preschools how to deliver long, rehearsed speeches flawlessly and belt out songs with many verses (Tobin et al. 1989). Americans, in contrast, tend to view words as the key to promoting individuality, autonomy, problem solving, friendship, and cognitive development in children. In American preschools children are taught the rules and conventions of self-expression and free speech (Cazden 1988). In the process of EC curriculum reform, many Chinese kindergarten teachers tried to change their language-teaching program from emphasizing enunciation and memorization to self-expression and free speech, but they were used to using old strategies and methods based on their own culture. Also, most parents valued enunciation and memorization rather than self-expression and free speech. Even though teachers could discuss the new 'western' thinking about language learning, they still used the traditional methods to teach children language.

The influence of this hybrid on early childhood education has been selective, dynamic, and changing. First, each of the three cultural threads has shaped different aspects of early childhood education. While the influence of the communist culture is evident in practical aspects of kindergarten education, such as organization, administration, and curricular goals and content, traditional culture has had a profound influence on the ideological and philosophical bases of kindergarten, including views of the young child, views of learning and development, and views of appropriate teacher-child relationships.

Sometimes one cultural thread counteracts another. For example, individuality is one of the main goals of the new ECE curriculum. It emphasizes individual differences, individual needs, individual choices, individual expression et cetera. But this might pose a threat to the communist social order. So the values of unity, collectiveness, and a subject-based curriculum model, which are traditional in Chinese culture, run counter to these curricula that are built on a culture of individualism. McClelland (1961) has pointed out that the achievement-oriented ego style that is a prerequisite of economic development tends to encourage selfishness and thus poses a threat to social cohesion if it is not corrected by an emphasis on "other directedness" and "collectivity" in the education system.

The pattern of influence has changed over time. In the post-Mao era (1976), European-American culture has emerged as an important cultural source and has exerted an increasingly powerful influence. The progressive ideology regarding children, educational values, and the curriculum has been a strong force in early childhood education reform in recent years. Meanwhile, the communist culture's control and the influence of traditional culture on early childhood education have been waning ideologically and philosophically (Li 2007). But there have been no major practical changes, especially in most developing areas.

7.4.3 Conflicts Between Imported Western Educational Ideas, Chinese Traditional Culture and Political System

With the complex three cultural threads, Chinese people found a lot of challenges when reforming the current early childhood curriculum. Li (2002) analysis of implanting a borrowed curriculum in Hong Kong also applies to such efforts in China. Li summarized six factors that limit the success of implanting these successful programs: the teacher-student ratio, the quality of the teacher, resources, parents' expectations, the educational system, and the socio-cultural environment. Obviously in China development is very unbalanced throughout the country, as are developments in early childhood education. That is, contemporary early childhood education in Mainland China is becoming diverse in its forms, funding sources, and educational approaches, and is aligning itself with the increasingly open and diversified society since it is strongly influenced by socio-cultural changes and conditions. These factors not only challenge the multi-level governance and decentralization of curriculum implementing, but also bring many conflicts when only obeying the western theory. The main conflicts are as follows:

1. Contradiction between curriculum implementation and great ECE resource disparities caused by regional and economic differences.

Preschool education is not compulsory in China. Only a very small percentage of the total national expenditure on education is used for early childhood education, and most of it is contributed to the high-developed regions. In China, many young children still have no access to attended 3-year ECE programs even 1-year program. Those children are mainly in rural areas, especially in the western remote areas.

Due to the huge regional and economic differences, there are great ECE resource disparities between China's coastal and inland areas, well-developed and developing regions, urban cities and rural villages. Some of the above-mentioned successful western-style programs, such as the Project Approach and Reggio Emilia pedagogy, require considerable educational resources and a low teacher-student ratio to support the children's wide range of exploration and discovery. Likely, the successful implementation of current curriculum ideas also needs a ton of supportive educational resources, but rural and remote areas have lagged behind in their available resources for early childhood education. They lack financial resources because of the poverty and uneven distribution of the limited educational fees. They have a shortage of qualified teachers due to scarce resources for local teacher education and training, low pay and a harsh environment. In those areas, most kindergarten teachers have only high school diplomas at best, and hardly have a chance to obtain specialized professional training. They also have a lack of parent support because many rural parents work in big cities as migrant workers, leaving their children in the countryside. As a result, the curriculum maybe can be well implemented in some high-quality kindergartens of well-developed coastal cities, but rarely can be used in rural kindergartens located in the interior developing areas.

2. Inconsistency between curriculum philosophy and the school examination system.

In China, school education is closely linked with the examination system, which emphasizes much on commanding academic knowledge. Students' performance at the college entrance exam determines their future fate to a certain degree. In such a situation, many parents anxiously associate their children's future examination success with early childhood education, which is caused by Chinese culture as well as China's current social status (such as huge population versus limited employment opportunities, et cetera).

Influenced by the western education philosophy, the current early childhood education curriculum emphasizes much on meeting children's interests and needs, and also the process of education rather than the result. Therefore, the ideas and practice of the current curriculum cannot easily gain acceptance from parents and the society, especially from the low socio-economic families who are eager to change their current status. Obviously, this situation will affect the whole course of the curriculum implementation and relative assessments. So many Chinese parents' high expectations and demands for academic achievement also challenge these student-centered and child development-based curricula. As a result, assessments in many kindergartens are also challenged by parents' expectations and have to pay much attention on knowledge, skills and results.

Actually, Chinese government hasn't issued a specific children's development assessment guideline for kindergartens. But in the end of 2012, the Ministry of Education issued the *Early Learning and Development Guideline for Children Aged* 3–6. Although the Ministry emphasizes that the Guidance is mainly for adults' observation and education on children not just for assessment, but it appears that many teachers and parents are still most interested in helping children achieving the knowledge and skill objects mentioned in this document. So it's quite difficult to persuade teachers and parents change their ideas or practice in the social cultural background of school exam system.

7.5 Reflection on the Kindergarten Curriculum Reform: Appropriation of Borrowed Curriculum Ideas and Models

Based on the above discussion, we think it is time to rethink the influences of borrowed theories and thoughts on the reforms, although Chinese kindergarten curriculum reform has made great progress via learning from the western education. When rethinking, here we will ponder over several issues, such as value-universal versus value-related, grand theory versus local knowledge, quality of education versus equity in education, and academic research versus practical feasibility.

7.5.1 Value-Universal Versus Value-Related: Kindergarten Curriculum Reform in China Should Be Sensitive to Chinese Culture

The kindergarten curriculum reform in China should not depend too much on European-American ideas. There are obvious differences between China and western. Educational approaches have a cultural character: western ideas and approaches have their cultural values, and Chinese early childhood education has its own values.

Following recent research in China, Tobin (2007) concluded that the government was using the reform of early childhood education as a tool for producing a labor force able to compete more effectively in the global economy. "Many American early childhood educators would no doubt welcome the spread of constructivism, learning centers, self-expression, and the project approach in Chinese preschools. But as an educational anthropologist I worry about how these approaches will be integrated with Chinese cultural values and be made responsive to the concerns and conditions of local Chinese communities. Many countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia that are much poorer than Turkey and China have much less ability to stand up to the pressure to introduce a Western approach to early childhood education. Help from North Americans in developing their systems of early childhood education is welcomed by many poor countries, but it is important that they do so on their own terms, in ways that respect their local cultures." (Tobin 2007).

Actually there is no high quality curriculum that can be effectively adopted in all different cultures, it is important for us to look into and think about the culturally embedded nature of these successful curricula and identify these cultural factors in the process of appropriating and localizing any borrowed curriculum. It is very important that while indigenizing ideas from the west, our curriculum reform should reflect on our own culture's merit and try to preserve it and be sensitive to its demand.

7.5.2 Grand Theory Versus Local Knowledge: Kindergarten Curriculum Reform in China Should Be Sensitive to Chinese Multi-lever Social Ecology

When borrowing the western theories and practice, people usually think it is the most "advanced" and "correct" ideas. This kind of view regards early childhood education as being objective, universal and value-neutral, but neglects the contextual difference and cultural diversity. So all kindergartens are hoped to use the "correct" ideas and put it into practice. But China is a big country and there are obvious differences between eastern and western, rich and poor, and urban and

rural areas. Many socio-cultural or ecological theories have enlightened us that we should not pay too much attention to the western theories as a single quality standard. We should consider the serious disparity of early childhood education in different areas in China.

We need to focus on all groups in different areas and create equitable social, cultural, economic, and political relationships among them. Early childhood curriculum reform including assessment inform in China should acknowledge these differences between different groups in different areas and develop different curricula for them (Zhu 2004).

For example, in some poor areas, many disadvantaged young children in low-income families are eager to learn, but their parents have no ability to teach them some basic knowledge. What we need to do is to give them more basic educational opportunities including reading, writing and calculating via play and other appropriate approaches. Some curricula, such as the Project Approach and Montessori, are too expensive to provide in these contexts and may not suitable for those children.

7.5.3 Quality of Education Versus Equity in Education: Kindergarten Curriculum Reform in China Should Be Sensitive to Some Social Problem Solving

Another issue is that Chinese people hope that Chinese early childhood education reaches the high-standard quality by borrowing the western ideas and practice. So lots of resources including money are invested to those good kindergartens by the government, aiming supporting the development of high-qualified kindergartens which will be as good as the western preschools. But at the same time, many children in many remote areas actually have no opportunities to go to kindergartens. In this kind of situation, we would like to argue that prevalence access to early childhood education may be the most urgent task for the government to consider, not investing public resources to urban qualified kindergarten to using the western educational approaches or ask the few rural kindergartens work hard to keep pace in the ones in cities in the terms of western "quality".

Meanwhile, China is making great progress economically. The Reform and Open-up Policy has brought significant advances in the past 20 years but new problems crop up when old ones get solved. We never expected that the levels of one-parent families, child abuse, sexual discrimination and ethnic diversity would increase so quickly.

Early childhood curriculum reform in China should be sensitive to the need to solve these social problems. We need to be concerned about children's basic rights including equal entitlement to enjoy public early childhood services and to fair and just treatment. We need to think of ways of solving social problems such as gender discrimination, child abuse, and racial discrimination and so on.

7.5.4 Academic Research Versus Practical Feasibility: Kindergarten Curriculum Reform in China Should Pay Attention to Varied Pedagogical Contexts in Practice

After the curriculum reform, early childhood teachers know more new theories and ideas about education and teaching, but such knowledge does not automatically bring changes in educational practices. New perceptions do not necessarily lead to new ways of behaving. When teachers face complicated and varied pedagogical contexts, it can be very difficult to make sure that their teaching is meaningful.

After the curriculum reform, many early childhood teachers think that it is not easy to be a teacher, and that to be a good teacher is even more difficult. Although there are teaching methods, there is no method that can be suitable for all circumstances. Anecdotal evidence and our interviews suggests that some early childhood teachers even complain that teachers who could teach well in the past now do not know how to teach, while the teachers who did not know how to teach in the past have now become more happy-go-lucky.

Sometimes teachers should teach, sometimes not; sometimes they should intensify, sometimes induce, sometimes insist and control, sometimes wait patiently. To know when to teach, what to teach and why to teach, is much more difficult than to simply advocate teaching or constructing. To know how to decide when teachers should constrain children, or how to insist on obedience without disturbing children's independent development, is much more difficult than only considering constraint or cooperation. Aiming to make teaching meaningful can be an important standard when evaluating whether or not teachers should teach, and how they should teach.

How to make children's learning and teachers' teaching meaningful might be one of the most important things for early childhood teachers to think of. The teachers need to be concerned about the practice in their pedagogical and cultural contexts rather than the theoretical effectiveness of the curriculum. They recognize that they need to make authentic connections between the learning tasks they plan and the activities which children themselves initiate. However, it is very difficult to achieve this connection. Teachers need not only to reflect on past and on-going behaviors, but also on the process of reflection. Then they can improve themselves. The early childhood curriculum reform in China should help them solve the practical problem. Otherwise, it will be meaningless even though the curriculum may appear to be valuable.

7.6 Suggestions for Current Chinese Kindergarten Curriculum Reform: Paying Attention to the Cultural Contexts of Curriculum

Obviously, if we want to bridge the gap between advocated theories and realistic practice, we cannot just blame on teachers. Dramatic changes in educational philosophy, as shared by these teachers, require support and engagement of all

cultural systems to survive and endure (Fees et al. 2014). The future of kindergarten curriculum reform in China should be based on not only an overview of curriculum reform history and influences of western theories and thoughts, but also an observation on the development of Chinese economy, politics, society and culture, such as imbalance of economic development among different regions, the shortage of resources especially the funding and the qualified teachers, diverse cultures, methodology of de-colonization and localized knowledge, et cetera. Now we are excited to find that the government, researchers and educators has realized some problems and begun to change their action. Some further suggestions for Chinese early childhood education are as follows:

7.6.1 Pay More Attention to Culturally Appropriate of Curriculum Development, Especially to Preserve Chinese Own Excellent Tradition Culture

Actually there is no high quality curriculum that can be effectively adopted in all different cultures. It is important for us to look into and think about the culturally embedded nature of these successful curricula and identify these cultural factors in the process of appropriating and localizing any borrowed curriculum. Just as Tobin (2007, p. 143) said, Cultural traditions of childcare and education should be respected and valued (which isn't to say that they should not also be critiqued and changed) and differences across nations and cultures in approaches to early childhood education should be respected and not treated as deficits. To do otherwise is to engage in colonialism, ethnocentrism, and intellectual provincialism.

In fact, Chinese government has noticed the importance of preserving and developing Chinese own culture. Some local governments even issued some documents to embrace the traditional local culture into education concluding the early childhood education. But at the same time, we would like to urge policy makers and educators in China, as they engage with globally circulating ideas, to value more highly their own indigenous ideas and practices, and not be in a rush to replace them.

7.6.2 Pay More Attention to Different Socio-Economic-Culture Contexts in Different Areas of China

China has a vast territory, many minority groups, and a wide range of economic development levels. Historically, rural and remote areas have lagged behind in their educational resources and educational quality. Since the enactment of the

market economy and open-door policy in the early 1980s, the gap between these areas and developed areas has been widening. While the cities and towns along the east coast are enjoying the rapid spread of modern conveniences, some areas in the west and southwest are still dealing with hunger. In recent years, the government has been pushing for a Western-style, forward-looking economic reform aiming to jump-start economic development in these areas.

Early childhood education in backward areas has also received great attention. Due to the limited resources in these areas, the state and local governments concentrate on establishing pre-primary classes in local elementary schools. Built on the existing elementary education infrastructure, pre-primary classes are set up to provide full-day or half-day early education programs for children in the year prior to first grade. This approach greatly expands much-needed early education in rural or remote areas. However, because the programs are put in elementary schools, the pedagogy and curriculum are often simply a lighter version of first grade. Although it helps prepare young children for elementary education, the practices of elementary education—long class sessions, rigid discipline requirements—are often risky for young children's development. These areas are in urgent need of teacher training, pedagogy, and curriculum that are tailored to pre-primary classes.

In 2011 the Chinese government issued "*Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development* (2010–2020)" (The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the State Council of China 2010), which briefly lays out the direction of Chinese education for the next 10 years. This outline has been more than a year in the making, with a large amount of public consultations, online consultations, and a series of expert roundtables, where both the Minister of Education and the Prime Minister of China have participated. The National Outline puts forward the objective: "by 2020, 1-year preschool education should become the norm, while 2-year preschool education should be basically universalized, and three-year preschool education popularized in regions where conditions are ripe." (The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the State Council of China 2010). It proposed that China should strengthen the government's responsibilities on the development of early childhood education (including planning, investment and supervision), set up a universal, flexible and public ECE service system, help rural, poor and remote areas to develop their early childhood education, and ensure the education rights of disadvantaged children.

According to the idea of this outline we believe that the implementation strategies of current curriculum should be adjusted. That is to say, apart from further promoting the current curriculum implementation, the government should develop different curricula for rural and remote areas, especially providing comparatively high-structured curricula which will be easily understood and operated by teachers, even those without long-time professional training.

7.6.3 Pay More Attention to Culture When Promoting Teachers' Professional Development

It is acknowledged that teacher training is crucial to the success of curriculum reform. The current reform aims to modify curricula to enable them to be diversified and flexible enough to suit local and individual programs' needs.

However, most training programs are still focusing on introducing some western theories and prevalent practical guidelines. We should help teachers understand that different areas with different cultures could have different curriculum and practice. We shouldn't just urge teachers in rural areas to learn from urban kindergartens. We should encourage them develop their own practice suitable to the local culture. In this case, a few scholars including us put forward the opinion that different teachers should have different kinds of professional training. Actually some strategies for teacher training have been used by some local administrations as following:

- Establishing abundant curriculum resources and encouraging teachers to use.
- For high quality kindergartens, focusing more on practice in the context rather on theory in in-service training by using case study, teaching research rooted on kindergarten, and documenting children's and teacher's behavior to reflect teacher's teaching, et cetera. Thus, teachers can be sensitive to the different cultures and contexts while implementing the curriculum.
- For kindergartens in developing areas and/or rural areas, providing curriculum resources, even high structured curriculum, which are easy to access and easy to use. Preschool teacher education and training for them is not mainly impractically focused on helping teachers to construct tacit knowledge via their own introspection. Instead, the main concern is placed at helping most teachers to successfully complete basic teaching tasks and achieve basic competencies. At the same time, teachers are also encouraged to develop their own educational activities which are suitable to the local culture when they are ready.

7.7 Conclusion

It is clear that early childhood education curriculum in China is strongly influenced by socio-cultural changes and conditions and reflects the hybrid of traditional, communist and western cultures. China should consider the complex cultural background, keep re-thinking what has happened in the past years and continue to promote reform in early childhood curriculum. Likewise, when there is gap between advocated theories and realistic practice in implementing early childhood education curriculum, it's too ideal for every country to only consider teachers' professional levels. Every country should consider its socio cultural background as an important factor.

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Part II
Re-Examining Standards

The movement to improve student achievement through stronger accountability is one of the most significant developments in the field of early childhood education. In the past decade, K-12 education systems, and to some extent preschool education systems, have been increasingly held accountable for making sure that students achieve at high levels. As part of this accountability movement, standards have been written to articulate exactly what students are expected to learn and the level at which they are required to demonstrate this learning. In this section, contributors contemplate how early learning standards may have changed the blueprint for early childhood education. They investigate changes to early childhood curricula related to the development of standards and what children experience in early childhood settings; what has influenced changes in standards, curricula and policy in specific countries, and how these changes have impacted philosophy, pedagogy, and play-based learning.

Policy in **Indonesian** early childhood education is the topic of Chap. 8. **Ali Formen** analyses the use of human capital theory and developmentalism in 14 recent policy documents. He limits himself to 14 documents, even though a vibrant policy environment in Indonesia has resulted in the creation of many documents for the early childhood sector since the turn of the century. And, like many other countries, early childhood education and care in Indonesia has policies that have different audiences and are applicable at the macro and micro levels. Foreman tracks some of the recent history and the associated challenges with these policies, affirming the shortcomings of putting faith in economic calculations associated with human capital theory, and for Indonesia, the limitations associated with developmentalism.

The use of digital technologies in classrooms has been the subject of much debate in early childhood education and is the focus of Chap. 9. **Jillian Fox and Carmel Diezmann** investigate whether digital technologies are considered *apart from* or *a part of* everyday life in early childhood classrooms. To begin, they undertook a comparative analysis of the mandated Australian learning framework

for children 0–5 years (*Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*) and the *Technology and Young Children* position statement developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the USA. They looked specifically at the extent to which the 16 principles in the position statement are evident in the Australian learning framework. Second, they used document analysis to examine the Australian research evidence relating to digital technology in the early years. Both purposes were aimed at establishing research evidence that can be used to guide early childhood educators in supporting children to become successful learners in a digital age. They concluded that despite digital technologies being an integral part of many children's everyday lives, they are yet to become *part of* the typical prior-to-school experience of young children in many Australian early years settings.

In Chap. 10, **Ruth Gasson and Alexandra Gunn** provide insight to the emerging realities of early learning standards in Aotearoa (New Zealand). The chapter reviews the introduction of learning standards in the primary context and resistance to the blanket imposition of standards in early childhood and early schooling. Issues pertinent to the early childhood community discussed in the chapter include the narrowing of early childhood curriculum, parental anxiety about children's future academic performance, and concern over the possible exertion of pressure by school-sector colleagues towards teachers in early childhood education to prepare children adequately for the new rigours of national standards testing. Critical to this chapter is the discussion of *TeWhāriki,* the Ministry of Education's early childhood curriculum policy statement. In contrast to using learning standards to assess performance in specified domains of curriculum, *TeWhāriki* focuses on the kinds of play-based learning environments and experiences that scholars, families, and educators in Aotearoa consider conducive to positive learning and human development.

The Chinese Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNICEF, officially published the Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG) for children aged 3–6 years in 2013. In Chap. 11, **Liyan Huo and Hongyu Gao** offer a detailed description of the rationale for, and development of the ELDG. The ELDG recognize early childhood development as a national priority for **China**. The intent of the ELDG is to identify what children know, what they are able to do at a particular time during early childhood education, and establish a secure foundation for developing national guidelines for assessing quality of early childhood education centers and preschool educational norms. The ELDG are intended as a guide for pre-primary teachers and parents. The Chinese MOE has chosen to use the word 'guidelines' rather than 'standards' in an attempt to avoid categorizing children at a standard according to their accomplishments. The chapter discusses two pilot studies that were undertaken in urban China in an attempt to find effective models of implementing the ELDG. One focused on how to use the guidelines to better support teachers with information about what children can do and learn at different stages of development. The other initiated a model for nurturing children's approaches to learning.

Chapter 8
In Human-Capital We Trust, on Developmentalism We Act: The Case of Indonesian Early Childhood Education Policy

Ali Formen

8.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the use and influence of human capital and developmental theories in Indonesian early childhood education (ECE) policy. As my colleague and I have mentioned elsewhere (Formen 2008; Formen and Nuttall 2014) human capital and developmentalist thoughts, in addition to religion, are the two major Indonesian ECE policy rationales. Notwithstanding its massive repercussions in the policy documents, these two discourses and theoretical frameworks, as the rest of this piece shows, have been used differently. While developmentalism is used as both a policy justification and practical reference, human capital thoughts seem to occupy the macro policy documents, and have become blurred across more micro, practical directives. If the economic future benefit is one of the reasons for the provision of ECE, it should practically promote to its beneficiary (children) the values, knowledge, and skills, necessary for their economic survival and success.

To further discuss these issues, the following sections portray how human capital and developmentalism are consistently spoken across the policy documents. In doing so, this chapter follows the policy document analysis approach suggested by Olssen et al. (2004) and Taylor (2004). Considering the increasing speed of Indonesian ECE policy change, this chapter focuses on the analysis of

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policy documents, which have been published since the early 2000s. A closer look at these documents is critical as they represent The Government of the Republic of Indonesia's (GOI) commitment to ECE and there are few policy reviews available, especially by those not involved in policy-making.

This chapter uses fourteen documents as the analysis materials. Of these, five can be categorised as macro (Table 8.1) and the remaining nine as micro policy documents (Table 8.1). Macro policy documents include legal documents and strategic plans, and micro policies include technical documents such as curriculum, and accreditation instruments.

Table 8.1 Policy documents

Document title	Document type
1. National plan of action: Indonesia's Education For All 2003/2015: Chap. 2 early childhood education and care (National Coordination Forum 2003)	Macro
2. Law No. 20 of 2003 on national education system (GOI 2003)	Micro
3. Curriculum 2004: Competence standards for kindergarten and Raudhatul Athfal (Curriculum Center 2004)	Micro
4. Strategic plans of national education 2005–2009 (MONE 2005b)	Micro
5. Government regulation No. 19 of 2005 on the national standard of education (GOI 2005)	Micro
6. Government regulation No. 32 of 2013 on the amendment of the Government regulation No. 19 of 2005 national standard of education (GOI 2013a)	Micro
7. The Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia regulation No. 58 of 2009 on the standard of early childhood education (BNES 2009)	Micro
8. The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia regulation No. 137 of 2014 on the national standard of early childhood education (MOEC 2014b)	Macro
9. Accreditation instrument—Kindergarten and Raudhatul Athfal (NAB 2009)	Macro
10. Accreditation instrument—Early childhood education institution (NABNF 2009)	Macro
11. The grand framework of the Indonesian early childhood education development 2011–2025 (DGECNIE 2011)[a]	Macro
12. The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia regulation No. 146 of 2013 on the Curriculum 2013 of early childhood education (MOEC 2014c)	Macro
13. Strategic plans 2010–2014 (MONE 2010)	Macro
14. Strategic plans 2010–2014 (Revised)(MOEC 2013c)[b]	Macro

[a]DGECNIE, Directorate General of Early Childhood Non-Formal and Informal Education
[b]This document is the revised version of MONE 2010 strategic plans, after the inclusion of cultural affairs into MONE's; MONE's name has changed since then to Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC)

8.2 Early Childhood Education in Indonesia

The campaign for ECE in Indonesia started in the early 2000s (Gutama 2006). Culturally non-parental early care and education is a long-established practice, and dates back to the country's imperial era, before the modern-day kindergarten was introduced and Indonesia as a state was proclaimed in 1945 (Suyanto 2003, cited in Waluyo and Formen 2015). The Western-styled preschool system which has inspired today's ECE service was introduced along with European colonisation of the archipelago (Suyanto 2003; Thomas 1992). In the early 20th century, the Dutch initiated a small number of Froebelian preschools in some areas; Montessorian methods were introduced in the late 1930s (Thomas 1992). Suyanto (2003) notes that in 1922, after his return from exile in the Netherlands, Ki Hajar Dewantara founded a preschool program named Taman Indria (literally, Garden of Senses) (further elaboration on Dewantara's legacy, see Dewantara 1967; Harper 2009; Waluyo and Formen 2015). The long established division of general-religious and the Islamic education system also paved the way for Islamic kindergartens, namely Raudhatul Athfal and Bustanul Athfal (Arabic, 'the garden of young children'). The situation of Indonesian ECE before 2000s is less effectively documented than the early years of the 21st century.

New developments took place in the early 2000s. In 2001, GOI created the Directorate of Early Childhood Education (DECE) within the Ministry of National Education's (MONE, now Ministry of Education and Culture, MOEC) (Gutama 2006). In 2003, GOI enacted a new bill, which clearly stipulated the provision of ECE (GOI 2003, Article 1: 14). It also regulated three service lines, the informal line, non-formal line, and formal line. As Table 8.2 shows, the non-formal lines are services delivered through such programs as play groups and nurseries and the formal services are through kindergarten and Raudhatul Athfal programs (GOI 2003, Article 28).

The creation of DECE in 2001, however, made ECE a parallel service (UNESCO 2005), as another directorate responsible for ECE, the Directorate of Kindergarten and Primary Education (DKPE) had pre-existed. It also created an overlap as the DECE programs were authorised to serve young children from birth to the age of six, while kindergartens were allowed to serve children aged 4–6 years. Complicating the matter, the DECE non-formal ECE programs called the centres "early childhood education" instead of "early childhood learning centres", "early childhood development centres" or simply "playgroups". This led to a misunderstanding that suggested kindergarten was an unacceptable ECE program. The situation was exacerbated because the typical portrayal of kindergartens within conversations of neo ECE circles in the early 2000s was conservative, not-developmentally sensitive, less play-based, and '3Rs' drill oriented—a representation that did not always match reality.

The GOI took a number of initiatives to integrate ECE services. In 2010, MONE was reorganized through a Presidential Regulation that gave MONE one structure for ECE, the Directorate General of Early Childhood Non-Formal and

Table 8.2 ECE programs and actors (This table shows only the direct ECE actors; many indirect ECE actors exist, such as teacher education institutions and MOEC's research institutes)

Line/Programs	Responsible bodies	Age	Focus
Formal			
Kindergarten	Ministry of National Education	4–6	Holistic development with more emphases on school readiness
Islamic kindergarten (Raudhatul Athfal)	Ministry of Religious Affairs	4–6	Holistic development with more emphases on school readiness and Islamic-intensified skills
Non-formal			
Play group	Ministry of National Education	2–6	Play-based learning, holistic development stimulation, school readiness emphases for children aged 4–6
Childcare centre	Ministry of Social Welfare	3 months–6 years	Care service for children of working parents; child development stimulation
	Ministry of National Education,		
Integrated service post	Ministry of Health	0–6	Health service for mothers and children; parenting education
	Ministry of Home Affairs		
	National Family Planning Coordination Board		
Under-five family program (Bina Keluarga Balita)	Ministry of Women Empowerment	0–5	Parenting education, activities for children during meetings
	National Family Planning Coordination Board		

Source UNESCO (2005). Policy review report: early childhood care and education in Indonesia

Informal Education (DGECNIE) (GOI 2010). In 2011, DGECNIE published The grand framework of Indonesian early childhood education development 2011–2025 (DGECNIE 2011) by which it called for integration through ECE "national movement" (pp. 67–84). In 2013 another call was made through the President regulation on holistic-integrative early childhood development (GOI 2013b).

These policies, however, did not effectively meet their goals. In the case of the 2010 policy, integration occurred mostly at the ministerial level and not at the provincial and district level. This was due to education decentralisation, which has made ECE delivery and development in general the responsibility of local governments. The Framework faced a similar problem, as the "national movement" it advocated involved an even more complex list of actors, for which coordination is a critical issue. Similarly, the 2013 holistic-integrative presidential policy has not made significant impact at the program level. With this regulation, ideally all

ECE centres provide care-education-protection services through partnership with the health and child-protection sectors. In fact, most centres continue to focus on education and learning services in which care and protection are not given much attention.

Regardless of all the challenges it has faced, Indonesia's successful ECE campaign over the last decade has been widely recognised (Hasan et al. 2013; World Bank 2006). In support of this success, GOI has passed various policies (Table 8.1), for which human capital and developmental perspectives are consistently used as rationales. Moreover, Indonesia's decision to adopt human capital and developmental perspectives amid critiques of the use of these in ECE (see for example, Blaise 2005; MacNaughton 2005; Penn 2010), is a brave decision given the lack of local documented good practices. A critical look at such decisions, as the rest of this chapter discusses, is crucial as a reminder that there are always possibilities policies may stray from their aims.

8.3 Human Capital Voice: Emphasis then Disappearance

As Table 8.1 indicates, significant ECE policy development has taken place in Indonesia. This chapter maintains that the use of human capital theory across the diverse policy documents has left a disjuncture because it is emphasised in the macro policy documents and absent from the micro ones.

The idea of 'human capital' is associated with the American economist Theodore W. Schultz (1902–1998). Since its early introduction, it has appeared as an encounter between the economy and education (Becker 1993; Schultz 1960, 1961). Schultz (1961) had an economic belief that "people are an important part of the wealth of nations" (p. 2) and stated that education is a tool of its maximisation. Becker (1993) suggested that "education and training are the most important investments in human capital" (p. 17). As people are valued based on their economic worth, education is provided because it can lift economic productivity (Penn 2010). The introduction of human capital theory into the ECE field is associated with Heckman's works (Heckman 2000, 2011; Heckman and Masterov 2007) and Schweinhart's Perry Preschool studies (Schweinhart et al. 2005; Schweinhart and Weikart 1997, 1981). It was found that the Perry Preschool Program provided a "248 % return on the original investment" (Schweinhart and Weikart 1981, p. 36) and that its participants had better school readiness, later academic success, lower criminal involvement, and higher earnings (Heckman 2000; Heckman and Masterov 2007).

Indications of human capital theory reproduction in Indonesian policy are apparent. The Strategic Plans 2005–2009 (MONE 2005b, pp. 15–16) state that education should "…produce capable human resources that would be the national economic development driving actors….professionals with entrepreneurship spirits….to support the development of knowledge-based economy". A GOI-UNESCO joint report calls young children "essential capital for the development of a nation's human resources" (National Coordination Forum 2003, p. 2). With this in mind, ECE is:
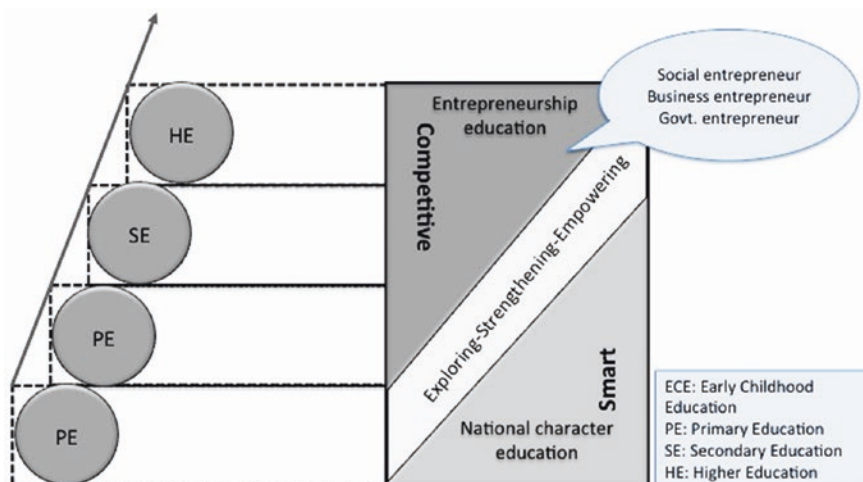
Fig. 8.1 Intersection between character and entrepreneurship development across education levels (MOEC 2013c, PL.10), adapted

a strategic measure to prepare the future competitive human resources….to face the globalisation challenges….including job market competition….[as] only those with excellence could seize such opportunity….early child education and care is an emergent need….to prepare such excellent humans (MONE 2005a, pp. 24–25).[1]

Individual excellence and education economic value are reemphasised in the *Strategic Plans 2010–2014*, as the *Vision 2025* reads: "to achieve the intelligent and competitive Indonesian humans (*Insan Kamil*)" (MOEC 2013c, p. 37; MONE 2010, p. 17).

The last 2009 national leadership succession, including within the MONE, brought another strategic issue into education policy, namely "character education" (*pendidikan karakter*). The *Strategic Plans 2010–2014* (MOEC 2013c) claim that "the increase in education participation was unaccompanied by the [improvement in]…national character building" (p. 34). Hence, Indonesia's national education policy general posture is an intersection between the needs for economic development and national character building (Fig. 8.1).

The interest in character education has been propagated together with a rather messianic vision in Indonesia 2045 (DGECNIE 2011; Yudhoyono 2011). Former President Yudhoyono envisioned that in 2045, the year of the centennial independence anniversary, the Indonesian "generation of 2045 will have strength of character" and the country will be of "a strong and just economy, a stable and modern

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[1]The phrase 'insan kamil' (Arabic, the 'perfect human') is often used among Muslims to refer to the Prophet Muhammad. Its presence in the recent policy reaffirms the claim my colleague and I (Formen and Nuttall 2014) have made on the influence of Islam on the Indonesian education system.
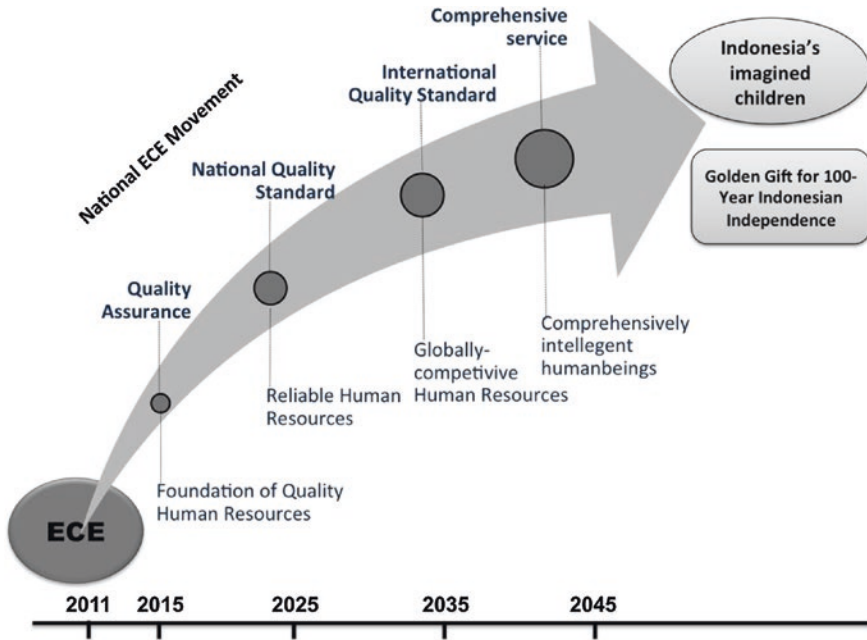
Fig. 8.2 ECE as foundation of 'Indonesia's imagined children' (DGECNIE 2011), adapted

democracy, and a thriving civilization" (Yudhoyono 2011, p. 47). The vision also shaped the 2011 ECE Framework (DGECNIE 2011), which states that today's ECE is an investment for the 2045, "Indonesia's imagined children", a generation of comprehensive intelligences (Fig. 8.2).

Figure 8.2 illustrates the role of ECE in creating a long-term effect for participating children and its contribution to overall national development. It represents an alignment between the Framework and the US preschool longitudinal findings. The Framework itself uses US-based ECE economic studies such as those of Heckman (DGECNIE 2011, p. 39). It assumes that today's preschools are the cradle for future "quality", "reliable", "globally competitive" human resources and "comprehensively intelligent" citizens (p. 5). This superkid generation would be the gift for the Indonesian independence golden anniversary in 2045 (DGECNIE 2011). To achieve its vision, the Framework emphasises adopting a quality assurance system, ranging gradually from national to international standardisation.

The Framework defines the superkid generation as those with ten main dispositions: "faith, piety, nobility, health, smart, honesty, responsibility, creativity, self-confidence, and patriotism/nationalism" (DGECNIE 2011, p. 11). It is surprising however that these ten exclude some fundamental characteristics mandated by education law such as being "democratic", "independent" and "knowledgeable" (GOI 2003, Article 3). The 'smart' characterisation the Framework uses is perhaps an alternative to 'knowledgeable'. Nevertheless, the exclusion of the other

two virtues of being democratic and independent is problematic not only because they are legally mandated, but more importantly because personal independence and adherence to democratic values are requisites for economic development and achievement. Based on the Perry Preschool study findings, Heckman (2000, 2013) argued that non-cognitive, emotional and social skills, in this case independence and adherence to democratic values, are fundamental determinants of later economic success. If mature, democratic citizens and stable democracy are what the present day Indonesia is envisioning for its future (GOI 2003; MONE 2010), as it is for later economic success, early exposure to democratic values will lay critical foundations for its realisation.

Regardless of its optimism, the Framework seems too ambiguous in three ways. First is the confidence that ECE will end-up with a superkid generation. This belief tends to oversimplify that the future can be predetermined through preschool intervention and the education system is solely responsible for the creation of a super generation. As the Framework (DGECNIE 2011) states, ECE is no more than the "foundation of quality human resources" (p. 5) and not an exclusive determinant. Associating ECE intervention and future gains, both in economic and social understanding, whilst excluding other factors, might not only be misleading but also force the ECE sector to take over responsibility of the overall education system. A careful reading of the US-based studies such as those the Framework refers to is an unavoidable necessity.

A second ambiguity is the Framework quality system and outcomes it aims to achieve. Figure 8.2 shows that the globally competitive and comprehensively intelligent human resources would be achieved in 2035 and 2045 respectively, along with and as a result of the application of international quality standards and comprehensive services provision. This raises a crucial question, for if the international quality framework and comprehensive services are applied in 2035 and 2045 respectively, then, how can these outcomes be achieved in the same periods? In other words, if the DGECNIE really desires those long-term effects (the imagined children according to the Framework), it indeed needs to provide high quality, comprehensive services well before 2045.

A third point is related to how ECE supports young children and their families to acquire the ten virtues as well as to make the economic gain that the Framework promotes. If future economic productivity is the very reason for ECE investment, then, what economic-oriented values and skills are young children to be exposed to during their preschool participation and how might this occur? In short, what type of pedagogy is required to align with such an economic assumption? The Framework gives no advice about this point; it provides only the economic 'why' of ECE and does not provide its 'how-to' aspects. This should be addressed through the technical policies. However all national curriculum and standard documents, ranging from Curriculum 2004 (Curriculum Center 2004), National Standard (BNES 2009; MOEC 2014b) to the new Curriculum 2013 (MOEC 2014c), do not reflect the promises of human capital ideals and the economic value of ECE in general.

Combining these three points, it becomes clear that what has happened in the Indonesian ECE policy texts is a sort of theory-practice disjuncture; in which the macro policy texts tend to emphasize ECE economic benefits yet are silent about how the macro is to be embedded at the micro level of technical regulations. Penn (2010) identifies the potential for such disjuncture, stating that "human capital theory…has been misused" (p. 61) in many developing countries. To simply adopt the US experience to justify ECE investment in developing countries like Indonesia is potentially misleading:

> …it is already a problematic assumption that intervention in early childhood will produce changes in the distant future, whatever dynamic and unforeseen shifts in societies and in global economies might take place (Penn 2010, p. 54).

Penn (2011b) suggests that reliance on human capital theory and economic perspectives in general is not necessarily unacceptable. Indeed, the use of human capital and economic perspectives has helped the GOI to boost investment in ECE. However, findings that integrated ECE and high quality services do not result in later economic achievement are also abundant, such what happened in post-Soviet countries (Penn 2011a). With this understanding, a careless association between childhood exposure to preschool and later economic performance in different economic contexts might give theoretical insight of no empirical relevance. To rely on the ECE-future economic assumption, Penn (2011b) argues, also means to carefully consider the overall quality system and ideas about children and their childhood in which such assumptions are developed.

Thus, to use the assumption of economic gain, the ECE policy base necessitates identifying not only what ECE services should provide to children and families but also more crucially the values, knowledge, and skills that are relevant and supportive of economic productivity and life in general. Even if all these are met, the predicted preschool participation and future economic productivity might not eventuate. Economic development involves multifaceted, dynamic factors for which education in general and ECE in particular cannot stand as a sole determinant. To conclude this section, it seems critical to recall a reminder of the prophet of human capital theory, Thomas W. Schultz, that "when farm people take nonfarm jobs they earn substantially less than industrial workers of the same race, age, and sex" (Schultz 1970, pp. 28–29). If Schultz was right, the belief of Indonesian ECE policy makers in the preschool economic promise necessitates an idea of the future Indonesia and an understanding the everyday lives of present-day children. A thorough understanding of these two components should ideally shape ECE curriculum and pedagogy. Nevertheless, this will only address the question of the relevance of ECE for economic development. Ultimately, economic achievement does not depend solely on ECE provision.

8.4 Developmentalism in the Macro Policy

The second major thought supporting the Indonesian ECE policy is developmentalism, which typically refers to the use of knowledge drawn from developmental psychology (Edwards et al. 2009). This perspective seemingly reached its influential peak after the US National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) introduced 'developmentally appropriate practice' (DAP), a concept that refers to "applying child development knowledge" (Gestwicki 1995, p. 5) in ECE practices.

Indication of the GOI's reliance on developmentalism to support ECE is evident from the abundant use of developmental terms across both the macro and micro policy documents. Such concepts as 'growth' (*pertumbuhan*), 'development' (*perkembangan*), 'stimulus' (*rangsangan*) and 'stages of development' (*tahaptahap perkembangan*) are consistently used across the policy documents listed in Table 8.1. A fundamental one is the use of terms of this kind in the definition of ECE in the 2003 *Education Law*:

> …the teaching efforts [aimed at] children from birth to the age of 6, delivered through the provision of educational stimulus to nurture their growth as well as physical and mental development in order for them to acquire necessary readiness for participating in further education (GOI 2003, Article 1: 14).

The adoption of developmentalist ideas can be further seen through abundant references to DAP ideas as well as to findings in neuroscience and developmental study (for example policy documents 1 and 4). The following extract demonstrates the policy affiliation with DAP ideas, especially its emphasis on the value of play and the rejection of instruction similar to primary school (Bredekamp 1993; Charlesworth 1998).

> Kindergarten is not a school, and therefore…should not take the system applied at the Primary School. Of the principles of kindergarten…is learning through play….The world of the kindergarten-aged children is the world of play…it is too early for them to learn in the way it is done in the school…they should not be forced to be able to read, write, and count as many parents expect (MONE 2004, p. 7).

A more subtle developmentalist orientation is found in MONE's (2005a) *Education For All* plan, which provides a lengthy reference to brain studies:

> …findings in the area of *neuroscience* have shown…. [when] a baby is born his/her brain consists of 100 billion of neuron…after the birth, the brain develops trillions of inter-neuron networks…. [which] will be stable only if they are sufficiently exposed to external information…the implication is…children with no adequate environment stimulating their brain…will consequently be less developed…their brain size will be smaller compared to the normal size" (p. 21).

At this macro policy document level, the influence of developmentalist ideas on Indonesian ECE, its pedagogy, and professional practices is easily identified. A closer look at the micro, technical policies is required to further discuss these issues. The next sections address developmetalism in the ECE standard, curriculum, and accreditation policies.

8.5 Developmentalism in the ECE Standard, Curriculum and Accreditation Policies

In 2004, MONE published a new national *Kindergarten Curriculum and Standard of Competencies* (Curriculum Center 2004), which was popularly known as competency-based curriculum (Indonesian, 'kurikulum berbasis-kompetensi') or *Curriculum 2004*. As its developers claimed, it was "based on [the notion of] children's *stages of development* and [aimed] at fostering children's *overall potentials*" (Curriculum Center 2004, p. 6). By 'overall' *Curriculum 2004* means the areas of development, which have been modified with regard to Indonesian contexts yet represent the traditional domains in developmental psychology: moral and religious values, socio-emotional and self-independence, language proficiency, cognitive development, physical and motor development, and aesthetic skills. Each of these aspects is then detailed into specific skills that reflect the relative complexity between the different age groups. *Curriculum 2004* defined these skills as "basic competencies" (p. 15) and provided a long matrix of indicators for teachers to measure the achievement of kindergarten children. It seems a common practice among teachers, however, not to use these indicators to measure student developmental achievement, as I have learnt from my involvement in teacher education over the past decade. Many tend to take a shortcut by directly teaching the skills specified by these indicators, a practice that to some extent is equal to 'teaching to the test'. This practice has long been critiqued, for example by Armstrong (2006) and Seymour (1979), as it narrows the curriculum and children's overall competencies into a list of policy/teacher-predetermined skills.

Following DAP principles, *Curriculum 2004* recommended teachers use play-based activities to stimulate children's development. Formally, however, it recommended two lines of developmental stimulation: a play-based approach and "behaviour formation through habituation" (Curriculum Center 2004, p. 8), with the latter targeted to religious and socio-emotional development.

In 2009, the Board of National Education Standard (BNES) developed a new standard (BNES 2009). Expanded from the *Curriculum 2004* competencies, the *ECE Standard 200*9, included a new set of developmental standards for the age group from three months to three years. It also regulated another three aspects of ECE practice: teacher/personnel qualifications and competencies, program content, process, and assessment, and facilities, management, and finance.

Unlike *Curriculum 2004* (Curriculum Center 2004), the *ECE Standard 2009* (BNES 2009) omitted aesthetical skills from the developmental domains. This omission asserted even stronger reliance on developmentalism. Aesthetical skills are not recognised as a specific development domain, including by the widely distributed Indonesian version of Hurlock's (2004). *Developmental psychology: A life span approach*. Similarly, DAP literature (e.g., Copple and Bredekamp 2006, 2009) does not recognise it. Moreover, the amplification of a developmentalism in the 2009 standard was clear through the inclusion of artistic/aesthetic skills as part of the "fine motor developmental achievement standard" (BNES 2009, p. 9).

This means that aesthetical skills are considered as developmental impacts instead of a developmental domain and goal, as the *Curriculum 2004* (Curriculum Center 2004) claimed. This omission could be a result of the shift within the policy makers' network of power and influence, and therefore, a shift in its theoretical orientation.

The birth of the 2009 *ECE Standard* (BNES 2009) might indicate GOI's effort to strengthen the theory/research-policy connection. A closer look however found that its production was driven mostly by the desire to standardise and regulate ECE practice instead of to theoretically inform practice. This standardising logic is clear, for example, in the statement that "although every individual child is unique…in fact his/her development follows *universal patterns*" (BNES 2009, p. 2, emphases added). The regulative drive is even clearer with regard to the relatively stronger status, compared to the 2004 version, of it as a ministerial regulation. Last but not least, its production was situated within the contexts of the legal mandates (GOI 2003, 2005, 2013a) for the national education standardisation.

Following the publication of the 2009 *ECE Standard* (BNES 2009) came the introduction of two sets of accreditation instruments, one for kindergarten by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) (2009); and another for non-formal ECE institutions by the National Accreditation Board of Non-Formal Education (NABNFE) (2009). Although most policy documents emphasise the developmental benefits of ECE, surprisingly, both documents give only brief attention to this aspect. Even more surprising is that each of these documents differed significantly in detailing the developmental achievement indicators. The formal instrument has eleven structured items of children's developmental achievement, representing all areas of development. The non-formal instrument however provides only one item for this aspect, which measures the administrative aspect of developmental stimulation, and not the impact, benefits, or quality of the stimulation itself (NABNFE 2009, p. 6).

It took less than a half-decade for the GOI to repeal the 2009 *ECE Standard* (BNES 2009). Before the end of 2014, MOEC launched a new *ECE Standard* (MOEC 2014b) and subsequently *ECE Curriculum 2013* (MOEC 2014c). Unfortunately, no comprehensive evaluation is available on whether or not the 2009 *ECE Standard* benefited Indonesia's national ECE performance. The MOEC itself had called for curriculum reform since 2012, for which the *National Curriculum 2013* was provided. The new curriculum emphasised a "scientific approach to learning" and "authentic learning assessment" (MOEC 2013b, pp. 50, 64). The *ECE Curriculum 2013* followed the same characteristics (MOEC 2014c, Attachment 1, p. 2) although it does not provide detailed meaning of the phrases. The supporting documents for *Curriculum 2013* suggest that a scientific approach to learning is rooted in five core skills: "observing, questioning, associating, experimenting, and networking/presenting" (MOEC 2013a, p. 50).

Like the previous ECE standards (BNES 2009; Curriculum Center 2004), the 2014 *ECE Standard* (MOEC 2014b) and *Curriculum 2013* (MOEC 2014c) documents are based on developmentalism. Similarly, they provide long lists of children's developmental indicators that are highly likely to be the material used

for ECE teachers to plan lessons. The presence of the *2014 Standard* and *ECE Curriculum 2013* however, has given rise to dualism in practical references as both regulate children's developmental achievement, yet with differences in the degree of detail and emphasis (Table 8.3). In addition, the developmental indicators of the *Curriculum* seem to be disconnected from those of the *Standard*. As Table 8.3 shows, the *Standard* offers more complex items compared with those of the *Curriculum*. Potentially complicating this situation, especially when both documents reach ECE practitioners, are the overlapping phrases such as "developmental achievement" (MOEC 2014b, Article 1: 2) and "basic competency" (MOEC 2014c, Article 4; Attachment 1). While they might have different meanings conceptually, as Table 8.3 shows, they seem to refer to same meanings. Practitioners are likely to use the *Curriculum* document, as it is perhaps the closest policy text to their professional practice. This leaves questions about the value of the *Standard* publication. What are the benefits of having a standard for teachers when another tool, which is more accessible and practical, in this case the *Curriculum* document, is available? What are the benefits of having two policies which regulate the same object?

No less challenging than such dualism is the overlap and asymmetry between developmental achievement indicators. The terms 'knowing' (*mengetahui*) and 'recognizing' ('*mengenal*') (Table 8.3) are a good example of such overlap. While conceptually distinct, to differentiate 'knowing' from 'recognising' is not an easy task. Irregularity is apparent in the level of achievement complexity between those of the *Standard* and those of the *Curriculum*. For example, the *Standard* requires children aged 4–5 years to "imitate" the prayer movements, while the *Curriculum* expects the same age group to actually "perform" the prayers under adult guidance. This contradicts a developmentalist doctrine that children develop in ways resembling the progression of the acquisition of skills, from simple towards more complex (Brewer 2007; NAEYC 2009).

The disjuncture and irregularity between the *2014 Standard* and ECE Curriculum 2013 are perhaps due to the poor coordination during the process of its production. The documents were produced in a chronological abnormality. From a legal perspective, the curriculum should be developed based on, or as the technical elaboration of, the standard. In practice, the new curriculum was almost completed before development of the standard was about to begin. This irregularity might be linked to the ad hoc composition of its production team. The curriculum team members, coordinated by MONE's Curriculum Centre, were mainly practitioners; and those for the *Standard* were university academics coordinated by the MONE's BNES and DGECNIE. There were attempts to synchronise the documents after the *Standard* draft was completed. Nevertheless, in a professional atmosphere with a salient academic/practitioner divide, such synchronisation might have unexpected outcomes. It may lead to the revision or even refusal of practitioner works at the hand of the experts, although often the products of academic experts, in this case the *Standard* document, can also be problematic for practitioners.

Apart from the developmentalist claim, neither the *2014 ECE Standard* nor the *ECE Curriculum 2013* provides information about how each of the respective

Table 8.3 Sample the 2014 standard and ECE curriculum 2013

Development area: religious/spiritual

ECE standard 2014 developmental achievement		ECE Curriculum 2013	
4–5 year group	5–6 year group	Basic competency	Indicators 4–5
Knowing his/her own religion	Recognizing his/her own religion	Knowing of religious daily rituals [daily prayers]	Uttering the short prayers
Imitating prayer movements correctly	Performing prayers		and performing religious rituals in accordance to his/her religion
Uttering prayer before and after activities	Being honest, helpful, polite, respectful, and fair	Performing daily religious rituals [daily prayers] with adults' guidance and supports	Naming religious holidays
Knowing good and poor manner	Maintaining personal hygiene and sanitation		Naming the venues of worship of other's religion
Being well-behaved	Knowing religious holidays		Telling of the story of religious figures (e.g. the prophets)
Offering and responding to greetings (verbally)	Respecting (being tolerant) to religiously different others		

Extracted from the Attachment-1 of the 2014 ECE Standard (MOEC 2014b) and the Attachment-1 the ECE Curriculum 2013 (MOEC 2014c)

developmental achievements, competencies, and indicators were formulated and whether or not they are culturally and/or theoretically informed. Indeed Havighurst (1953, 1967), whose ideas of 'stages of development' and 'developmental tasks' are abundant in Indonesian education legal frameworks, suggests that development is rooted in three sources: bio-physical maturity, socio-cultural expectation, and personal aspiration. Thus, every single developmental achievement, competency, or indicator should ideally mirror these three bases. The overlaps between indicators and the cultural/religious-specific biases indicate that the 2014 documents are neither theoretically nor culturally well informed.

Considering these shortcomings, the 2014 ECE standard and curriculum predictably will not be effective for long, as happened with the 2009 version. Recently, MOEC repealed the *National Curriculum 2013* implementation for the primary school and above (MOEC 2014a). The Minister's letter, which was uncommonly sent directly to principals, surprisingly said that "*Curriculum 2013* was processed very quickly and even already set to be implemented for the whole country before it was thoroughly and comprehensively evaluated" (MOEC 2014a, p. 1). This decision has led to uncertainty, as the letter has no reference to ECE, leaving ECE communities unsure about how to bring the *ECE Curriculum 2013* into daily practice in centres.

8.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter shows how human capital and developmental perspectives have systematically shaped Indonesian ECE policy. The inclusion of these perspectives, which perhaps aims to provide a stronger and more scientific ECE justification, are problematic and have resulted in a disjuncture between what the policy states and how it is practiced. This seems to recycle the typical logical fallacy that a given policy would necessarily solve an existing problem. In the context of this paper, such logical fallacy is found in the idea that the *ECE Grand Framework*, *ECE Standard*, or *Curriculum 2013* will ensure the birth of the Indonesian 2045 golden generation. In fact, as the previous sections have shown, they themselves present a new problem.

Above all, it is indeed worthy to further ask about the validity of GOI's reliance on human capital assumptions to justify investment in ECE and the sufficiency of developmentalism to support the achievement of the country's ECE goals. Effective early childhood education is a basic right, and it is equally as important as the right to health and survival. While partially understandable, it is a logical fallacy to place such an important aspect of young children's lives on an economic calculation. The same is also true for reliance on developmentalism. If ECE is one aspect of government plans for national advancement, reliance on a developmental perspective, as the previous sections have shown, is a reductionist approach. It may work in some parts of the world but may not necessarily for others.

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Chapter 9
The Australian Early Years Learning Framework and ICT: A Part of Life or Apart from Life?

Jillian L. Fox and Carmel M. Diezmann

9.1 Introduction: Early Years and Technology

A key goal of the "Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians" is that "All Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] 2008, pp. 8–9). The Declaration highlights the role of early childhood education, and the importance of information and communication technologies in becoming a successful learner:

> Australian governments commit to supporting **the development and strengthening of early childhood education**, to provide every child with the opportunity for the best start in life (p. 11) (emphasis added).

> Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are changing the ways people share, use, develop and process information and technology. In this digital age, **young people need to be highly skilled in the use of ICT** (p. 6); (Successful l**earners) are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT,** as a foundation for success in all learning areas (p. 8) (emphasis added).

Digital devices and Information and communications technology (ICT) have rapidly become the tools of the culture at home, at school, at work, and in the community (Rideout et al. 2011). In this chapter, digital technologies refer to devices such as computers, smart phones and tablets capable of being connected

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to the Internet, ICTs and ICT products such as websites, games, and interactive stories (Plowman and McPake 2013). Since 2009, touch screen technology (e.g., iPads, smartphones, tablets, interactive whiteboards and online technologies) has increasingly played an important role in early child education because it enables interaction through a gestural or 'natural' interface (Norman and Nielsen 2010). Touch screen technology can potentially remove barriers associated with the use of the traditional keyboard, which requires a certain level of physical and motor skill in addition to the cognition required to use the device (Terreni 2010). Therefore, inclusion of touch screen technologies in early years settings has potential learning opportunities due to their accessibility for young children. It is undeniable that technology permeates everyday life. However, in early childhood education in Australia are digital technologies considered *apart from* or *apart of* everyday life?

Subsequent to the Melbourne Declaration, and as part of the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) reform agenda for early childhood education and care, Belonging, Being and Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR 2009) was introduced from 2010 and mandated from 1 January 2012 for long day care services, family day care, occasional care, school age care, and most preschools and kindergartens. It addressed the COAG vision that "All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation" (p. 5). The EYLF (DEEWR 2009) is Australia's first national learning framework and was developed to support early childhood educators to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to 5 years and through the transition from before school environments to formal schooling. The ELYF acknowledges the importance of this period for children's social, physical, emotional and cognitive development and the place of healthy, safe and stimulating environments in this development. The overarching intent of ELYF is "to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning" (DEEWR 2009, p. 50).

The dual purposes of this chapter are to examine the intersection of early years education in the pre-school years and the use of digital technologies in the curriculum, and establish the research evidence to guide early years educators in supporting these children to become successful learners in a digital age. As background, we commence with an overview of the Australian context and review the EYLF (DEEWR 2009) document. We then introduce Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system theory, which guides our investigation, and outline the research approach we adopted. Our findings relating to digital technologies and early years in the curriculum specific to Australia are presented. We conclude by identifying alignments, and omissions between the literature and the ELYF.

9.2 Background

9.2.1 The Australian Context

Early childhood education and care in Australia in the pre-school years is not compulsory and is delivered to children through a range of settings, including childcare centres, kindergartens and preparatory year (i.e., Prep programs). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) "Education at a Glance 2014" (OECD 2014), although enrolment in Australia in pre-primary education has increased and investment per student is high, these statistics remain below the average of 34 OECD countries. The enrolment rate of children aged 4 years in Australia increased by more than 20–76 % between 2005 and 2012, but the rate remains below the OECD average of 84 %. The OECD data also reveals that in Australia, pre-primary education for children aged three years is significantly low compared with other OECD countries, with just 18 % of this age group enrolled, compared with 70 % on average across OECD countries.

In Australia, over the last two decades, education has been undergoing a 'digital turn'. Education policy has placed increasing emphasis on the integration of digital technologies in the classroom. In 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) recognised the role of schooling, and the potential contribution of digital education to the nation's productivity. As a result, Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments agreed to a national partnership and the "Digital Education Revolution" was born (Buchanan 2011). Access to the Internet in Australian homes is rapidly increasing. In 2009, 60 % of Australian children aged 5–8 years accessed the Internet—an increase of 22.7 % since 2006. In 2012–2013, the number of Australian households with access to the Internet at home numbered 7.3 million; more than three quarters (77 %) of all households had access to the Internet via a broadband connection, and almost every household with children under 15 years of age had access to the Internet at home (96 %) (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2012–2013). With the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN) in Australia even greater use of digital resources and improvements in student outcomes is expected (Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy 2013): The aim is to enable access to fast, reliable and affordable phone and internet services, from a range of providers. The network is designed to enable lifestyle enhancements including health, education, well-being, sustainability and wealth (Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy 2013). Hence, most of today's young children should have access to high speed Internet connection at their home or school, and because of this, teachers need to know how to employ digital technologies to support learning.

9.2.2 Belonging, Beijing and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework

The EYLF (DEEWR 2009) is designed to assist educators to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to 5 years and through the transition to formal schooling. It emphasises play-based learning and highlights the importance of communication and language, and social and emotional development. The ELYF specifies five learning outcomes:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators (DEEWR 2009).

The details of Outcomes 4 and 5 make specific references to children's engagement with technologies. In Outcome 4, children are encouraged to resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, **technologies** and natural and processed materials. Educators can promote learning by introducing "appropriate tools, technologies and media and provide the skills, knowledge and techniques to enhance children's learning and support the development of children's confidence with technologies" (DEEWR 2009, p. 35). In Outcome 5, goals are set for children to use information and **communication technologies** to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking. Educators can provide children with access to a range of "technologies; integrate technologies into children's play experiences and projects; teach skills and techniques and encourage children to use technologies to explore new information and represent their ideas; and encourage collaborative learning about and through technologies between children, and children and educators" (DEEWR 2009, p. 44). The Australian framework, developed to enrich and enhance young children's learning, clearly acknowledges the inclusion of digital technologies in children's everyday engagements.

9.3 Theoretical Framework

Young children live and learn in a variety of environments. Hence, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory is useful in examining the relationship between early learning and particular environments. This theory highlights the interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape that fuels and steers development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) organised the contexts of development into five nested environmental systems: the *microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, microsystem* and *chronosystem*. The *microsystem* is the layer closest to the child and refers to the immediate environment that directly impacts on the child, most

notably, home, school, neighbourhood and peers. The *mesosystem* represents the interconnections between the microsystems such as the interactions between the family and teachers, relationships between the child's peers, and the neighbourhood and the family. The *exosystem* defines the larger social system that indirectly affects the developing child because the influence from the *exosystem* usually impacts the child as it "trickles" down through other people in the child's life. For example, a parent may need to travel for work and the child may feel this impact on the microsystem as the parent is absent from the family home for periods of time. The *macrosystem* is the outermost layer in the child's environment, comprising cultural values, customs, and laws which impact a child's life. The sociocultural effects of the *macrosystem* have a cascading influence throughout the interactions between the child and all other layers. The *chronosystem* encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environments as well as socio-historical circumstances. Features of this system can be either external (e.g., timing of a parent's death) or internal (e.g., the aging of a child).

Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979) was created prior to the invention of the Internet and the large range of digital technologies that now feature in everyday life (e.g., touch screen technology, smartphones, iPods). Johnson and Puplumpu (2010) argue that digital technologies (e.g., iPad, internet) impact the child's microsystem and proposed an ecological techno-subsystem that "situates the developing child in the context of ICT use in home, school, and community environments" (p. 32), including child interactions with human (e.g., communication) and nonhuman (e.g., hardware) elements of digital technologies and ICTs. Figure 9.1 demonstrates how Johnson and Puplumpu's (2010) techno subsystem can be combined with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) system.

In Australia, digital technologies have the potential to be constant tools in young children's microsystems and can be used for education and entertainment (See Fig. 9.1). Technologies also indirectly impact on young children as they become common tools in other systems. For example, school or centre Internet portals that connect parents to children's learning are mesosystematic. Schools online resources designed for teachers' professional development are components of the *exosystem*, which indirectly influence children's experiences. Cultural and societal views of children's use of technology (e.g., tools for learning or play) are situated in the *macrosystem*. Engagement and competency with digital technology changes across dimensions of time as children become more competent, or technology itself develops (*chronosystem*). In the chapter, we use Johnson and Puplumpu's (2010) theory encompassing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system for the purpose of aligning technology within a child's ecosystem.

9.4 Research Approach

The research approach used in this integrative review (Pautasso 2013) was document analysis (Bowen 2009). An integrative review was chosen for this study to support the discovery of common ideas and concepts from the reviewed material.
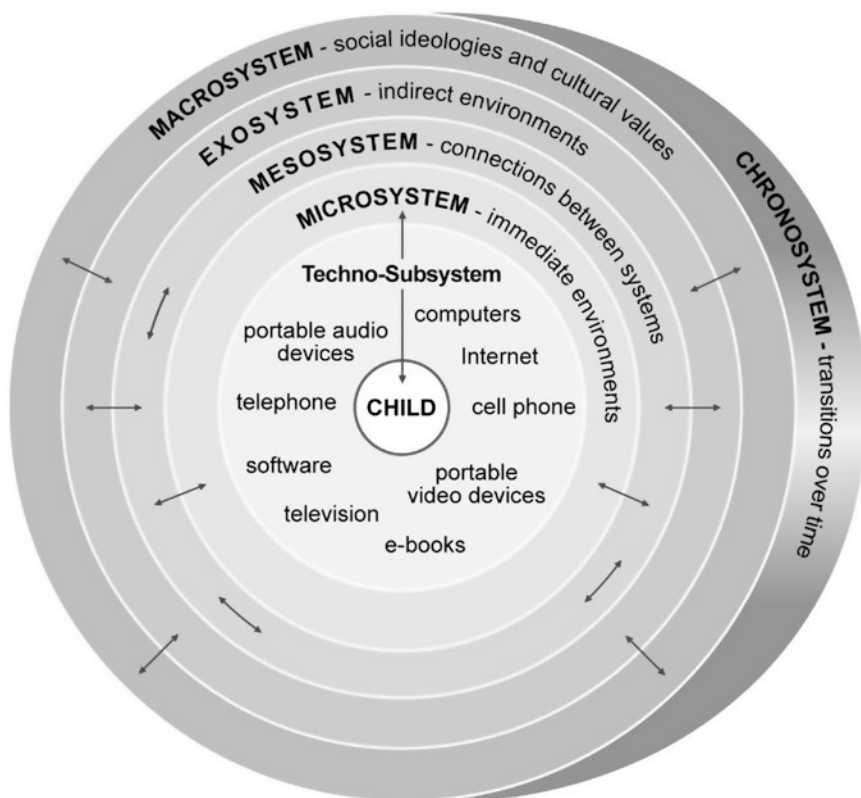
Fig. 9.1 The ecological techno-subsystem (Johnson and Puplampu 2010)

The first purpose is to examine the intersection of early years education and the use of ICT in the curriculum. This purpose was achieved through an analysis of the relationships between the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR 2009) and the "Technology and Young Children" position statement (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012). This technology position statement (henceforth referred to as the Technology Statement) was chosen as a comparison because there is no document focusing on technology and the early years in Australia. The NAEYC is the largest professional association of early childhood educators' worldwide, comprising nearly 70,000 members from countries around the world. In particular, we examined the extent to which each of the 16 Principles outlined in the Technology Statement are represented in the EYLF.

The second purpose of this chapter is to examine the research evidence on digital technology in Australian early years research and the Technology Statement. The study adopts methodology utilised by Lubienski and Bowen (2000) and Fox and Diezmann (2007) to determine the Australian literature base. *Phase 1* consisted of identifying a data set of articles for review, limiting the set according to specific criteria, and ascertaining the relevance of the literature through a thematic categorisation

of the articles. Papers examining literature addressing digital technology in ECEC in Australia from 2009–2015 were identified. The commencement date was 2009, the same year as the ELYF was published. EBSCO *host* was the data source for this study. ERIC, which is sponsored by the US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, was used because it is easily accessible and offers a variety of proprietary full text databases and popular databases from leading information providers. Only articles from peer-reviewed journals were considered because they reflect the interests and values of mainstream research communities, and have a degree of quality control and credibility through the peer-review process. The articles for this study were identified from a key word search of the ERIC database with the assistance of the ERIC thesaurus. The original search identified 72 papers that linked the descriptors of digital technology, young children and Australia. The EBSCO filter removed duplicates and a subsequent manual check ensured that articles met the descriptors reduced the data pool to 22 papers. Papers that were excluded focused on non-Australian research, primary or middle school, or were outside the time reference. *Phase 2* was conducted to ensure articles and authors were comprehensively represented, and a follow-up literature search was conducted via Google Scholar. Using authors 'names from the previous phase, a search was conducted for additional papers that might have been published in the same time period (2009–2015). Through this process, a further 13 journal articles specific to digital technology were located and added to the literature pool. Therefore, there are 35 papers referencing digital technologies, young children and Australia in the literature pool.

Once the data pool in *Phase 2* was finalised, the abstracts of the identified articles in the data set were analysed by aligning each with NAEYC Technology Position Statement (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012), and with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems and Johnson and Puplumpu (2010) Ecological Techno-Subsystem. The focus of the content analysis was to identify research agendas specific to the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR 2009) learning goals and outcomes, and digital technology in early years contexts in Australia. This was a straightforward process in which the abstracts and key words of each article were read to establish the focus of the article and then a relevant category was assigned by firstly matching key words or their synonyms and then reviewing the body of the article. This integrative literature review (Pautasso 2013) sought to understand trends and common ideas in the body of scholarship pertaining to the EYLF (DEEWR 2009) and the use of digital technologies in the early years. The methodology does not address the quality of the article. The quality was determined by the early childhood or technology education communities through the journal peer-review process.

9.5 Results

The results report, first, on the outcomes of the document analysis of the EYLF and the Technology Statement followed by a review of position and research papers. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems and Johnson and Puplampu (2010) Ecological Techno-Subsystem were also examined to determine alignments.

9.5.1 Comparison of the EYLF and the Technology Statement

A comparison of the EYLF (DEEWR 2009) with the 16 Principles in the Technology Statement (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012) revealed that there is limited alignment between the two documents. The EYLF framework can be explicitly linked to only two of the technology Principles. The EYLF Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners, states that children should have "access to technology" (p. 36) and aligns with Technology Principle 7, which highlights that when used appropriately, technology and media can enhance children's cognitive and social abilities. The EYLF Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators, states that "technology should be child friendly" (DEEWR 2013, p. 40), connecting to Technology Principle 10, which states that technology and media can enhance early childhood practice when integrated into the environment, curriculum, and daily routines. However, in the EYLF, there is no reference to some of the key principles of the Technology Statement, such as safe engagement with technological tools (Principle 1), assistive technologies (Principle 11), and use of technology to assist dual language learners (Principle 12), or promoting digital citizenship (Principle 14). Given the Australian goals for early childhood education and the need for young people in the digital age to be highly skilled in the use of ICT (MCEETYA 2008), this disconnect between the two documents is a concern. Failure to provide guidance to early childhood teachers about technology and ICT has the potential to impact on children's uptake of these pervasive and contemporary cultural tools.

9.5.2 Content Analysis of Literature (2009–2015)

Whilst the data pool comprised of 35 papers, a review of the project report by Yelland and Gilbert (2013) revealed four themes. Similarly, the article authored by Green and Holloway (2014) had two research aims which addressed two themes. Therefore there were a total of 39 themes identified within the 35 papers. The content of the papers was analysed for alignment with the Technology Statement (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012) and Johnson and Puplampu's techno-subsystem (2010), which was built on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system.

A review of the data set revealed that some papers presented empirical data while others were position papers. Articles that reported new and original research were categorised as empirical papers and articles that were theoretical discussions, reviews of literature, meta-studies or reflective critiques were recognised as position papers. Themes in the empirical papers are discussed first, followed by themes in the position papers.

9.6 Empirical Papers

Ten of the 16 Technology Principles were represented in 23 empirical papers (see Table 9.1). Nine topics (35 %) related to Principle 4, which states, "developmentally appropriate teaching practices must always guide the selection of technology and interactive media" (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012, p. 6). Based on the publications, of significant interest to Australian researchers are the pedagogies that teachers utilise to support the integration of digital technology in purposeful ways in early childhood settings. Topics addressed included the examination of pedagogies associated with the use of a computer lab (Grieshaber 2010b), tablets, and developing multi-literacies (Harrison et al. 2009). The EYLF (DEEWR 2009) has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and teaching. The attention given to pedagogical practices using digital technology in the literature complements the play-based pedagogies in Australian early years education and care agendas.

Four papers (15 %) addressed issues concerning teacher judgements about the inclusion of digital technologies in early years settings. These papers align with Technology Principle 3, which states, "Professional judgment is required to determine if and when a specific use of technology or media is age appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally and linguistically appropriate" (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012, p. 6). The papers addressed topics such as applications that are appropriate for teaching music (deVries 2013), when young children should have independent use of digital cameras (Northcote 2011), and analysis of digital-consumerism artefacts (Nuttall et al. 2013). Given the 'newness' of digital technologies in early years settings, these papers can inform teacher decision-making about which digital technologies would best support learning in their contexts.

Thirteen papers (50 %) relating to eight other Technology Principles were identified in the literature review. There is no research identified relating to six Technology Principles. Australian research agendas did not prioritise discussions about safe engagement with ICT (Principle 1), the employment of developmentally appropriate practices (Principle 2), catering to individuals and their engagement with technology (Principle 5); technology for dual language learners (Principle 12); the promotion of digital citizenship (Principle 14); or the development of a rigorous evidence-base about young children and technology(Principle 16). This review reveals that a rigorous evidence-base that could support Australian early childhood educators in their choices about the inclusion of digital technology their settings is limited.

All empirical papers discussed research that involved teachers or parents engaging with children to investigate technologies and their integration. This research was conducted in the specific Microsystems (Bronfenbrenner 1979) (e.g., early childhood classrooms and homes) where children interact with others. These papers also align with Johnson's (2010) techno-microsystem, which conceptualises child development in social, emotional, cognitive and physical domains as the

Table 9.1 Empirical papers analysis

Technology principles (shortened titles)	Paper topics	Bronfenbrenner system	Johnson and Puplampu system
Safe engagement			
Employ developmentally appropriate practices			
Use Educators professional judgement	Teacher thinking about digital-consumerism artefacts (Nuttall et al. 2013)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Children's use of digital cameras to improve experience (Northcote 2011)	Micro and mesosytems	Techno sub-system
	Multimedia engagement during music teaching music (deVries 2013)	Micro and mesoystem	Techno sub-system
	New applications to support teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy (Yelland and Gilbert 2013)	Microsystem	Techno sub-system
Employ developmentally appropriate pedagogies	Impact of teacher pedagogy on the integration of ICTs (Hesterman 2013)	Mesosystem	
	Pedagogies for multi-literacies and ICT in early childhood education (Harrison et al. 2009)	Micro and mesosystem	Techno sub-system
	Pedagogical challenges associated with integrating computer technologies into everyday classrooms (Grieshaber 2010a)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Pedagogical and philosophical factors influencing the use of a computer lab (Grieshaber 2010b)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Effective pedagogies adopted when using tablet technologies (Yelland and Gilbert 2013)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system

Table 9.1 (continued)

Technology principles (shortened titles)	Paper topics	Bronfenbrenner system	Johnson and Puplampu system
	How tablet technologies can be incorporated to support new forms of meaning making (Yelland and Gilbert 2012)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Children and parental engagement with technology and strategies used (Green and Holloway 2014)	Microsystem	Techno sub-system
	Development and trial a digital play framework (Bird and Edwards 2014)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Analysis of the content of young children's musical DVDs for developmentally appropriate practices (Brooks 2015)	Mesosystems	
Cater for the individual			
Scaffold authentic engagement	An analysis of one teacher and preschool children's co-construction of an email (Danby et al. 2015)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Investigation of children's positive experiences when using of iPads and engaging in digital play (Verenikina and Kervin, 2011)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
Enhance children's cognitive and social abilities	The use of popular culture and ICT in early years (Hesterman 2011)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Teachers using technology intentionally with children (Fleer and Hoban 2012)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	Investigation of iPad use to support standards-based classroom curricula (Lynch and Redpath 2014)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system

Table 9.1 (continued)

Technology principles (shortened titles)	Paper topics	Bronfenbrenner system	Johnson and Puplampu system
Create playful active interactions	Investigated young children's social inter-action with technology (Danby et al. 2013)	Microsystem	Techno sub-system
Build home-school connections	Examination of the dis-connect between home and school digital practices (Gronn et al. 2014)	Microsystem	Techno sub-system
Enhance engagement in daily activity	How robotics enhance hands on, fine motor development in 21st century con-text (McDonald and Howell 2012a)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
	How the use of robotics can build, enhance and allow for creative engage-ment (McDonald and Howell 2012b)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
Support equitable access for children with special needs	Early childhood teachers Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge when using iPads to support autis-tic children (Oakley et al. 2013)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
Assist dual language learners			
Apply digital literacy to decision making	Teacher researchers exploring new forms of literacy (Hill 2010)	Micro and mesosystems	Techno sub-system
Promote digital citizenship			
Provide profes-sional development opportunities	Teacher comfort using web-searching for teaching (Thorpe et al. 2015)	Mesosystem	
	Teacher professional learning opportuni-ties to incorporate tablet technologies into programs (Yelland and Gilbert 2013)	Microsystem	Techno sub-system
Develop evidence- base			

consequence of engagement between the child and ICTs and digital technology in home, school or community environments. A few papers conducted research that examined teachers views of and confidence with digital technology and their digital technology pedagogies (e.g., Hesterman 2013; Nuttall et al. 2013; Thorpe et al. 2015). These studies involved situations or events in which two microsystems came together as a Mesosystem with the child interacting with and being influenced by the home and prior-to-school settings. In summary, these papers reported the use of a range of digital tools in the child's micro and meso systems and educator and parent endorsement and support of this interaction.

9.7 Position Papers

Thirteen papers from the data set were position papers that provided reviews of literature. Analysis reveals that only nine of the 16 Technology Principles were represented in the Australian data set (Table 9.2). Three papers addressed Technology Principle 7 (24 %), which states, "When used appropriately, technology and media can enhance children's cognitive and social abilities" (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012, p. 7). The papers included a review of pedagogies that support the assimilation of digital technologies (Danby et al. 2013), the concept of an online museum and how it can connect children and elders (McKay 2013), and an analysis of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation media platform and how it can support digital media platforms for children (Rutherford and Brown 2013). Given the relatively new uptake of digital technologies in early years settings (Danby 2013), it is understandable that researchers are considering and debating their theoretical and philosophical positioning.

Technology Principle 2 advocates "Developmentally appropriate practices must guide decisions about whether and when to integrate technology and interactive media into early childhood programs" (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012, p. 5). This principle was evident in two papers (13 %) (Holloway et al. 2013; Plumb et al. 2013). Discussions about the processes that teachers used to determine the types and modes of digital technologies to be included in early years settings are important and necessary to inform the profession.

Technology Principle 16 highlights "Early childhood educators need training, professional development opportunities, and examples of successful practice to develop the technology and media knowledge, skills, and experience needed to meet the expectations set forth in this Statement" (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012, p. 10). However, only two papers were identified that explored professional development needs of early years teachers (Thorpe et al. 2015; Yelland and Gilbert 2012). In our contemporary world, it is essential that early years teachers understand the contribution of digital technologies to young children's lives and receive opportunities to develop expertise in early childhood educational settings.

Table 9.2 Position paper analysis

NAEYC principles (shortened titles)	Paper topic	Bronfenbrenner system	Johnson and Puplampu system
Safe engagement			
Employ developmentally appropriate practices	Review of literature investigating children and the internet (Holloway et al. 2013)	Macroystem	
	Review of literature investigating practices and pedagogies for integrating ICT (Plumb et al. 2013)	Ecosystem	
Use educators professional judgement	Exploration of digital media that impacts on children and teachers' thinking (Edwards 2013)	Exosystem	
Employ developmentally appropriate pedagogies	Debate on the nature of contemporary play and the influence of digital tools (Edwards 2014)	Macrosystem	
Cater for the individual	Analysis of appropriateness and pedagogical designs for app integration (Highfield and Goodwin 2013)	Macrosystem	
Scaffold authentic engagement			
Enhance children's cognitive and social abilities	Review of ABCs **children**'s content provision in the **digital** television era (Rutherford and Brown 2013)	Macrosystem	
	Discussion about connecting children with elders by using technology (McKay 2013)	Exosystem	
	Review of strategies for children to engage with technology in Early Childhood settings (Danby et al. 2013)	Exosystem	

Table 9.2 (continued)

NAEYC principles (shortened titles)	Paper topic	Bronfenbrenner system	Johnson and Puplampu system
Create playful active interactions	A historical review of ABC programs and the commitment to exploring new directions of ICT (Harrison 2013)	Exosystem	
Build home-school connections			
Enhance engagement in daily activity	Debate about the need for a broader definition of literacies that encompasses ICT (Hesterman 2011)	Exosystem	
Support equitable access for children with special needs			
Assist dual language learners			
Apply digital literacy to decision making			
Promote digital citizenship			
Provide professional development opportunities	Teacher professional development concerning children's digital play and play-based learning in early childhood curricula (Nuttall et al. 2015)	Mesosystem	Techno sub-system
Develop evidence- base	Discussion about impact of media on 2–8 year olds highlighting the gap between evidence and practice (Rutherford et al. 2010).	Mesosystem	
	Evidence-based media studies to debate preschoolers' internet use (Green and Holloway 2014)	Exosystem	

Analysis of the remaining six (46 %) position papers revealed one article associated with each of the further six Technology Principles addressing educator professional judgement about digital technologies (Principle 3); the employment of developmentally appropriate digital technology pedagogies (Principle 4); catering for the individual (Principle 5); playful active interactions with ICTs (Principle 8); technology engagement as part of daily activity (Principle 10); or detailed professional development initiatives (Principle 15).

Although nine of the Technology Principles were addressed in the position papers, there were no papers addressing seven of the Technology Principles. These Principles related to safe technological engagements (Principle 1); the need to scaffold authentic engagement (Principle 6); the construction of home-school partnerships (Principle 9); the use of technology to support equitable access for children with special needs (Principle 11); assisting dual language learners with the use of ICTs (Principle 12); applying digital literacy to decision making (Principle 13), and the promotion of digital citizenship (Principle 14). The integration of digital technology in early years settings requires a robust examination. However, to date, Australian literature addressing many aspects of digital technologies and how they can be used to support and enhance early learning is limited.

The position papers examined in this analysis align with Bronfenbrenner's *macrosystem* (4 papers)*, exosytem* (7 papers) and *mesosystem* (2 papers). Eleven of these papers situated in the *macrosystem* and the *exosystem* debated and discussed beliefs, theories, and rethought practice about how digital technology can be purposefully used in early years settings. Topics included the need for a broader definition of literacies that encompasses ICT (Hesterman 2011), pedagogical designs for app integration (Highfield and Goodwin 2013) and the nature of contemporary play and the influence of digital tools (Edwards 2014). Children of the 21st century live in social, cultural and technological spaces where multiple technological devices and systems are used constantly. Hence, it is imperative that overarching societal beliefs and values (*macrosystem*) be reviewed to ascertain how engagement is inhibited or advanced. Likewise given the range of socio-cultural systems in which children engage it is critical that technology use impacting and influencing young children is investigated. The educational structure and the political and economic climate influences the environment (*exosystem*). Two position papers aligned with the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979) and these focussed on discussion about professional development (Nuttall et al. 2015) and the impact of digital media on young children (Rutherford 2009). Johnson and Puplampu's techno-subsystem (2010) is not particularly well represented in the content of the position papers, with the exception of Nuttall et al. (2015), who discussed teacher professional development, which impacts directly on children's microsystem.

9.8 Discussion: Alignments, Disconnects and Omissions

This review of the 35 empirical and position papers discovered clear alignments, disconnects and omissions between the EYLF (DEEWR 2009) and the Technology Statement (NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning 2012). The Australian literature aligned with 13 of the 16 Technology Principles, which is evident from Tables 9.1 and 9.2. However, the literature base is limited. Given the attention that digital technology receives in Australian policy, it is important to develop a comprehensive evidence-base on which to build Australian standards and practice, and inform the implementation of the ELYF (DEEWR 2009).

This literature review exposed a disconnect, a paucity of research in Australian contexts. Only four articles addressed issues relating to iPads or other touchscreen technologies. Mobile touch-screen technologies have been touted as 'revolutionary' devices that hold great potential for transforming learning (Goodwin 2012). These devices have attracted interest from the educational community mainly due to their versatility and accessibility. However due to the limited literature, it is difficult to confirm that assertions about portability, accessibility to a range of learning materials and capacity to reduce barriers associated with the use of the traditional keyboard are demonstrated in real classroom settings.

Omissions in the Australian literature were also identified with three Technology Principles not represented (Tables 9.1 and 9.2). These omissions indicate that researchers in Australia were not investigating or discussing issues related to these Principles. Principle 1 focuses on safe practices associated with digital technologies. With more young children accessing the Internet and playing with digital devices due to touchscreen technologies, strategies to keep them safe must be considered. New risks for children that come with technology include consumer related risks (e.g., online fraud and marketing), contact related risks (e.g., online predators and cyber bullying) and privacy-related risks (e.g., issues related to protection of personal information) (OECD 2012). Further, no articles were found related to Principle 12 that is, exploring how digital technology could assist English language learners. Census data revealed that over one quarter (26 %) of Australia's population was born overseas (ABS 2012). Statistics recently published by the Immigration Department (Parliament of Australia 2015) revealed that during the 2013–2014 financial year, some 6,500 visas were granted to refugees. This data provides a valuable insight into the diverse cultural landscape that makes up Australia and suggests that there is a growing need for digital technology that could assist English language. Moreover, there was no literature related to Principle 14, which concerns promoting digital citizenship in the early years. It is important in the early childhood context that children are provided with opportunities to grow and develop as digital citizens. In today's digital age, children can be exposed to technology and online environments from birth, for example, when they are photographed with a mobile phone and shown to relatives at a distance through Skype or similar social media technologies. Just as we prepare young learners for interaction and success in the physical spaces, we must also support children to engage confidently and successfully in virtual spaces, which are now blended with the physical world.

The Australian literature provided some attention to the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979). However, here was no literature about the chronosystem. The chronosystem includes the transitions and shifts in the lifespan and may also involve the socio-historical contexts that may influence peoples' lives. Digital technologies are a contemporary phenomenon in education and have different levels of uptake in early years settings. A more robust evidence base exploring the impact and influence of digital technology on young children's lives would support decision-making in the Australian context. Consideration of Johnson and Pulampu's techno-subsystem (2010) also provides a guide for early years educators.

9.9 Concluding Points

We commenced our investigation with the notion of exploring whether digital technologies are considered *apart from* or *apart of* everyday life in early education in Australia. At present, somewhat disappointingly, we suggest that Australia lags behind other nations because it has yet to embrace and embed the digital technologies referred to in the ELYF (DEEWR 2009), the nationally mandated learning framework for young children aged 0–5 years. Hence, digital technologies seem to sit apart *from* the everyday life of young children and have yet to become *part of* the typical prior-to-school experience of young children in early years settings. Technologies are abundant in many young children's lives and they can be an integral part of children's learning (e.g., Yelland and Siraj-Blatchford 2002). Specifically, our study revealed that there is limited intersection between the Technology Principles and the EYLF (DEEWR 2009). While this might be expected as the ELYF (DEEWR 2009) is Australian and the Technology Statement is US-based, this was the best point of comparison in the absence of an Australian technology statement in the early years.

If developing technology capabilities across all learning areas has been prioritised in the Australian school curriculum (e.g., ACARA n.d.; MCEETYA 2008), the same priority needs to be accorded **young** Australian children in the prior-to-school years. Thus, the play-based approaches in the ELYF (DEEWR 2009) need to be reconceptualised to include digital play. On the role of digital technologies in the early years, Australia differs from other nations internationally. The importance of technology in early education is acknowledged in the Technology Statement and many international policies and curriculums. For example, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) views technology as a way of addressing "access, inclusion and quality" (UNESCO 2011, para 1). Thus, if Australia is to support all individuals to be successful learners from their earliest years, a concerted effort is needed to embed digital learning opportunities in classroom activities and to ensure that there is a research evidence to inform professional practice and community knowledge. Likewise, it is essential that 'theoretical conversations' and debates occur to inform community views about the role of digital technology in the early years, as they may be over-influenced by popular media, which is typically more concerned with sensationalism than sound information (Plowman and McPake 2013).

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Chapter 10
The Spectre of Standards in Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Education and Care

Alexandra C. Gunn and N. Ruth Gasson

Keywords New Zealand · Te Whāriki · Standards · Charter schools · Neoliberalism

10.1 Introduction

The announcement of an education policy of National Standards in literacy and numeracy (Tolley 2010) for primary level education in Aotearoa[1] was met with an outpouring of resistance from educators, scholars, and parents alike. Newspaper headlines over many months aired perspectives and revealed the depth of ill-ease: "Parents braced for standards chaos" (Hartevelt 2009a, October 24), "School policy under attack" (Hartevelt 2009b, October 26), "Teachers want debate on standards" (Nelson 2009, December 11), "Tolley keeps fighting hard for achievement standards" (Hartevelt 2010, April 3), "Big leap backward halts progress made" (Fletcher 2010, July 5). Met with loud, public, and sustained disquiet from colleagues in the schools sector, the policy was considered by early childhood teachers as equally as risky to children and curriculum in early childhood education (hereafter ECE). Fears of a trickle down effect were raised, bringing with it concern about the narrowing of early childhood curriculum, parental anxiety about children's future

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[1]Out of respect to the dual language heritages of Aotearoa New Zealand, we use Te Reo Māori and English names interchangeably in this chapter.

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academic performance, and worry over the possible exertion of pressure by schools-sector colleagues towards teachers in ECE to prepare children adequately for the new rigours of national standards testing (Alcock and Haggerty 2013). Five years on from the introduction of the policy these fears remain, as the spectre of an imposition of standards for early learning in New Zealand persist. This chapter provides an opportunity to consider the issues and emergent realities of early learning standards in the context of New Zealand's early years education (that is, early childhood and early schooling). In it we discuss how and why ECE in this country has remained largely resistant to the blanket imposition of early learning standards, and how Government remains significantly invested in the possibility of change.

10.2 New Zealand's Education System and Its Neoliberal Orientation

In the late 1980s, the New Zealand education system was subject to a major reformation and ideological shift that reoriented it towards neoliberal economic and political imperatives (Carpenter 2014). Neoliberalism holds free markets to be the most economically efficient means of producing most goods and services. Free markets are said to reward producer merit, given that individuals are considered self-interested, able to rationally weigh the costs and benefits of goods and services, and choose accordingly (Duncan 2007). Where free markets are not feasible to the delivery of services (as in New Zealand's compulsory education sector, which, because of the compulsory requirement, involves government funding), neoliberally minded service providers seek to emulate market-like conditions. Gordon and Whitty (1997) argue that "the lack of a conventional cash nexus and the strength of government intervention distinguish quasi-markets from the idealised view of a free market" (p. 454). Key aspects of New Zealand's quasi-market in education include attempts to increase school autonomy and parental choice, and new accountability measures to address a perceived lack of accountability for want of a free market (Gordon and Whitty 1997).

In 1988 a Government policy called Tomorrow's Schools (Lange 1988) devolved management of schools to individual Boards of Trustees (BOT) who would be elected three-yearly by the parent community and staff of each school. Individual schools became responsible for identifying their own objectives within national guidelines and in collaboration with their community. These were set out in charters: formal contractual undertakings between a school, its community, and the government. A new organisation, the Education Review Office (ERO) became the body responsible for auditing an education service's (school or early childhood) performance against charter obligations. Boards of Trustees were accountable to the school community and the government for meeting charter objectives. They were also the body who would appoint staff, supervise the delivery of curriculum within a national framework, and who would take overall responsibility for school administration and finance. In ECE the management and administration

of services was left to individual settings or for groups of like settings, nationally based organisations. The same kinds of charters obligations were introduced and services were also subject to audit by the ERO. The National government that came into office in 1990 continued with the neoliberal agenda. A new curriculum framework for schools was developed (Ministry of Education 1993a) and a direction for assessment, based largely on standards based (criterion referenced) school and classroom based formative assessment approaches was set (Ministry of Education 1998). It was in this broader context of education reform that a contract to develop a curriculum for early childhood curriculum was developed and let. Government wanted a policy that would parallel the new New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF) of seven essential learning areas and eight skills (May 2002).

10.3 Curriculum Developments and the Future Proofing of ECE

The curriculum contract gave the early childhood sector an opportunity to determine its aspirations for children, families, and ECE, "the alternative, of not defining the early childhood curriculum, was a dangerous one: the national curriculum for schools might start a downward move" (May 2002, p. 31). To date the concern has been largely unrealised—if anything, the curriculum for ECE can be said to have influenced a later revision of curriculum for New Zealand schools (Carr 2006; Ministry of Education 2007). However, concerns over the schoolification of ECE (Alcock and Haggarty 2013), including the spectre of early learning standards or imposition of measures for particular outcomes of ECE persist. Later in the chapter we will discuss how. In the following section however we discuss the sufficiency of *Te Whāriki* to render questionable this threat. Our argument focuses on constructions of learners and learning within curriculum and fit-for-purpose assessment.

10.4 Te Whāriki's Stances on Learning and Assessment

Rather than develop a prescriptive, individualistic, subject oriented, and measurement based curriculum for New Zealand children in ECE, *Te Whāriki* took an aspirational approach to curriculum design. It focused on the kinds of play-based learning environments and experiences that scholars, families, and educators in Aotearoa considered conducive to positive learning and human development. The position sat in contrast to one that sought the setting of standards for learning performance in specified domains of curriculum. The curriculum's focus on aims for children was also different from the traditional developmental map that characterised many Western models (Fleer 1995). *Te Whāriki* was concerned with learning; it articulated an expectation that quality learning experiences would drive

children's development ahead. The curriculum was to become interpreted as anti-racist (Ritchie 1997) and later as anti-biased (Gunn 2003). One of its strengths was seen in the way it provided for the diversity of languages, cultures, and perspectives existing in the New Zealand early childhood landscape. Reedy (1995, 2003/2013) described *Te Whāriki* as being about self-determination.

Despite these stances, at the time of its introduction, the Government was unable to resist an attempt at bringing the early childhood curriculum more into line with the prevailing neoliberal ideology and newly developed schools' policy. Between its draft (which was subtitled a "guideline for developmentally appropriate practice") and final versions (Ministry of Education 1993b, 1996), aims became goals and goals referred to learning outcomes; moves the curriculum development working groups and leadership team opposed (May 2002). Additionally, the reference to developmentally appropriate practice in the title was dropped, the guidelines became curriculum, and an expanded set of links between the strands of *Te Whāriki* and the NZCF essential skills and each of the seven essential learning areas was articulated. At the policy level, the image of a continuous curriculum policy for early years education in Aotearoa was set. However, with no substantive change to either NZCF to connect it more broadly with *Te Whāriki's* aspirational stance, and no real change to the foundational position and structures of *Te Whāriki*, these late changes left a significant gap between early childhood and school sectors' approaches to curriculum, learning, and learners that in the current climate, replete with calls for standards and outcomes, has been an important factor in resisting the blanket imposition of these within ECE.

10.5 Assessing the New Curriculum: What Will Children Learn?

Integral to the assumptions and philosophical stances of *Te Whāriki*, the kind of assessment practices imagined and realised in New Zealand based ECE can be described as holistic, narrative, and credit-oriented. Assessment seeks to document what children can and are doing, rather than what they are not. The distinctive practices that have emerged since *Te Whāriki* was introduced are referred to variously as *learning narratives* (Carr 1998a), *learning stories* (Carr 1998b, 2001), or through the generic term of *narrative assessments* (Gunn and de Vocht van Alphen 2011). Assessment of children's learning has come to involve teachers and others (parents, children, other involved adults) in the documentation of significant everyday events within environments designed for learning that highlight learning and learner identities in the contexts of *dispositions for learning*, *working theories*, and *dimensions of mana.*[2] *Te Whāriki* refrains from separating out the social, emo-

[2]For a comprehensive discussion of learning dispositions see Carr (1998a, b, 2001). Working theories are discussed by Hedges (2007, 2008) and by Peters and Davis (2011), whilst Reedy (2003/2013) gives an account of mana as it relates with the curriculum.

tional, cognitive, and the physical; so do the assessment practices desired of the field (Ministry of Education 2004/2009, 2008a, b, c, 2009). Instead, the field seeks to maintain and document a view of learning as complex and situated.

Carr (2004) argues that if what we set out to assess is overly simplistic, then it does no justice to *Te Whāriki*, to children's learning, and to the complexity of relationships that support learning in the early years. Simplistic, fixed, and standardised measures cannot adequately account for the close connections between children's learning and the kinds of responsive and reciprocal relationships that contribute to that learning. Nor do they recognise any uncertainty about what's being measured or the situated nature of what children can achieve, at a given moment, alone or with others. Simplistic, fixed, and standardised measures also fail to account for the fact that valued outcomes of early childhood curriculum in Aotearoa include understanding how the learning-experiences children engage in are contributing towards their identities as competent and confident learners. Given the perspectives on learning taken up in *Te Whāriki* (predominantly emerging from bio-ecological and sociocultural theoretical lenses) that understand learning to be distributed, measures of that learning must be equally as distributed if they are to be fit-for-purpose, credible, and trustworthy. It is difficult to imagine in this context why or even how fixed and simplistic early learning standards might be imposed or introduced. In spite of this however, questions about child learning outcomes and the standards of such are regularly raised by Government officials, some academics, and commentators (Blaiklock 2010; Early Childhood Education Taskforce 2011; Woulfe 2014), and a new development, left-of-field has added to the call. A form of charstandardster or partnership model of schooling for New Zealand,[3] a recent iteration of which included a call for proposals for a school incorporating an early childhood setting (0-8yrs), raises the spectre of early learning standards for New Zealand based ECE from quite a new direction, that of the partnership kura.

10.6 NZ Partnership Kura

The establishment of partnership kura in 2012, created schools with the kinds of flexibilities, in terms of management and strategic direction neoliberals aspire to. By way of untagged funding these schools are given more control over finances. They can set their own salary scales, employ unregistered teachers, set their own curricula, hours, and holidays, and are exempted from provisions of the State Sector Act (O'Meara and Parata 2014), the law that oversees state sector employer/employee relations. The so-called greater freedoms are designed to enable partnership kura to operate more efficiently and effectively than schools within

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[3]Charter schools in New Zealand are referred to as "Partnership schools/kura hourua" or, abbreviated, "Partnership kura" (Ministry of Education 2014e).

the state system are said to be able to. They are also expected to help partnership kura meet the demands of their so-called consumers.

Partnership kura are targeted to students from Government identified and labelled "priority groups": groups that have traditionally underachieved in state schools, that is Māori and Pacific students, students from low socioeconomic groups, and students with special needs (O'Meara and Parata 2014). From a neoliberal perspective, it is believed that these groups will gain most from a school that has the freedom to respond to their needs, especially when the school's viability depends upon it meeting set achievement targets (Banks 2012).

Thus the increased freedoms of partnership kura travel hand in hand with increased accountabilities. The concept of provider capture was used in a Treasury Report to describe the condition of New Zealand education in the 1980s (NZ Treasury 1987). The concept embodies the belief that providers of education are more concerned with their own interests than those of consumers. To remedy this, providers must be made more directly accountable for the educational outcomes desired by consumers and the government (NZ Treasury 1987).

Whereas state schools have been made accountable to consumers via the BOT, and the government via ERO, partnership kura are governed by sponsors, who can include businesses, philanthropists, iwi, community organisations, faith-based groups, private schools, and culture-based educational organisations (Ministry of Education 2014c). They operate on fixed term contracts with the Minister of Education, and are required to meet specific targets in "four outcome areas: student achievement, student engagement, financial performance [and] enrolment of priority groups" (O'Meara and Parata 2014, p. 5). Achievement targets set for primary school students attending partnership kura in 2014 were related to the 2012 National Standards results of decile 3 state schools (O'Meara and Parata 2013)[4] The contracts the MOE sign with partnership kura identify interventions that can be applied if kura fail to meet their targets, the ultimate being "cancellation of the contract" (O'Meara and Parata 2014, p. 5). Partnership kura are fully funded by the government at a rate comparable with decile 3 state schools, and they can be (but do not need to be) for-profit institutions (Ministry of Education 2014e). Five partnership kura opened for business in 2014.

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[4]"A school's decile indicates the extent to which the school draws its students from low socioeconomic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the lowest proportion of these students" (Ministry of Education 2014a). In 2013, the average school per-pupil funding was about $6500 (Ministry of Education 2013). In 2014, a decile 3 school could receive around $320 more funding per pupil than a decide 10 school (Ministry of Education 2014b).

10.7 Partnership Kura for 0–8 Year Olds

A second call for proposals for partnership kura was released by the MOE in December of 2013. This time, the Government announced that applications involving "innovative options for 0–8 year olds" (O'Meara and Parata 2014, p. 1) would be given preference. Not all the same targets were to be set for the early childhood component of any successful 0–8 partnership kura (the targets for student achievement and student engagement were excluded), however legislative modifications, required for ECE to be included in a partnership contract, were signalled, and concerns for ensuring continuity of early learning between ECE and school were expressed (O'Meara and Parata 2014). As it has eventuated, no proposals for 0–8 partnership kura were judged successful in the second round of funding. This may mean that none were regarded as appropriately innovative, none applied, or none were able to conform to the requirements. However, the MOE suggests further rounds of applications are likely to be forthcoming, ECE would be included, and legislative change to simplify the process for ECE "may be desirable" (O'Meara and Parata 2014, p. 6). Given their emphasis on accountability for educational outcomes and the inclusion of an early childhood component to the partnership kura policy, the risk of Government responding to public calls for some sorts of early learning standards at school entry (see for example Barback 2014) remains high. Such a development would be easily effected in the 0–8 Partnership Kura arena and could later flow onto other ECE service types, thus opening the door to stanstandardsdards more broadly. A Ministerial forum on raising student achievement (in operation since 2012) has had a "continuity of early learning" work stream as one of its projects (Ministry of Education, n.d.). Within this, the implementing of curriculum and alignment of teaching practice across early childhood and school settings (0–8 years) has been a focus. A recently convened (December 2014) early learning advisory group (Parata 2014) has one of two main objectives as the provision of advice on "practical ways to align curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation across early learning services and the early years of school and kura" (Ministry of Education 2014f, p. 1). Much investment is being made by current MOE officials to further align the practices and policy frameworks of early schooling and ECE. As at the end of July 2015, the early learning advisory group report was not released. A report on the continuity of learning between early childhood and school in New Zealand, however, revealed that the different approaches to assessment between the early childhood and school sectors was consistent with curriculum in each sector; policy expectations about measures of learning were being heeded; different approaches to assessment were satisfactory in the view of parents' and teachers'; and that the kinds of assessment information being gathered and reported on as children transitioned to school was indeed useful (Mitchell et al. 2015).

10.8 New Zealand's National Standards

The partnership kura initiative came at the same time as the National Standards policy for primary education was bedding in, and, as noted, standards are employed in the initiative as an accountability tool, to measure student performance. This is a different purpose to the Government's previously stated aim for National Standards—which is to improve student achievement (Ministry of Education 2014d). The tracking of student achievement via National Standards is said to occur through the provision, to parents and teachers, of accurate and transparent information about how students are achieving in literacy and numeracy at each curriculum level. Individual children's achievement is examined and reported against a four-point scale. Children are deemed to be achieving: Above, At, Below, or, Well Below the National Standard. School wide data is aggregated and reported to the MOE (Thrupp and White 2013). This allows the Government to monitor school achievement rates. Publication of each school's results occurs via a Ministry of Education website and report called Public Achievement Information (PAI, see http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/national-education). From a neoliberal perspective, such public accountability encourages schools to be responsive to consumer demands by inciting comparison and competition.

In an effort to avoid any narrowing of the curriculum or introduction of further high stakes testing, which are problems commonly associated with National Standards (Hattie 2009), New Zealand standards are based upon existing curriculum achievement levels, which include numeracy stages and literacy progressions. They draw upon Overall Teacher Judgements (OTJ) gathered from a range of formal and informal assessment activities at each school. To ensure consistency, teachers and schools are expected to moderate their assessments internally or within local school clusters, and an online Progress and Consistency tool (PaCT), designed to assist teachers make consistent judgements, has recently been developed for schools that choose to use it (Thrupp and White 2013).

10.9 Partnership Kura, National Standards, and ECE: Conflating Neoliberal Agendas

As outlined earlier, to facilitate in education "the achievement of higher returns for each public dollar invested" (NZ Treasury 2013, p. 2), the government has attempted to replicate market-like conditions in a state funded education system, which manifests in schools via competition between publically funded institutions. Similar thinking has contributed to the development of New Zealand's ECE, whereby private for-profit and public not-for-profit early childhood services are funded to the same level, operate under the same regulatory framework, and implement the same curriculum. The consequence of the neoliberal and market oriented policies for ECE has been a marked shift from public to private provision

(Mitchell 2012), persistent questions over variability in the quality of education and care (ECE Taskforce 2011; Mitchell et al. 2011; Smith 1996), including worries over increasing numbers of unqualified educators working in ECE, and a lack of consumer choice. As private provision has come to dominate, services have shifted into higher income communities (Mitchell and Brooking 2007), and concerns over access to services by diverse populations have been raised. The Government response has been to target provision towards so-called priority groups and to leave the rest of the market to its own devices (New Zealand Educational Institute 2014).

10.10   Returning to the Question of Standards and ECE

The Government recognises that the highest return for the education dollar comes from investment in high quality ECE, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (NZ Treasury 2013). Additionally, smooth transitions between ECE and school are argued to increase the effectiveness of the education dollar by benefiting children's educational outcomes (O'Meara and Parata 2014). It is not surprising therefore, that having initiated National Standards and having introduced partnership kura and set the scene for ECE to be included, the government's questios about measuring outcomes of *Te Whāriki* remain (Education Review Office 2013b; Ministry of Education 2014f). In pursuing the neoliberal object of the highest possible return for each dollar invested in education, the government has become obsessed with measurement and accountability; this interest in the current climate supports a continued and troubling interest in the spectre of standards for ECE.

10.11   NZ Evidence on National Standards: Why Should ECE Remain Vigilant?

A comprehensive three-year study *Research, Analysis and Insight into National Standards (RAINS) Project* into the ways National Standards were experienced by staff, children, and parents in six diverse schools was completed in 2013 (Thrupp and White 2013). The results confirmed the kinds of fears raised by educators and parents noted at the beginning of this chapter. Standards had not provided the accurate and transparent information on student achievement that the government intended. This was partly because the OTJs were inconsistent: "On the one hand there is a mandated but crude four-point scale, while on the other hand the process behind this scale allows for huge variation in assessment approaches between schools" (Thrupp 2013, p. 13). Furthermore, while the introduction of Standards did impact favourably on teachers' understanding of the curriculum levels, on the

motivation of some teachers and children, and on targeting interventions, "the gains are overshadowed" by the harms (Thrupp and White 2013, p. 1). We discuss those particularly relevant to ECE below.

New Zealand's stance of using OTJ rather than a single high stakes test led some schoolteachers to see National Standards non-problematically as an extension of something they had already been doing: classroom-based formative assessment. This made it easier for them to accept National Standards when they were introduced (Thrupp and White 2013). In the context of an increasingly under-educated workforce (Mitchell et al. 2011), fierce competition for market share, and persistent calls for transparent measures of some sorts of fixed learning outcomes of ECE (Barback 2014; Blaiklock 2010; Education Review Office 2013a; Woulfe 2014), it is our concern that standards may become similarly viewed over time by some educators in ECE. This may ease the way for standards to be introduced more fully to ECE, and in doing so, disrupt efforts towards attaining a fuller and more robust national implementation of *Te Whāriki*. If the gaze on children's learning narrows from a dispositional, working theory and mana-strengthening basis, towards one of pre-school preparation and knowledge in some curriculum domains (principally literacy and numeracy), the promise of *Te Whāriki* is lost. However, as the Mitchell et al. (2015) research indicates, emergent practices between teachers in early childhood and schools are beginning to open up understandings about learning and achievement of children as they transition from early childhood to school. These developments represent a strengthening of curriculum implementation and teacher practice within the existing policy frameworks.

Additionally, when Standards were introduced to schools, some school leaders saw Standards and their school's progress towards them as a means of demonstrating their own high expectations of students and their school's improvement, and as a way of showcasing their school. This ignored how some schools are better placed than others for the majority of their students to achieve the Standards, and it led to dissonance: Some school personnel began to see the standards as a means of positively showcasing a school's quality, for others they remain troublesome measures, stigmatising children and driving the curriculum towards more narrow ends (Thrupp and White 2013). These findings hold warnings for ECE. We argue that if government pressure is placed on ECE to adopt more fixed and simplistic measures of some sorts of learning, then some ECE leaders, too, may see it as an opportunity to showcase their staff expertise, to capitalise on government incentives, and to increase market share. The purposes of ECE could become oriented towards preparedness for school, the National Standards testing environment, and assessment of particular skills and abilities at school entry. *Te Whāriki's* focus on learner identity, mana, and dispositions for learning would consequently diminish; the promise of ECE to create learning environments that foster learning dispositions, would be challenged. Furthermore, the risk of a fracturing of ECE along the lines of age and pre-school preparation could emerge, which in itself could lead to a re-emergence of the care and education divide that characterised New Zealand based ECE in decades past and many other countries approaches to ECE (Bennet 2003).

10.12 Standards: Lessons from the Schools-Sector for ECE

According to Thrupp and White (2013), National Standards brought with them increased workload related to accountability, and pressure to justify and modify OTJs. Interestingly, teachers did not experience pressure in the making of OTJs. They did this effectively and competently. However increased pressure and workload led some schools to focus the curriculum on perceived needs relative to standards for reading, writing, and mathematics. This has left less time for teachers to address concepts, key competencies, or to carry out topic work. There is evidence of a "two-tier curriculum being reinforced by the National Standards policy …" (Thrupp and White 2013, p. 19), one founded on a broad-based NZ curriculum, and the other based on National Standards. Teaching is becoming more technical, as teachers feel pressure to ensure students can demonstrate the mastery needed for National Standards (Thrupp and White 2013). The narrowing of the teaching and assessment focus towards so-called STEM subjects (sciences, technology, English and maths) is of growing concern to us.

In New Zealand, well qualified and experienced ECE teachers are becoming increasingly able to think broadly about children's engagement in play-based curriculum, and how, in this, children are becoming stronger in themselves, and disposed towards learning (Mitchell et al. 2015). If, as *Te Whāriki* holds, participation in quality ECE supports children to meet the world with interest, become involved, persist with challenges, communicate about their endeavours, and take responsibility for themselves and others, then this is the measure of learning and the learner we must remain invested in within New Zealand based ECE. Calls for fixed and simplistic measures of learning in narrow domains of curriculum (such as those seen in Barback 2014; Blaicklock 2010; Woulfe 2014) make no sense in this curriculum context. Such measures, even those that employ OTJs, that speak to decontextualised skills and externally composed standards, have no place in a rich and play-based learning environment that is premised on situated and complex learning.

Finally, once National Standards were introduced in New Zealand and schools felt pressure to conform, there was a general concern that non-complying schools would face sanctions, leading the authors of RAINS to suggest that "a new normativity" is creeping into schools as National Standards become integral to educational discourse (Thrupp and White 2013, p. 18). As National Standards become more entrenched in schools and in society, and unless educators in the ECE sector can articulate why ECE should continue in its stance against them, may trickle down into ECE with less controversy, especially through right-of-field-developments such as 0-8 Partnership Kura. This would be a travesty in New Zealand. Early childhood education has a broad and inclusive curriculum that encourages diversity, expects teachers to follow, respond to and expand the interests of children, and aspires for children's contributions to their worlds to be recognised and valued (Ministry of Education 1996). Evidence from New Zealand schools

suggests this could be compromised if a framework of standards was imposed on children in their early years.

10.13 Conclusion

The intent of partnership kura and National Standards seems admirable: to improve the educational achievement of priority students by introducing an alternative model of state funded education, to provide the new model with the flexibility it needs to respond efficiently and effectively to consumer demands, to monitor the achievement of students, provide transparent and publically available information, and enable families and teachers to support children's learning. Evidence is inconclusive about whether charter schools (Lubienski 2003) or National Standards (Thrupp 2013) will improve student achievement. Evidence does however suggest that National Standards will result in a narrowing of the curriculum, a more technical approach to teaching, and a 'sameness' as teachers work to instil in children the knowledge and skills they need to meet the National Standards, and as schools focus on ensuring they comply with targets (Thrupp and White 2013).

We have argued that an imposition of early learning standards via a downward thrust of summative forms of assessment or standards into early childhood education in Aotearoa is untenable. It would be inconsistent with curriculum policy and with long established principles for young children's learning taken up in this country. It behoves teachers in early childhood education to clarify and strengthen how they articulate information about children's learning, and to help their colleagues, in the schools children transition to, to understand the valued learning strengths and dispositions that children and their families bring with them from ECE into school.

That the spectre of early learning standards in NZ exists. Even if it does sit within the Partnership Kura initiatives, this does not automatically mean that standards in early childhood education should or need to become reified. As recent work has shown (Mitchell et al. 2015), parents, children, and teachers can usefully expand practices, clarify expectations, and build understandings about children's learning in ways that allow school teachers to welcome children and families to school with sound knowledge of learning strengths and interests. From there, school based teachers can capitalise on this knowledge and use it to support the transition of children from early childhood education into school. Our argument has been that the curriculum policy for this already exists; teachers' practices are now catching up. In our view, no need for additional measures of learning on children in their early childhood years presently exists.

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Chapter 11
The Early Learning and Development Guidelines in China: Retrospective and Prospective Views

Hongyu Gao and Liyan Huo

11.1 Introduction

Early learning and development standards are generally understood as statements that reflect expectations for children's development across a range of domains, including language and literacy, social and emotional development as well as physical health and cognitive development. China has applied the term 'guidelines' instead of 'standards' to avoid potential misuse of early learning standards for 'classifying' individual children according to the levels of accomplishments. With strong and continuous support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Education of China completed the Early Learning and Development Guidelines (hereinafter referred to as the "ELDG") for children aged 3–6 years, which were officially released as part of the second annual national early childhood education advocacy month in May 2013. The intent of early learning guidelines is to identify what children know, and what they are able to do at a particular period of time during early childhood education, and lay a solid foundation for developing national guidelines for assessing quality of early childhood education centres and preschool educational norms (Scott-Little 2006; UNICEF 2014). The guidelines can be used for a number of purposes from guiding curriculum development to upgrading teacher training. They also allow information to be collected through direct observation of children and used as a basis for comparison in measuring or judging capacity, quality, value or quantity of programs (Kagan and Britto 2005;

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Miyahara and Meyers 2008). This article firstly analyses why and how the ELDG have been developed in China. In addition, the domain framework that ensures holistic development of children is introduced. After that, the discussion focuses on 'Approaches to learning', which is a new concept that emerges in this document. After reviewing the challenges of how to capitalize on potential benefits of the ELDG and effectively implement this standards-based approach (Scott-Little 2006), some advocacy efforts that will contribute to achieving the successful implementation of ELDG in China are suggested.

11.2 Development of the Early Learning and Development Guidelines

The Early Learning and Development Guidelines are rooted in the social, cultural, and political values of China that are evident in the second decade of twenty-first century. The Chinese government has made early childhood development a national priority, recognizing the social and economic dividends that quality early learning opportunities bring for human capital in the long term (Li et al. 2015). Recognizing early childhood development as a national priority was a landmark decision in the history of Chinese preprimary education. On July 29, 2010, the Chinese government issued the "Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)" (hereafter referred to as the "Outline"). It ranked pre-primary education as one of the top eight tasks of education reform in the next decade, with an entire chapter dedicated to outlining its planning and deployment. Furthermore, it set out "the basic development goal of popularizing pre-primary education", that is, in the next 3 years, enrollment of children in kindergarten in the year before compulsory schooling will be 70 %, and by 2020 this rate should rise to 95 % (Xinhua News Agency 2010).

    In the same year (2010), on November 24, the State Council issued the "Commentary on the Current Development of Pre-primary Education" (Office of the State Council 2010) and endorsed pre-primary education as an important part of the protection and improvement of people's livelihood. The government applied a full range of system designs for pre-primary education and developed a series of strong policy measures. The Office of State Council aimed to expand resources, ensure investment and organize teacher groups, and regulate management. Regional governments were required to prepare a 3 years action plan at the county level to effectively alleviate the problem of inadequate access to kindergartens. On December 1st 2010, the State Council held a national preschool television and telephone conference to fully implement the "Commentary on the Current Development of Pre-primary Education." According to the reform blueprint, the development of pre-primary education in China has stepped into a golden decade. As pre-primary education has entered a new stage of development, how to provide high quality education for young children has become the top priority. One of the important steps for China to improve pre-primary education quality is the

development of the ELDG. China particularly emphasizes providing a basis for identifying reasonable expectations for children's learning and development, and guiding pre-primary teachers and parents to offer quality education and care at preschool and home (Ministry of Education 2012).

The concern was that "Without standards to define expectations for what children should know and be able to do, individual teachers or programs are left to decide what children should learn, and these decisions may or may not be age-appropriate or equitable" (Scott-Little 2006, p. 1). Thus the ELDG will help to create a social environment to mobilize all who have a role in the learning and development of young children.

The development of the ELDG in China is part of the "Going Global Project" launched by UNICEF in 2002, and supported by the Ministry of Education. The "Going Global with Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS)" is a partnership between UNICEF, Columbia, and Yale Universities aimed at developing appropriate early learning standards for monitoring children's early development in a range of countries (Li and Feng 2013; Miyahara and Meyers 2008). When the concept of the ELDS approach was shared amongst UNICEF Country Offices and their national partners throughout the region, a number of countries showed interest in undertaking the ELDS development process. The arrangement is that UNICEF "allows each country to define its own domain framework…using their own terminology and national perspectives… [which are] reflected in the clustering of dimensions and domains that map [ped] holistic child development" (Miyahara and Meyers 2008, p. 20). China has been involved in the development of national standards since the middle of 2005 (Miyahara and Meyers 2008). In the ELDG process, UNICEF contributed technical support to the Ministry of Education (UNICEF 2014). The development of the ELDG was a systematic process and occurred in six stages: initiating (2005.7–2006.3); expert group discussion and development of the early draft (2006.4–2006.11); content validation process (2006.12–2007.3); age validation process (2007.4–2008.10); development of the final draft (2007.4–2008.10); comments and revisions to the draft guidelines (2009.4–2012.6) (Li and Feng 2013). The content and age validation process ensured that the ELDG reflected the norms of children in the country. After 6 years' development and ongoing revision, the ELDG were officially released in October 2012.

11.3 Domain Framework of Early Learning and Development Guidelines

11.3.1 The Framework of ELDG

In the ELDG framework (Fig. 11.1), the conceptualization of children's holistic development at a given age is framed by domain, subdomain, goal and typical behaviour. In addition, educational advice offers guidelines for preschool teaching practice.
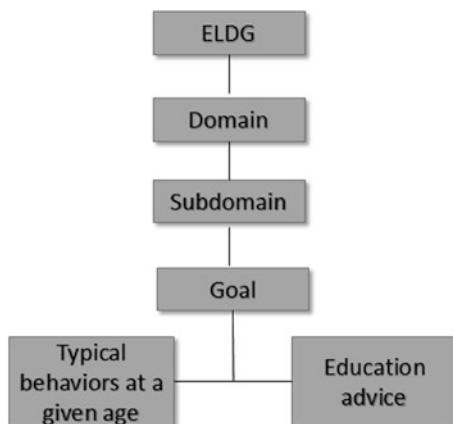
11.3.1.1 Domains of Development

The ELDG defines expectations of what the children should know and be able to
do at a given age. The domains of development are defined as different aspects
of a child's personality development, although young children develop holisti-
cally and their respective domains of development are interlinked (Bose 2010).
Applying a holistic approach to early education, the dimension of child develop-
ment and learning is divided into five basic domains: physical health and motor
development; language and literacy; socio-emotional development; science; and
arts. Within each separate domain are subdomains, which refer to specific areas
of development within a domain (e.g., gross motor development, is a subdomain
within the domain of physical health and motor development). Table 11.1 shows
the 11 subdomains for the five domains.

Table 11.1 Subdomains of five domains within the ELDG

Physical health and motor development	Language and literacy	Society	Science	Arts
Subdomain 1: Physical and mental conditions	Subdomain 1: Listening and speaking/ communication	Subdomain 1: Social interaction	Subdomain 1: Scientific inquiry	Subdomain 1: Artistic perception and appreciation
Subdomain 2: Motor development	Subdomain 2: Reading and writing readiness	Subdomain 2: Social adaptation	Subdomain 2: Mathematical cognition	Subdomain 2: Artistic expression and creativity
Subdomain 3: Living habit and living ability				

11.3.1.2 Goal

A Goal is a statement about expectations of what children should know and be able to do at a given age. China has applied the term 'goal' instead of 'standard', which is widely used in early learning standards in other countries. These learning goals are the general skills, behaviours and concepts which children should develop within each domain of development. They reflect the content that is meaningful and based on research about children's development at the preschool age. The ELDG identified a total of 35 goals within the five domains. For example, in Subdomain1: Listening and speaking, three goals are included:

Goal 1:   Child has listening and comprehension ability of the spoken language.
Goal 2:   Child is willing to talk and communicate clearly.
Goal 3:   Child has civilized language habits.

11.3.1.3 Typical Behaviours at a Given Age

The Early Learning and Development Guidelines provide visible and measurable expectations for children's development at a given age. The ELDG refer to the age ranges of 3–6 years (36–72 months) and is divided in age groups as follows: 3–4 years (36–48 months); 4–5 years (48–60 months); and 5–6 years (60–72 months).

11.3.1.4 Educational Advice

In order to achieve the learning and development goals, the ELDG provides 87 forms of educational advice and strategies for teachers, parents and other early care givers. Strategies are various activities that adults could carry out with a child at home or in a kindergarten in order to speed up and stimulate the achievement of a goal. These strategies suggest that adults respect children's personality and subjectivity, respect their interests and needs, and create developmentally appropriate environments to satisfy each child's needs. Some educational advice also highlights the potential harm of some educational practices to children's lifelong development. For instance, some advice states: "Do not punish your children, because he/she may lie in order to avoid your punishment". The ELDG advocate the use of positive guidance to support children's learning and development.

11.3.2 Approaches to Learning in the ELDG

In the officially issued ELDG, the concept of "Approaches to learning" emerged first in authoritative publications of China. Approaches to learning refer to learning habits, dispositions and styles through which a child embarks on a learning path.

Approaches to Learning are not about the competence and skills which children possess but how children orient and direct themselves in the learning process. Although Approaches to learning was not created as an independent domain in the officially issued ELDG, in the section titled "Some aspects we should clarify in carrying out Early Learning and Development Guidelines" (Ministry of Education 2012), the guidelines emphasize that we should "focus more on children's approaches to learning" (p. 2). In the guidelines, key points about Approaches to learning include: initiative, persistence, not being afraid of difficulties, exploring new things, taking reasonable risks, and being willing to imagine and create (Ministry of Education 2012). These can be seen as the key dimensions of Approaches to learning. However, in early drafts, the ELDG had six domains: Health development, Language development, Social and Emotional Development, Science and Arts, and a separate domain for Approaches to learning. But this domain disappeared in the formally issued ELDG. The factors accounting for this change are discussed in Sect. 11.3.2.1.

11.3.2.1 The Early Drafts: Approaches to Learning as a Separate Domain

In early drafts of the ELDG, China created a separate domain for Approaches to learning, addressing learning attitudes, learning behaviour, and learning habits (Miyahara and Meyers 2008). Compared with the other five domains of children's learning and development, Approaches to learning was a new field, which did not appear in any prior policies about pre-primary education in China. The developmental process of children within the domain occurred in two subdomains: learning attitudes and learning behaviours. Table 11.2 shows the subdomains and standards within the Approaches to learning domain in early drafts.

There are three reasons why Approaches to learning was a domain addressed in the draft ELDG. Firstly, Approaches to learning is a critical dimension of school readiness. The way a child approaches learning can be nurtured in the early years; young children develop readiness skills by engaging in learning experiences through play, which strengthen children's cognitive capacities such as paying attention, remembering rules, persisting at challenging or frustrating tasks,

Table 11.2 Subdomains within the approaches to learning domain

I. Subdomain: Learning attitudes	II. Subdomain: Learning behaviour and learning habits
Standard 1: Child demonstrates curiosity and interest to the world	Standard 1: Child demonstrates attentiveness in the learning activities
Standard 2: Child is able to take initiative	Standard 2: Child demonstrates persistence in what s/he is doing
Standard 3: Child is willing to imagine and create	Standard 3: Child is able to make plan and manage their behaviours
	Standard 4: Child is able to reflect and learn in different ways from her/his own experiences

and learning from mistakes to achieve a larger goal (Tomlinson and Hyson 2012). Research from the USA shows that children with higher proficiency of Approaches to learning, such as initiative and perseverance, do better in both literacy and mathematics at the end of the kindergarten year and the beginning of first grade (Conn-Powers 2006). Secondly, Approaches to Learning was to overcome the tendency of early childhood education being formalised in China. The negative influence of a Chinese exam-oriented education system and profit-oriented educational institutions influenced kindergarten teachers' and parents' perspectives and failed to foster the educational philosophy of the ELDG. While an exam-oriented system is affected by many factors, a focus on intense academic training influences children (Cheng 2014). Approaches to learning has the potential to assist educators to review their images of children, learn to cherish the uniqueness of the early years, and follow the development of children's bodies and minds to implement scientific early childhood education, which will benefit the children's long-term wellbeing.

Thirdly, international comparative studies suggest many countries or states identified Approaches to learning as an independent domain in their early learning and development standards (Scott-Little et al. 2003). For example, the National Education Goals Panel of America identified Approaches to learning as one of the five dimensions of school preparations for children, along with physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language development, and cognition and general knowledge (Kagan et al. 1995). This category was adopted in the early learning and development standards in many other countries. A study that collected data from National Child Care Information Centres in America showed that of the 35 states surveyed, 14 states included Approaches to learning; and although the learning standards from three states (Arkansas, California, Missouri) were not available for review, they had addressed Approaches to learning in the learning standards (Yan 2009). Some developing countries undertaking the Going Global Project also included Approaches to learning as a separate domain in their ELDS. Approaches to learning have received increasing attention in recent years and China has aligned itself with the global trend of adopting ELDS.

11.3.2.2 The Formally Issued ELDG: Approaches to Learning no Longer an Independent Domain

In the formally issued ELDG, Approaches to learning was no longer an independent domain. Instead, it is integrated in the other five domains (see Fig. 11.2). This means that when children are engaging in artistic activity, imagination and creativity could be promoted at the same time. When they are actively experiencing scientific inquiry, their ability to explore new materials, consider difficulties and take reasonable risks can also be developed. No matter which content or domain children are learning, Approaches to learning can play a part in learning processes and outcomes. However, Approaches to learning cannot be learned mechanically. The development of Approaches to learning is realized through children's natural
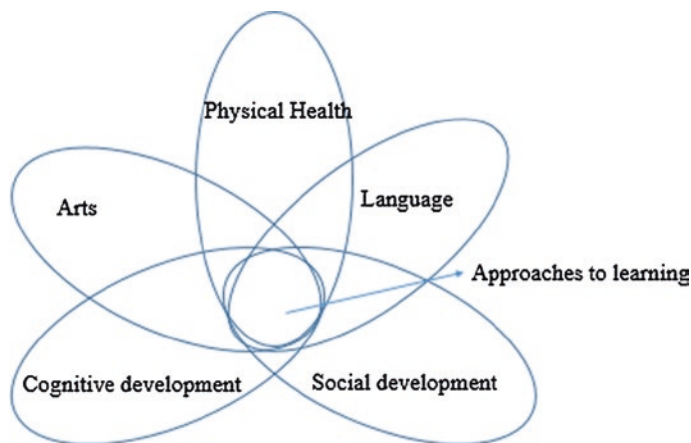
Fig. 11.2 The relationship between approaches to learning and other domains

activities in these five domains. As a consequence, Approaches to learning should be encouraged by offering children many avenues for developing physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills, where teachers provide well-planned activities and materials in all domains to cater for a diverse range of children. The decision to integrate Approaches to learning into other domains was taken in order to avoid potential misuse of this domain through mechanical training of individual children.

The decision to integrate Approaches to learning with other domains was also made to align with the Chinese Pre-primary Education Guidance Program (Trial) (Li and Feng 2013). Prior to the ELDG, China had developed a national Pre-primary Education Guidance Program (Trial) in 2001 (Ministry of Education 2001). In this document, learning areas are divided into five domains. For more than a decade, this comprehensive developmental framework for young children had been widely used and guided teachers' curriculum design and implementation. If the ELDG had conceptualized children's development within six domains, this may have led to confusion for pre-primary teachers and other educational practitioners. It may also have influenced adoption of the ELDG by preschool teachers. It was necessary therefore, to arrive at a consensus on the expectations for children's development and for teaching before the ELDG were formally issued.

11.4 Some Initiatives and Ways Forward

11.4.1 Implementation Objectives and Usages

Since their release, the ELDG have been playing a positive role in improving the quality of early childhood education. Two models were formed for implementing

the Early Learning and Development Guidelines: a top-down and a bottom-up model (Huo and Shi 2013).The top-down model refers to the efforts that the Ministry of Education makes to ensure this important document is implemented effectively. The first step was to organize a number of experts in early childhood education to interpret the ELDG for preschool teachers, parents and professionals working with young children, and to promote its advanced ideas and great value for the improvement of preschool education. At the national level, the MOE aims to strengthen the planning and implementation of the ELDG nationwide. The ELDG will be used to influence national policy so that school and developmental readiness can be monitored, which in turn can ensure more equitable readiness throughout the country by providing strong commitment of resources and necessary support, especially for marginalized children. Thus policy advocacy is an important objective of the ELDG. Some local governments have designed proposals for the implementation of the ELDG in their province, district or cities. For example, the Hunan Preschool Education Committee, entrusted by the Education Department of Hunan Province, has designed a proposal to trial the implementation of the ELDG. The proposal includes trial contents and objectives, subjects and methods, main steps and supportive conditions (Peng 2013). The bottom-up model refers to some preschools that have taken the initiative in using the ELDG to guide teacher training, curriculum development and school-based educational research. Many preschool teachers use the ELDG to observe and assess children's learning and development, to better understand children in play and natural activities, and to develop realistic expectations of children with regard to what they are able to achieve and how they can best support early learning. Teachers learn about the ELDG by using the guidelines in their daily practice, which is a direct and effective model of implementing the ELDG.

In recent years, the ELDG has been used as a guide for curriculum development for early learning programmes, and improvement of instructional practices and parenting skills. China hasn't set national early learning objectives before. By clearly defining the expectations for what children should learn, and how they will demonstrate what they have learned, the ELDG helps ministries to set national curriculum objectives based on expected outcomes for children, which are developmentally appropriate. This in turn allows early childhood practitioners to set educational goals and plan lessons more appropriately for children. The application of the ELDG allows many preschools to revisit existing preschool education curricula and to guide curriculum improvement.

The ELDG are also used as a basis for developing tools to help improve instructional practices among early childhood practitioners. For example, Weng (2015) used the ELDG to guide herself to redesign the art activity area in her classroom. In the guidelines, a subdomain of the Art domain is Artistic expression and creativity. It has one goal, which is: "children are born artists and have the potential to express themselves freely and artistically". Based on understanding of this goal, Weng (2015) provided more open-ended materials for children. She encourages each child to create their own picture album, and shares their artistic works every week. Understanding the domains, subdomains, and goals, and how they can be

observed is a solid basis for pedagogy. Such a basis allows center-based care providers to plan developmentally appropriate group and individual activities.

Some researchers have used the ELDG to revise pre-service and in-service preschool teacher training. Cheng (2014) pointed out that the ELDG should be integrated in preschool teacher training plans. This helps teachers know how to use the ELDG to observe and assess children's learning and development. With the integration into teacher training, the ELDG will be effective in improving the quality of teacher training, and promote preschool teachers' professional growth. Wang (2014) has suggested that the ELDG should not only be the guidelines for children's learning and development, but also the guidelines for teacher training institutions to review existing teacher education curriculum and teacher training programs. She suggested that pre-service teacher education curriculum should offer practical courses on how to plan and organize activities in the five domains. In-service teacher training programs should also include the ELDG in the training design.

In order to find effective models to implement the ELDG, we have done some pilot studies in urban China. The first pilot study focused on how to use the ELDG to guide preschool teachers' observation. The second is exploring a model for nurturing children's approaches to learningapproaches to learning with the guidance of the ELDG.

11.4.1.1 Pilot Study 1: Using the ELDG to Guide Child Observations

This pilot study is conducted from a comparative perspective and contributes to both curriculum reform and grounded research. A curriculum development project was initiated in 2012 in Daxing District, a typical rural area in Beijing. This is an action research project in which preschool directors and teachers collaborated to develop a new curriculum and instruction model in No. 1 Kindergarten of Daxing Huangcun County. Before this project, the curriculum in this kindergarten was not appropriate for the children's development level and did not interest children in learning. In 3 years of research and practice, Z model was developed based on the application of the ELDG. The ELDG provide a visible and measurable demonstration of what children can do at a given age, with each demonstration clearly related to a respective age. According to the project, Z model consists of three continuous steps: *observing, analysing and scaffolding,* which can be applied by teachers in their instruction (Table 11.3).

Observing and recording children's critical behaviours during play is the first step of improving teacher instruction. Here we emphasize the teacher's act of

Table 11.3 Z model for observation

Z model for observation involves
Observing and recording the significant behaviours of children in the classroom with the ELDG framework
Using knowledge of the ELDG to analyze children's behaviours
Making decisions to scaffold children's further learning and development

deciding what is noteworthy and deserves further attention. Prior research shows that "identifying the significant events in a teaching situation" (van Es and Sherin 2008, p. 245) is an important capability for teachers, which is a skill that novice preschool teachers, and even some experienced teachers need to develop. In Z model, teachers are encouraged to use the ELDG to decide what significant behaviours should be observed. The ELDG can provide a framework for teachers to guide observation. For example, in the "Language and literacy" domain, several learning goals are set for children, such as the goal "Child is willing to talk and communicate clearly", so teachers could pay focused attention to children's behaviours on this goal, and record what children do and say in order to carefully consider what they have noticed.

In the second step, the ELDG can be used to analyse children's behaviour. Specifically, observed behaviour can be connected to the ELDG's statements of children's learning goals. After that, teachers are encouraged to find each child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD),[1] which is the core in analysing children's behaviour. By applying the ELDG, the preschool teachers are better able to analyse children's developmental levels and needs, and better understand children in their daily practice. For instance, in the observation a teacher in this project wrote about 5-year-old Lin: "Children are riding bicycles, they have to take turns as there are not enough bikes, and some children prefer red bikes, some like blue ones. When the children began to quarrel about who is the next to play, a child suggested writing names on paper. Lin, who always stands by and watches things happen, said 'write in blue…and write in red', his voice is full of excitement. He means to use blue pen to write the names of children who want to ride blue bicycles, and write in red for others." In this observation, Lin's behaviours can be linked to the learning goal "Child is willing to talk and communicate clearly" from the "Language and literacy" domain, or to the goals in the "Society" domain, such as the "Child is confident and independent"; or the "Child is willing to initiate an activity or think up ideas in activities".

Scaffolding is the third step of Z model. Scaffolding means the ability of teachers to provide appropriate teaching plans for children. According to their observation and analysis of children's behaviours as well as recognition of children's ZPD, teachers develop a meaningful curriculum and organize the environment to better meet the needs of the children. In this step, detailed instructions, such as the 87 forms of educational advice in the ELDG, have offered useful guidance for teachers. To sum up, Z model redefines curriculum and instruction in preschool. The ideology for this model is that children are active learners and teachers are active observers. Z model is not only a model for teachers to design lessons and organize teaching, but it is also an effective way for teachers to implement the ELDG in their teaching practice.

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[1]It is a concept introduced, yet not fully developed, by Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) during the last 10 years of his life. Vygotsky stated that a child follows an adult's example and gradually develops the ability to do certain tasks without help.

11.4.1.2 Pilot Study 2: Nurturing Children's Approaches to Learning with Integrated Theme-Based Activities

Another pilot study promotes children's approaches to learning through a project called "Five Steps Theme-based Curriculum", which is being undertaken in preschools in the Shunyi District of Beijing. The project aims at cultivating children's positive approaches to learning by respecting children's holistic learning and development through well-planned activities. The activities are organized in five continuous steps that include initiating, perception, exploring, communicating and reflecting. With effective instructional processes from teachers, children's different Approaches to learning are simulated and increased at each step.

Initiating is the starting point for children's learning processes. In this stage, children's curiosity is highly valued. Young children are very curious about every new impression, and are keen to use their enthusiasm to uncover the surrounding world (Jirout and Klahr 2012). When teachers start a plan, they mobilize children's internal motivation by providing an appropriate environment and using teaching strategies to evoke children's interest in a new topic.

Perceiving. Children differ in the sensory learning modality of environmental stimuli and different sensory stimuli affect the children's perception and reaction to the environment (Mahdjoubi and Akplotsyi 2012). It is important for teachers to offer various materials for children to touch, smell, and observe, so they have many opportunities to use multisensory methods to perceive these materials.

Exploring. Ample time is allowed for children to fully explore the materials in this period. Some challenging tasks for children are offered, and children are encouraged to solve problems by themselves. Teacher guidance is offered when necessary.

Communicating. At this stage, children are encouraged to communicate discoveries to others and express their findings in their own ways.

Reflecting. Here children look back on their learning experiences and learn from their peers' experiences. Teachers organize children to review and share their experiences in front of the whole class, and summarize key experiences or general principles for children to use in other settings.

The experience from the Five Steps Project suggests that the development of children's Approaches to learning is realized through well-planned activities in all domains, with the support of adults. When children perceive the message that they are capable learners, they become engaged and excited about learning. A well-prepared environment is another key factor that promotes Approaches to learning. With teachers providing well-prepared materials and children given ample time to deeply engage in developmentally appropriate activities, we have found that external rewards and incentives become unnecessary, and that children are more likely to have positive approaches to learning. Moreover, the teacher's role of taking responsibility to encourage and support children at preschool, as well as working

with parents, is critical in nurturing approaches to learning because of the focus on developing caring and respectful relationships with children and their families.

Research from the pilot study has shown that the Five Steps Project makes children's learning processes visible and also helps teachers know how to support children's learning effectively. During the implementation of the project, the ELDG, accompanied by detailed instructions such as the 87 forms of educational advice, have offered useful guidance for teachers to support children's Approaches to learning.

11.4.2 Ways Forward

Over the past 3 years, the ELDG has been used in various ways in various settings. In reviewing the goals and implementation processes to date, we have identified three major challenges encountered with implementing the ELDG effectively. These include adoption of the ELDG, the relationship between the ELDG and other documents, and teacher training.

The issue of concept clarification and eventual adoption of the ELDG is being faced by China. China has used the term guidelines instead of standards to avoid potential misuse of early learning standards for classifying individual children according to the levels of accomplishment (Miyahara and Meyers 2008). However, some practitioners have had difficulty in distinguishing between the two concepts. Yang (2014) found that 68.6 % of preschool teachers surveyed indicated that the national guidelines would be the single standard used to measure children's learning accomplishments. Should the ELDG be used as a framework to assess children? What is the relationship between the ELDG and existing assessment systems? These questions are frequently asked by practitioners working with children, which indicate that teachers need further understanding of this document. It also suggests that some concepts in this policy require further clarification. It is important that teachers learn the content of the ELDG and also gain an understanding of how and where the guidelines are to be used, and the degree to which their work is being held accountable through use of the ELDG.

The relationship between the ELDG and other documents also needs consideration. Before the release of the ELDG, some provinces or cities, for example, Shanghai, had already issued local early learning standards and had child assessment systems (Guo et al. 2012). The data from examining the early learning standards document indicate that the standards and the assessments may not be directly aligned with the national ELDG. To ensure the ELDG can be used widely, it is important to deal with the inconsistency among local early learning standards and child assessment systems, and the national ELDG. If the relationship between the early learning standards and child assessment data is unclear, it may cause confusion in practice, and potentially have a negative effect on local or national teacher training. Only when people working with children have a common understanding of the concept, can the implementation process move ahead smoothly.

Lack of high quality teacher training is another factor that affects the implementation process of the ELDG. In order to support teachers to better understand the guidelines, the Ministry of Education has been leading large-scale teacher training, and local governments have also made training plans for their teachers. They provide frequent training and workshops about the ELDG, but teachers still have inadequate in-service training on this issue. Many teachers, particularly in rural China, have limited opportunities for in-service professional training. This has greatly constrained the speed and quality of implementing the ELDG. The education philosophy that underlies this national reform agenda requires most preschool teachers to rethink their current practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about children's learning processes and outcomes, and to teach in ways they have never taught before. Many teachers have no previous experience in applying such an approach in their work. The ELDG are completely new, and teachers first need to know its intent, usage and potential benefits. When they decide to use it in their preschool, teachers need continuous support in solving issues that may be encountered in practice. Teachers need know-how in order to make a new vision of practice guided by the early learning and development guidelines a reality. This cannot be conveyed by means of traditional top-down teacher training models and strategies. These traditional training methods merely support teachers' acquisition of new knowledge or skills and make no difference to teachers' practice. There is recognition that, to make a difference, change must be situated and sustained at the classroom level (Hopkins and Levin 2000). Effective professional development models must provide occasions for teachers to reflect critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners, while in the workplace (Horn and Little 2010). As the success of the reform agenda relies on teachers accomplishing the difficult tasks of learning the skills and perspectives of new visions of practice, it is necessary to rethink and redesign existing teacher training programs (Guo et al. 2012).

Supportive conditions at different levels are also very important for teachers to accept and internalize a new working approach. In China, supportive conditions for implementing the ELDG still have a long way to go. In a survey of 300 preschool teachers, 61 % reported that their current working conditions are not appropriate for them to apply the ELDG in daily teaching activities. For example, large classes are common in preschools. As 40–50 children are included in one class, keeping them safe in the classroom is the teacher's primary responsibility. It is not easy for them to apply the ELDG, which advocate respect for individual difference. In the survey, 43 % of teachers suggested there is a huge gap between their current professional ability and the ELDG requirements (Dong 2013). Ineffective teacher training, the lack of equipment, and the physical environment in preschools has constrained the implementation of the ELDG (Dong 2013). School culture has a significant influence on teachers' attitudes towards reform. If school cultures are positive about the current reform, teachers are likely to have more confidence to take up the challenge and be more concerned about the reform.

In another survey related to mathematics and the ELDG, 33.6 % of teachers reported that their preschools had no strong motivation to learn and apply the

ELDG, and that they felt lonely and helpless in this reform (Yang 2014). Prior research suggests that effective professional development must be collaborative, involving sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice, rather than on individual teachers. Further, an emphasis is often placed on the benefits of collaboration within a community of inquiry for supporting teacher learning and practice revision (Butler and Schnellert 2012). For preschool directors, building a learning community for teachers in preschools is necessary. It gives teachers a safe place for collaborative inquiry to find appropriate methods for applying the ELDG. Such action has the potential to foster meaningful shifts in practice. In the learning community, teachers are supported to struggle with uncertainties together and share the successes they may experience during the process of applying the ELDG in daily practice.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of the ELDG has had a positive influence on early childhood education reform in China. However, how to maximize its potential benefits and minimize the risk of harm in the future years are also big issues that need further research and solid practice.

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Part III
Redefining Professionalism

The professionalization of those who work, lead and manage in early childhood settings has been on an upward trajectory for the last decade and is an international trend. The growth of early childhood professionalism has had different starting points and has followed different paths within the Asia-Pacific region. Current challenges relate to the initial preparation of educators, raising qualification levels, on going professional learning, and the quality of the workforce in both the public and private sectors. Questions remain about the recruitment and ongoing professional learning of teachers in early childhood education given that the broad consensus among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers is that the quality of early childhood services—and ultimately the outcomes for children and families—depends on well-educated, experienced and 'competent' staff.

The professionalism of early childhood teachers has been the subject of increasing attention globally for over a decade, and this is reflected in the situation in **Australia**. **Megan Gibson, Tamara Cumming and Lyn Zollo** (Chap. 12) examine some of the discourses of early childhood teacher professionalism and in particular qualifications as one way in which being professional is discursively produced. The chapter examines the literature to provide insights and understandings about professionalism; the Australian early childhood policy context, and preservice teacher education. It draws attention to theoretical and methodological approaches that will enable new and different understandings of what it means to be an early childhood professional in the current discursive conditions in Australia. The chapter draws on research from a study with preservice early childhood teachers that use a Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis to locate knowledge/power, regimes of truth, and resistance. The chapter concludes by presenting provocations about ways forward for preservice teacher education and policy.

A thought-provoking insight into the history of education in **India**, which can be traced back several thousand years, is the topic of Chap. 13. **Amita Gupta** considers ancient Indian texts that provide detailed accounts of the role of the teacher; qualities and dispositions of good teachers; effective pedagogies; expectations,

and appropriate codes of teacher conduct that portray an image of a *guru*, a highly respected and revered individual. The story weaves back to contemporary times to document the challenges of teacher professionalization and professionalism that Indian early years teachers face in contemporary times. The discussion examines policies of early childhood teacher preparation and then concentrates on some of the tensions that are being confronted in the process of increasing teacher professionalization. Gupta concludes with recommending the reconceptualizing and restructuring of early years education so that teachers feel validated and confident about their classroom practice and are empowered to facilitate children's learning and development in all dimensions.

Chapter 14 provides a case study of three Soka kindergartens located respectively in **Japan, Hong Kong** and **Singapore**. Soka kindergartens adopt a social constructivist view, which is based upon a Nichiren Buddhist philosophy and humanistic education. In this chapter **Kiiko Ikegami and Susan Grieshaber** explore how 12 Soka educators conceptualized quality early childhood education in their respective kindergarten classrooms. Data gathered from Ikegami's doctoral study are used to discuss the differences between modernist discourses of quality and those valued in Soka education. Much of the research about quality in early childhood education has been conducted from western perspectives using universalized measuring standards. This chapter builds an awareness of alternative ways of conceptualizing quality in early childhood education in the Asia-Pacific region.

In recent years, **China** has experienced a new policy agenda that calls for universal access to pre-primary education. This government initiative has significantly changed the landscape of the workforce in terms of quantity and quality. Since 2010 there has also been rapid expansion in prior-to-school early childhood settings, creating new demands for early childhood education. In Chap. 15, **Minyi Li, Liwei Liu and Xin Fan** examine how the Chinese pre-primary workforce has evolved, considering issues such as the characteristics of the pre-primary workforce since 2010, and how the workforce might be strengthened to meet the challenges of rapid expansion. A provincial-level data set is utilized to illustrate the challenges associated with China's policy of rapid expansion.

Significant advances in increasing access to formalized early childhood care and education have been made in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region. With the increasing rates of enrolment the importance of ensuring quality in the provision of early education and care services has been recognized. Given the considerable diversity in socio-economic circumstances; cultural and linguistic practices; geo-political environments, and historical backgrounds of formalized provision that exist across the Asia-Pacific region, variation in what is perceived as 'quality' is not surprising. In Chap. 16, **Emma Pearson and Jenny James** explore the contextual nature of quality using an example from the Pacific island nation of **Vanuatu**, where the national early childhood teacher preparation program responds in novel ways to unique contextual circumstances and needs. The chapter highlights the importance of incorporating the most effective elements of existing practice into attempts to enhance quality in teacher preparation 'standards' across diverse contexts.

The reflective thoughts documented in Chap. 17 were inspired partly by a collaborative effort to introduce postmodern ethics in early childhood teacher education, with the goal of developing culturally appropriate strategies to enhance professionalism in **Hong Kong Special Administrative Region** (SAR). During a journey to understand the topic of professionalism, **Gail Yuen** provides a critical perspective on discourses, knowledge and values in the postmodern society of Hong Kong. The chapter first explores the notion of being professional in a postmodern era, highlighting the challenges of postmodern life for teachers, the challenge of modernist discourses in defining professionalism, and the urgency of reconstructing professionalism in early childhood education. The taken-for-granted Chinese culture as lived in Hong Kong and manifested by Confucianism as well as the uneasy tensions between Confucian and postmodern ethics are examined. This reflective journey ends with a final remark on how to support ethical and critically reflective practice.

Chapter 12
Re-Thinking Discourse of Teacher Professionalism in Early Childhood Education: An Australian Perspective

Megan Gibson, Tamara Cumming and Lyn Zollo

12.1 Introduction

The professionalism of early childhood teachers has been the subject of increasing attention globally for over a decade (Moss 2006; Osgood 2012; Urban 2010). While understandings of professionalism have often been harnessed to discourses of quality in early childhood research literature (Urban 2004; Penn 2011), there has also been increasing attention to the ways discourses (based on the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault) produce understandings of being professional, becoming professional and constructing professionalism. Foucault (1972/1989) conceptualised discourses as ways of speaking, thinking or understanding that come to be accepted as truths. This means that discourses regulate possibilities for what can be spoken, thought or understood.

In order to understand ways pre-service early childhood teachers make sense of professionalism, this chapter examines some of the discourses of early childhood teacher professionalism, and focuses on qualifications as one way in which being professional is discursively produced. In particular, the chapter makes visible some of the discursive tensions involved in pre-service teacher intentions to pursue careers in primary school teaching/specialist early childhood teacher in primary

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school, rather than in the child care sector. In doing so, it makes visible some of the effects of particular discourses of professionalism and the ways they may be taken up by pre-service teachers as they make important career decisions.

The chapter begins by turning to the literature to provide insights and understandings about professionalism; the Australian early childhood policy context, and early childhood initial teacher education. Next, attention is drawn to theoretical and methodological approaches that enable new and different understandings of what it means to be an early childhood professional in the current discursive conditions in Australia. Third, data from a study with pre-service early childhood teachers are interrogated using a Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis to locate dynamics of knowledge/power, regimes of truth and resistance. The chapter concludes with discussion and ways forward that provide provocations for early childhood initial teacher education and policy, as well as the field of early childhood.

12.2 Conceptualising Professionalism and Professionalization

Ideas of professionalism and professionalisation are often conflated, and although they are interlinked, each of these terms has a distinct meaning. While professionalism can be thought of as the practices of members of a profession, professionalisation concerns the systemic making of a profession. The language of profession and professionalism emerged from occupations in the early eighteenth century, in particular, distinguishing an initially small number of occupations, including religion, law and medicine (Sutherland 2001). In the 1950s and 60s, Talcott Parsons proposed an influential definition of professions as having: a central regulatory body that ensures the quality of professional practice; a code of conduct as a way of "producing and managing the professional body of knowledge", and, ways of regulating "numbers, selection and training of future professionals" (Urban 2008, p. 140). Urban argues that these conceptualisations of professionalism connect back to "knowledge, and its modes of production, distribution and application" (p. 140), an emphasis that can fail to acknowledge the complex ways in which professionalism is expressed in early childhood practice (Urban 2008).

Urban's (2008, 2010) arguments for the distinctiveness of early childhood professional practice, and of what makes educators 'professional', draw in a number of important elements and tensions. For example, discourses of teaching offer links to the professional status enjoyed by teachers of school-age children (Ortlipp et al. 2011), whilst also potentially 'schoolifying' educators' understandings of their role, and ways of working with children (Woodrow 2008). Tensions also exist around the adoption of discourses of professionalism anchored in standards and measurable outcomes (Bradbury 2012), and their potential to undermine the unmeasurable yet important emotionality of early childhood practice

(Osgood 2010). The rise of corporate ownership and management of early childhood services has also been said to have shaped commercialised professionalism in service of shareholder value, rather than in service of children and families (Woodrow 2008).

Processes of professionalisation are distinguished by matters such as initial qualification requirements, ongoing professional development and equitable pay. Large scale professionalisation strategies were implemented in New Zealand and the UK for example, with emphasis upon a degree-qualified early childhood workforce, and teacher registration in New Zealand (Duhn 2010), and credentialing of the Early Years Professional Status in the UK (Nutbrown 2012). In Australia, the implementation of an extensive early childhood education reform agenda is underway, part of which focuses upon the professionalisation of the workforce. The Early Years Workforce Strategy (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) 2012) aims to professionalise the sector through "improved and nationally consistent qualification requirements" (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) 2012, 4), ongoing professional learning, and leadership development opportunities. We now give a brief outline of the Australian early childhood policy context, then discuss influences on discourses of professionalism in this context.

12.3 The Australian Early Childhood Policy Context

Early childhood contexts in Australia include family day care, child care[1] (often referred to as long day care), kindergarten/preschool and the lower years of primary school. Early childhood education programs and early childhood care programs have historically developed separately, with services to address care, health or education (Tayler 2011). Kindergarten/preschool has provided early childhood programs for children in the year prior to commencing school, with a focus on play-based learning (Ailwood 2003). Historically, child care has been provided as a service to care for children while mothers/parents participate in paid work (Brennan 2007; Wong 2007). The split between preschool/education and child care/care has, in part, been attributed to the origins of these early childhood contexts, although there have been shifts to integrate education and care. Yet, purposes for kindergarten/preschool and child care "have been, and are still diverse" (Tayler

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[1]In Australian policy the term 'child care' often encompasses a range of early childhood contexts. This is not always the case and a key policy that is drawn upon in this chapter New Directions (Rudd and Macklin 2007) refers to both child care and long day care. Yet, the requirement central to this policy for four-year degree qualified teachers to work in centre-based long day care, does not apply to other prior to school contexts—family day, occasional care and so on. Therefore in this chapter the discussion of child care focuses on centre-based child care or long day care and as such the term 'centre-based child care' is used.

2011, p. 215). Like elsewhere in the world (for example, United Kingdom, United States, Belgium, Norway and Finland; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006, p. 48), Australia has attempted to bring education and care together through models of integrated early childhood centres (Tayler 2011).

Australia's early childhood workforce is diverse, with a range of qualification requirements called for to work in different positions (Watson 2006). Child care studies are embedded in university-based early childhood initial teacher education courses, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) based vocational education and training (VET) courses and registered training organisations (RTO). University-based early childhood initial teacher education programs prepare pre-service teachers to work across a range of early childhood contexts with children aged 0 to 8 years, including child care (Watson and Axford 2008). Some universities also offer initial teacher education programs with a focus on children aged 0 to 5 years, which precludes work in primary school. Other universities offer programs for teachers of children aged 0–12 years, which extends into upper primary. Teacher registration is administered under state/territory jurisdictions and requires a four-year teaching qualification.

Since 2007, the early childhood sector in Australia has been undergoing rapid and extensive legislative reforms. These reforms were prompted (in part) by Australia's relatively poor performance against 2006 OECD indicators of investment in early childhood education[2] by international evidence of the importance of early childhood education in supporting positive outcomes for children, and the need to address Australia's highly fragmented and inequitable system of service provision and regulation (Nailon and Beswick 2014). The National Quality Framework (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2012) and Early Years Workforce Strategy (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) 2012) have guided the integration of the highly fragmented early childhood sector across Australia's 6 states and 2 territories, its Federal and State education departments (education) and departments concerned with community, family and human services (child care) (Brennan 2007; Press 2009; Watson 2006).

A universal access to preschool initiative (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2009; Rudd and Macklin 2007)[3] also forms part of the reform agenda. Requirements for four-year degree qualified teachers to be employed in centre-based child care settings under this initiative (Rudd and Macklin 2007; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace

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[2]Even in 2013, Australia's investment in early childhood education was still only around 0.4 %. This is 0.3 % lower than the OECD average (OECD 2013), and 0.6 % lower than the minimum recommended by UNICEF (2008).

[3]An exception was in New South Wales (NSW), where, for some time, degree-qualified early childhood teachers had been required in centres with an enrolment of over 30 children (New South Wales [NSW] Government 2004).

Relations (DEEWR) 2009) have necessitated a reconfiguring of the professional profile of staff in early childhood education. Although the early years reform agenda has provided some financial support to educators wishing to upgrade their VET qualifications to degrees, there are indications that the supply of adequate numbers of four-year qualified early childhood teachers who are prepared to work in centre-based child care contexts is far from secure (Australian Productivity Commission 2014). Indeed, as a number of studies (Ailwood and Boyd 2006; Thorpe et al. 2011; Vajda 2005) suggest, there is reluctance among pre-service teachers to work in centre-based child care settings, and, negativity about child care itself. This discursive tension—a policy call for four-year degree qualified teachers in child care and pre-service teachers' reluctance to do so was the basis for the research study with pre-services reported below.

12.3.1 *Professionalism and Qualifications in the Australian Policy Context*

One of the goals of the Early Years Workforce Strategy (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) 2012) is increased recognition of educators' professionalism within the wider community, as a means of improving the status of educators in Australia. In the EYWS, educators' professionalism is explicitly linked with the establishment of national quality standards, and potentially, to the accreditation of appropriately qualified early childhood teachers by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) 2012). The focus on qualifications and credentialing in the EYWS may be read as evidence of a performative agenda, by which professionalism rests on individual educators' achievement of externally-determined and measured standards (Bourke et al. 2013).

By contrast, the Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF] (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2009)—another key document in the Australian reform agenda—operates a more nuanced and holistic discourse of professionalism. In the EYLF, professional judgment is considered central to educators' work, and as such, involves: professional knowledge and skills, relationships, awareness, styles, experiences, creativity and improvisation. The disparate discourses of professionalism invoked in these two policy documents contribute to the complexity of a policy context that is sending mixed messages about being professional, becoming professional and constructing professionalism.

12.3.1.1 Initial Teacher Education

A central aim of initial teacher education is to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2009). The knowledge, skills and

strategies acquired through initial teacher education courses will provide the nec-
essary qualification to teach. Teacher preparation that equips teachers for "new
times" calls for the consideration of the "knowledges, skills, values and attributes"
that are required of "good teachers" (McArdle 2010, p. 16) who will make a dif-
ference in children's' lives. Early childhood initial teacher education programs
prepare pre-service teachers for work across a number of contexts. This work is
complex work. Yet, it is claimed that initial teacher education courses often do not
adequately prepare teachers for the complexities of their work (Flores and Day
2006; Hong 2010; Timostsuk and Ugaste 2010).

One aspect of this complexity concerns the mutually-constituting relations of
power and knowledge. MacNaughton (2005) proposes for example, that knowl-
edge/power relations that dominate approaches to professional learning create
binaries between those with the most (formal, or codified) knowledge and less for-
mal knowledge. She advocates for recognition of these relations, so that what can
often be uninterrupted cycles of reinforcing power/knowledge inequities are chal-
lenged and potentially reconstituted. Such a proposition in initial teacher educa-
tion challenges a binary of teacher-expert and pre-service teacher non- expert and
opens possibilities for reconceptualising the performance of being professional
(Viruru 2005). Possibilities are also offered though Moss's (2006) conception of
"teacher as researcher" in which there is a continual seeking of "deeper under-
standing and new knowledge" (p. 36). This positions pre-service teachers as com-
petent and co-meaning makers who shape, and are shaped by, discourses available
to them.

The design of initial teacher education courses and programs has been the focus
of attention in the literature (see for example, Darling-Hammond and Bransford
2009; McArdle 2010; Sumsion 2005; Viruru 2005). The content and pedagogi-
cal approaches work together to produce initial teacher education that meets
accreditation requirements in addition to preparing teachers. In Australia there is
a complex web of multiple statutory and jurisdictional bodies that mandate con-
tent, pedagogy and practicum requirements of teacher education programs. The
majority of 4 year university-based early childhood initial teacher education pro-
grams in Australia prepare graduates to work with children aged birth-8 or birth-
12 years. For these initial teacher education programs, there are two national
accrediting bodies—the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
(ACECQA) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
(AITSL). ACECQA accredits all early childhood education and care qualifications
across Australia and AITSL accredits all initial teacher education courses across
Australia. The majority of early childhood initial teacher education programs and
their pre-service teachers are therefore answerable to both authorities who each
set out course content and practicum requirements which are not necessarily in
sync with each other. Additionally, initial teacher education programs must also
meet the various requirements of the states. For example, the Queensland College
of Teachers (QCT) sets out state priorities for inclusion in initial teacher educa-
tion programs. Recent priorities have included early childhood education with
an emphasis on the teaching of reading, play-based curriculum and developing

explicit behaviour management strategies appropriate to young children (Caldwell and Sutton 2010). It is then the task of course designers at the university level to manage the multiple requirements of regulating bodies and flesh out ways to ameliorate tensions between competing and conflicting demands.

A considerable tension that has emerged in early childhood initial teacher education course design in recent years has been a mis-match in the recognition of 'professional experience' in prior-to-school contexts by ACECQA and AITSL ¬— in particular centre-based child care. While preparing graduates to work in both prior-to-school and school contexts has always required careful course design consideration new requirements by both ACECQA and AITSL have added complexity. One of the key complexities arises from collisions in the professional experience (practicum) expectations of pre-service teachers. A key requirement of early childhood initial teacher education programs by ACECQA is the inclusion of professional experience across the age span from "birth to two, two to five and over five years old" (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority 2013, p. 3). Within this requirement there is a specific stipulation that 10 days of the total 80 days of professional experience is with children aged birth to two years. This necessitates that pre-service teachers undertake professional experience in centre-based child care centres as an integral component of their teaching degree. This mandate supports the new early childhood reform agenda that has a requirement for four year qualified early childhood teachers to work in centre-based child care centres. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) however, does not recognise any professional experience practicum undertaken outside of a 'school': "The professional experience component of each program must include no fewer than 80 days of well-structured, supervised and assessed teaching practice in schools" (Education Services Australia 2011, p. 14). In Queensland therefore AITSL/QCT recognition of professional experience undertaken in centre-based child care centres is limited, restricted to those centres with state accredited kindergarten programs for 4–5 year olds. Moreover AITSL identifies the early years as "a non-traditional setting for teaching and learning" (LLoyd 2013, p. 54).

Prior to the new ACECQA requirements the incorporation of professional experience practicums in centre-based child care centres within initial teacher education programs was sparse. A content analysis of theoretical and practical experiences with infants and toddlers in Australian early childhood initial teacher education programs in 2011–2012 (Garvis et al. 2013) highlighted that less than 33 % of the 55 four year programs reviewed incorporated professional experience with infants and toddlers. Rather the great majority of programs reviewed focused on professional experience in kindergartens, pre-schools and the early years of school—not centre-based child care. Additionally only 27 % of the programs reviewed focused on pedagogical content related to infants and toddlers in centre-based child care settings. Similar findings about the lack of initial teacher education content and practicum focused on infants and toddlers have also been found in other countries such as the U.S. (Austin et al. 2013). Research by Maxwell et al. (2006) adds another dimension to these findings by suggesting there are a lack of

university teacher educators who can draw on their own professional experience in centre-based child care settings, particularly with infants and toddlers. Rather most teacher educators in this U.S. study had qualifications and experience with children four years and older, pointing to possible gaps and "capacity issues" in teacher education staffing profiles (Maxwell et al. 2006, p. 9). The new ACECQA requirements herald a major push for the re-thinking and redesigning of many early childhood initial teacher education programs so that 'professional experience' and the pedagogy of working with very young children in centre-based child care settings becomes a recognised, valued and integral component. This rethinking and redesigning Davies and Trinidad (2013) suggest will assist in "professionalizing" the role of educators working with young children especially children birth to 2 years" (p. 76).

This first section of the chapter has turned to literature to examine insights and understandings about professionalism; the Australian early childhood policy context; and initial teacher education. In the second section of the chapter, attention is turned to a study that focuses on professionalism, that the discursive ways in which it is constituted. Background to the study and particular theoretical approaches that were drawn upon will provide frameworks for an examination of the data.

12.3.1.2 Background to the Study

As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, early childhood degree-qualified teachers have a range of career pathways available, including work in centre-based child care contexts. However, studies undertaken in Australia (see Ailwood and Boyd 2006; Thorpe et al. 2011; Vajda 2005) appear to indicate that early childhood pre-service teachers resist work in centre-based child care as a career option. Graduate data from the Queensland University of Technology (where the present study was undertaken) in 2011 exemplifies this trend. In the year after completing their degree, the majority of employed early childhood teacher graduates (over 60 % of the 39 respondents) were teaching in primary schools (Queensland University of Technology (QUT) 2011). Approximately 5 % had attained work in kindergartens (the year prior to formal school), and approximately 13 % were working in centre-based child care, predominantly employed as a group leader (a position requiring only a two-year diploma qualification, not a degree).This pattern of career options for early childhood graduates does not appear to be isolated, with other Australian pre-service teachers indicating this preference for employment in a primary school setting. Recent studies indicate that this preference is shared by early childhood pre-service teachers who are reluctant to work in centre-based child care (Australian Productivity Commission 2014; Thorpe et al. 2011; Vajda 2005), and have negativity toward centre-based child care per se (Ailwood and Boyd 2006). Other research has shown that early childhood pre-service teachers who enter teaching degrees with a two-year diploma view their university qualification as a "pathway out of childcare" (Watson 2006, p. xv, original emphasis).

12.3.1.3 Re-thinking Teacher Professionalism Through Discourse

Data generated through a research study concerned with pre-service teachers' ideas of early childhood teacher professionalism will now be closely examined. Many discursive regimes shape ways of understanding early childhood teacher professionalism including discourses constructing public understandings of early childhood education itself, Here, readings focus on what is produced by the intersections of discourses of professionalism/early childhood/child care/and initial teacher education. These readings draw on Foucauldian theory (1980, 1984, 1990) to enable possibilities for thinking differently about discourses of early childhood teacher professionalism, and to problematise processes of professionalization.

In line with this orientation, discourse analysis was selected as an appropriate methodological framework for eliciting pre-service teachers' understandings of professionalism. Discourse analysis as a method is not prescriptive, nonetheless, it provides a valuable tool for considering discursive practice and how, through power, people are affected (Foucault 1980). The analysis also attends to ways that regimes of truth—those "historically specific mechanisms which produce discourses which function as true in particular times and places" (O'Farrell 2005, p. 153)—were implicated in the ways pre-service teachers produced professionalism. This approach to working with data was particularly useful when considering professionalism/professionalisation and becoming professional as it enabled the location of some of the discourses that competed and collided and produced the early childhood teacher as professional in Australia's early childhood education context.

In the research, data were generated through four focus groups with a total of 18 early childhood pre-service teachers. The participants were enrolled in a child care professional experience (practicum) unit focused on working with children aged birth to 3 years. This compulsory unit was typically undertaken by pre-service teachers in their third year of a four year Bachelor of Education (early childhood) degree. Focus group discussions elicited participants' conceptions of centre-based child care and work in child care. The document and transcripts of the focus groups were the basis of texts. Texts are understood in a Foucauldian sense (1981) as materials across which patterns might be seen, but which do not themselves hold inherent 'meaning' that can be unpacked through interpretation. Accordingly, the data were analysed through the process of organising and classifying pieces of information and systematically identifying their key features or relationships (Lankshear and Knobel 2004). Categories—based on the poststructuralist theoretical framework, and informed by the literature review—were then developed and applied (Davies 2004/2006) to these fragments. By examining these categories discourses were located, and through analysis of these discourses, regimes of truth were illuminated. These regimes were then read for the ways in which they produced the early childhood teacher professional. For example, scrutiny of the data identified ways in which the pre-service teachers developed and maintained categories for being an early childhood teacher. This included ways of speaking, resistance to or at times, re-establishment of regimes of truth shaping

possibilities for being an early childhood professional. What follows is an insight into "thick slice" (Geertz 1988) of the data that examine professionalism in early childhood education, through work in centre-based child care and qualification.

12.4 Ways of Constructing Teacher Professionalism

In focus group discussions the participants worked to define the professionalism of early childhood teachers. As the following analysis shows, participants continually turned to discourses of qualifications and knowledge to distinguish the early childhood teacher from the child care worker. These understandings then formed into five regimes of truth shaping ways early childhood teacher professionalism was constructed:

1. Early childhood educators' professional status is based on whether or not they have a degree
2. There is a qualifications hierarchy between educators, with degree qualifications ranked higher than diploma or certificate qualifications
3. Settings in which early childhood teachers work (for example, schools or child care centres) confer different levels of professionalism
4. With a degree-level teaching qualification you should be teaching in a school
5. Working in primary school settings confers a "specialist teacher" status.

12.4.1 Early Childhood Educators' Professional Status is Based on Whether or not They Have a Degree

Many participants spoke about their own, and others' binary belief that early childhood educators with a degree qualification are professional, and those without one are not:

Rory: Even when people say to me "So what does this degree get you?" I'll say "I can be a teacher. I can do this. Or I can be a director or child care worker" and the first thing they always say is "Why? Why would you do it? Not if you've got a degree, you don't even need to" and that is everybody's impression of child care.

Margie: And the status of teachers as opposed to the status of a child care worker.

Rory: Exactly. If you're a teacher, you're a professional. If you're a child care worker, you're a babysitter.

Melissa: Even teachers especially—well teachers in general aren't respected as much as they should be in society.

Rory: But still more than a child care worker.

(FG 1: 521–529)

A person's status provides their position in society, which is produced through discourses, and this status affords "resources, freedom, space, comfort, time and importantly being cared for" (de Botton 2005, p. 3). In their attempts to make sense of the difference in status between child care worker and early childhood teacher, the participants established a category of early childhood teacher with qualifications as equalling a professional. The distinction of teacher/professional from child care worker/babysitter exemplified the regime of truth situating degree-qualified early childhood teachers as professional, and those with other qualifications as not. The degree qualification is assigned power/status, while—on the basis of what "everybody" says—work in child care is seen as a babysitting service. Indeed, under these discursive conditions, a degree is not necessary—as the investment (McNay 1992) made to obtain a degree is not consistent with the limited value placed on work in child care. Choosing to work in child care with a degree then, would break the discursive rules.

This binary concerning degree qualifications and early childhood educators' professional identify has particular resonance in the current Australian context, where qualifications are a major focus of early childhood workforce reform (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) 2012) and a major part of the public discourse of educators' professionalism. While the benefits of qualifications for the quality of educators' practice are not in question here, the binary can exclude other ways of being professional, becoming professional and constructing professionalism.

12.4.2 There is a Hierarchy of Early Childhood Education Qualifications, with Degree Qualifications Ranked at the Top

In the focus group data, the participants also spoke of a *ranking* of early childhood-related qualifications—with the degree considered more important than a diploma. Participant Meg's account, exemplified this regime of truth concerning an early childhood qualification hierarchy:

> You get so much more knowledge [at university] than if you just go to TAFE and sort of leave my options open. I can do whatever I want with children from there (FG 2: 591–593).

Meg's focus on "more knowledge" positioned the early childhood teaching degree as more important, and more valuable than a TAFE qualification. With a degree, Meg has career "options" that include teaching in centre-based child care or preschool, and in primary schools.

In the following excerpt, participant Claire engages in a different way with the regime of truth that the status conferred behaving a degree makes the professional identity of a degree-qualified early childhood teacher more important than a child care worker without it:

A lot of people are doing TAFE courses or are doing traineeships within the centre and I think because they haven't got the degree they're not seen on the same level as a teacher but they are (FG 3: 121–124).

As well as differentiating between the types of qualifications held by educators, she also resists and redefines the category of "teacher-with-degree" to include other qualifications. By positioning TAFE diploma or certificate-qualified educators as "on the same level" as a teacher, Claire disrupts the regime of truth positioning degree-qualified early childhood teachers as those best able to provide for early years education and care.

Distinctions such as those discussed above clearly have the capacity to construct categories and value-based rankings of early childhood teachers based on qualifications. The following discussions also show ways that regimes of truth can contribute to ways early childhood teachers understand being professional, becoming professional and constructing professionalism.

12.4.3 With a Degree-Level Teaching Qualification You Should Be Teaching in a School

As well as representing professional status for the participants, qualifications were a key way degree-qualified early childhood teachers distinguished themselves from childcare workers:

Rory: I find there's a distinct difference between child care workers and teachers. Like this degree allows us to do both—you know we're exposed to both. But it's like if you have a degree you should be a teacher. That's the instinct, the impression I get and if you want to be a child care worker why bother going to university. You could just go do a diploma.

Lisa: Exactly.

Margie: Even my partner says to me "Why would you want to go into child care? You're going to have a teaching degree. Why would you do that?"

(FG 1: 511–520)

Rory worked hard to establish and maintain the early childhood professional identity as separate to the child care worker. The "distinct difference" that Rory perceives is denoted by the titles, as for her, it was the degree that produced a professional.

12.4.4 Settings in Which Early Childhood Teachers Work Confer Different Levels of Professionalism

Another way the pre-service teachers attempted to make sense of the early childhood teacher in child care, and the ways in which value is assigned to work in

child care, was to look at other early childhood contexts. In particular, work in primary school settings was one way early childhood teacher professionalism could be assigned power and status:

> Peta: … in this course, we do the primary school setting, we do early child care and pre-school, kind, so you are able to actually work in all.[…]

> Maeve: I think that's why I chose it because of the diversity of it. Say if I just did primary, then that would be that's what I was going to do and yeah there are different things you can do in that primary range, but at the end of the day you'll still be just in a primary school.

> (FG 2: 612–625)

As early childhood teachers for children birth to eight years, Peta and Maeve will be able to "actually work in all" contexts. However, as Watson (2006) has indicated, in the Australian context this does not necessarily lead pre-service teachers to choosing work in child care as a preferred career option. Indeed, as one participant in the research study—Ruth—commented: … "we're all getting out of the child care area and going into primary" (FG 3: 498–499). It appears possible then, that regimes of truth equating early childhood teachers' professionalism with their qualifications and their work setting, might contribute to the pre-service teachers' implicit expectations that they should work in a school setting rather than in child care.

12.4.5 Producing the Specialist Early Childhood Teacher

Despite establishing their preference for working in primary school settings rather than child care, the participants in the study saw their expertise in early childhood education as conferring them with a distinct professional identify of "specialist teacher". To illustrate this, one participant contrasted her own comfort with work in the lower years of primary school, with the fears expressed by her primary school pre-service peers:

> I've had lots of friends in the primary course. People just make comments to say "I'd be petrified having a Year 1 class because they just kind of brush over teaching kids how to read and write". And they're like "I don't know how I'd do this and have strategies for this". I mean, there's so much that they're learning in those first couple of years [of school] (Peta, FG 2: 626–631).

For Peta, an early childhood qualification is spoken as better than a primary qualification because of the skills that are acquired to work with children—in this case, in lower primary grades. Producing the early childhood teacher as a specialist teacher with expert knowledge therefore enables the professional to be constituted as more important than a teacher trained to work across age groups in primary school teaching degrees.

The readings of the data generated through the research study illuminated some of the ways that the discourses that are available to pre-service teachers

may shape their understandings of being professional, becoming professional and constructing professionalism. The readings of the data generated through the research study.

12.5 Conclusions/Ways Forward

This chapter set out to examine ways that pre-service early childhood teachers at one Queensland University understood the discursive construction of professionalism. In doing so, it has made visible dominant discourses and regimes of truth that continue to constitute (Foucault 1990, p. 9) early childhood teacher's understandings of being professional, becoming professional and constructing professionalism. As the readings of data from focus groups illustrates the collisions and tensions between the professional status and identity of early childhood teachers and child care workers are not easy to navigate. In terms of ways the participants understood professionalism, the location of the early childhood teacher within a discourse of professionalism—the recognition of specialised technical attributes, skills, expertise (Dalli 2010) and status (de Botton 2005) is hopeful. Yet, this professionalism is also closely tied to the context of their work—with school-based work conferring greater status than that of child care, where powerful social discourses tell the pre-service teachers that everyone is a babysitter. Given that the current policy landscape requires higher numbers of four-year degree qualified teachers to work in centre-based child care to meet policy goals, the apparent reluctance of the pre-service teachers participating in this research study to work in child care settings is troubling.

As such, the new questions about being professional in early childhood education that have been raised here have the potential to prompt re-thinking of government policy, as well as aspects of early childhood initial teacher education course design. Research into initial teacher education programs for example, could map, over a period of time, some of the discourses that shape early childhood pre-service teachers' thinking about child care during their experience in the course. This could then lead into curriculum that explicitly deals with the effects of dominant discourses and regimes of truth.

Altering "one's way of looking at things" provides possibilities to "change the boundaries of what one knows" (Foucault 1990, p. 11). Early childhood education is a field that is undergoing immense change. The proliferation of policy documents is shifting discourses and introducing new discourses that work to shape the field as well as the production and maintenance of early childhood teacher professionalism. This chapter therefore contributes to an ongoing research conversation that theorises early childhood professionalisation. Making visible some of the ways in which pre-service early childhood teachers' understandings of being professional, becoming professional and constituting professionalism are shaped through the discourses that are at play brings new understandings to early childhood policy provision, initial teacher education and the field more broadly.

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Chapter 13
Policy Trends in Teacher Professionalization and Professionalism in India

Amita Gupta

Sociologists refer to professionalization as the "degree to which occupations exhibit the structural or sociological attributes, characteristics, and criteria identified with the professional model" (Ingersoll and Merrill 2011, p. 186) whereas professionalism implies the attitudinal attributes of those who are considered to be professionals. Scholarship on teacher professionalization indicates there are multiple interpretations on the meaning and functionality of this concept (Demikasirmogu 2010). There is divergent thinking on the best ways to professionalize teaching such as upgrading teachers' skills and qualifications through professional development; instilling an ethos of public service, high standards and a sense of professionalism among teachers; or improving the working conditions of teachers (Ingersoll and Merrill 2011). Indicators identified by Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) to assess the professionalization of teaching include such factors as credentialing levels; induction and mentoring programs; degree of professional development; specialization; decision making authority and autonomy; compensations; prestige and occupational social standing (p. 186). Although the terms teacher professionalization and professionalism are often used in conjunction, they are in fact quite distinct. Hargreaves (2000) describes professionalism as the improvement of quality and standards of teaching practice, whereas professionalization is the improvement of the status and standing of the teaching profession (p. 152). Further, the two ideas might even seem complimentary but may not be so in actuality. Often, teacher professionalization implies the defining of standards in terms of a more scientific and technical knowledge base, a definition which can tend to disregard and even negate the importance of affective dimensions of teachers' practice such as their passion for teaching, ability to care for their students and

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their lives outside of the classroom, and other qualities such as patience and commitment (Hargreaves and Goodson 1996). Thus the two concepts are often contested: stronger professionalization does not always mean greater professionalism (Hargreaves 2000). For the purpose of this chapter teacher professionalization and professionalism will be identified as two ideas, the improvement of both being key to effective and proficient teaching.

Images of teaching and teacher professionalism in any society do not exist in a vacuum but linger on from past images that have prevailed. These historical images pose a force that the public, policy makers, and educators have to reckon with (Hargreaves 2000). It is thus relevant to start this chapter with a historical overview of images of teachers, teaching, and teacher preparation as understood within India's historical context. This will be followed by a brief account of the development of institutionalized teacher education in colonized and independent India, and the organization of the field of teacher preparation following independence from British administration. The discussion will then turn to an examination of recent policies specifically for early childhood teacher preparation, followed by some of the tensions that are confronted in the process of increasing teacher professionalization.

13.1 Images of Teachers and Teaching from Ancient India

The teacher as a professional, and teaching as a profession, has deep roots in the India's history of education that can be traced back a few thousand years. Ancient Indian texts provide detailed accounts on topics such as the role of the teacher, qualities and dispositions of good teachers, appropriate teacher-student interactions, effective pedagogies, expectations and appropriate codes of conduct between teachers and students, and so forth (Achyuthan 1974; Altekar 1965; Keay 1918/1980). Images emerge of the teacher, or guru, as a highly respected and revered individual who was responsible for the intellectual and spiritual regeneration of the students, and was thus considered to be more important than one's parents who were credited with their physical birth only. The teacher was seen to play a more important role in a student's education than institutions, equipment, classroom materials, and other structural resources. However, with this level of veneration came a correspondingly elevated degree of responsibility. The guru was expected to be of high character, patient, just, pious, well grounded in an area of expertise, committed to lifelong reading and learning, fluent in delivering instruction, possessing readiness of wit and presence of mind, be a source of inspiration, and never charging a regular fee but always being prepared to teach any student regardless of financial standing. The teacher's fee would usually be an honorarium or offering called guru dakshina, which students offered upon the completion of their studies.

Scriptures such as the Upanishad written in about 800 BCE encouraged a pedagogy based on techniques such as debate and argument while describing the

specific role of each player in this interaction. The Upanishadic passion for finding out the truth about things utilizes the science of reasoning and questioning, as can be inferred from the frequent use of terms such as prasnin (questioner), abhiprasnin (cross-questioner), prasnavivaka (answerer). It is this approach in teaching and learning that has led to "the long history of the argumentative tradition in India" that Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen refers to (Sen 2005, p. ix). Teachers were not prepared in formalized teacher education institutions. Potential teachers had to exhibit a high caliber of the intellect, and were called upon to pass an ordeal of debates in learning how to defend their own positions and attack that of their opponents. Thus the skill and power of debate, discussion and dialogue were remarkably developed by the end of an individual's education. The essence of this image of the teacher lingered on through the centuries. Until recently, these images were conjured when the role and responsibility of the teacher was discussed within Indian communities, and fragments of those images are referred to in discussions within some forums even today (Gupta 2006/2013).

Another indigenous knowledge-base to prepare individuals to teach can be found in references to the care and education of young children in ancient Indian literature. There are numerous examples of how childhood in India has been historically viewed in literary, philosophical, and devotional texts such as ancient law books (The Laws of Manu); prescriptions for caring and upbringing of infants and children in the traditional medicinal texts of India (Ayurveda, Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita); references, stories, and narratives on children and childhood in the epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata); in folktales and historical narratives; and in ancient, medieval, and modern Indian literature (Gupta 2013). These descriptions deliver a socio-culturally situated understanding of child development, the relationship between childrearing and personality development, intense parental longing for children, and children's upbringing as being marked by affection, indulgence and divine protection. The ancient Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda, defines five childhood periods: garbha (the fetal period); ksheerda (birth—nine months) when the infant lives entirely on milk; ksheerannada (nine months to two years) during which the child is weaned from milk to solids); bala (two to seven years); and kumara (seven to sixteen years). Kakar (1981) notes additional social rites of passage that mark a child's journey through and out of childhood. In the first month the naming ceremony, naamkaran, marks the formal introduction of infant and mother to the larger family. At three or four months of age the baby is introduced to the larger cosmos during the ritual of nishkramana. Annaprasana is a ceremony between six to nine months of age when the baby is fed solid food for the first time, marking the onset of weaning and the beginning of a psychological separation from its mother. At three years the child's baby hair is shaved off and offered to the goddess in a ceremony called mundan, marking another step in the gradual separation of the child from its mother. Between the child's fifth and seventh years is the ceremony called vidyarambha, when the child is considered ready to start formal learning of reading and writing. The period of childhood culminates in a special ceremony or upayana, which is performed around the twelfth birthday and symbolizes the child's social birth into the larger

community outside the extended family. Variations and combinations of these rituals and rites exist throughout Indian society, and can be seen still to varying extents across social castes and classes in rural and urban communities. The guidelines for the care and education of young children presented in these texts were available to all since the child's first teachers were considered to be those in the family and immediate community. Modern Indian educators and psychologists support the idea of a longer continuity between adults and children as they are a part of each other's worlds for an extended period of time (Kakar 1981; Kumar 1993).

13.2 Institutionalized Teacher Preparation in Colonized and Independent India

Teacher education in India as a formal discipline dates back to 1787 when Danish missionaries established the first formal institution for teacher training in modern India (UNESCO Report 1972). Thereafter, by 1901 there were 155 teacher education institutes in the country to prepare primary grade level teachers. A more recent report estimated that by 2008 there were 12,266 teacher education institutions for all grade levels in India, and that the programs offered by these institutions varied in quality (NCTE 2009).

Early childhood education (used interchangeably with pre-primary education) has not so far been a government mandate in India. Therefore, no existing government university had offered a degree in pre-primary teaching. Degree programs have been offered only for primary and secondary teacher training. Pre-primary teacher education in India was limited to certificate- and diploma- awarding bodies which until recently belonged to either government, private or NGO sectors (Datta 2001). The government sector offered training that was project or program-based, purely functional, with no scope for upward movement or jobs; and in-service courses were offered exclusively for ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) programs. The NGO sector offered training that was also program based, and catered to economically disadvantaged students and teachers; some of these programs though qualitatively rich are not recognized by the government and have limited employment opportunities. The private sector offered training through nursery school-based programs, and Montessori teacher training so widely popular in South Asia. An additional category of ECE Diploma/Certificate courses exists which are offered by distance learning institutions [Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)] but accounts for training a very small percentage of pre-primary teachers.

Since European missionaries established the first teacher training institutions in India formal degree programs have continued to be colonial in nature. After India's independence from British rule in 1947, several attempts were made to change the colonial system of preparing teachers inherited from British

administrators in terms of principles, approaches, and content of the teacher education curricula. Groups such as the University Education Commission (1948), and the Secondary Education Commission (1953), were formed to examine the existing teacher education system and make recommendations for improvement. The Kothari Commission (1964–1966) proposed that "that teacher education be brought into the mainstream academic life (p. 68) of universities" (Pandey 2010, p. 4).

Based on these recommendations efforts were put into place to streamline and organize the field at the national, state and district levels. Initial efforts targeted primary and secondary teacher education only since at that time pre-primary teacher education was not included as part of the central government's agenda and only emerged later.

13.3 Organising the Field of Teacher Education

India developed a multi-tier infrastructure for teacher education with two primary entities involved at the national level. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), established in 1961, has been responsible for designing exemplary and innovative instructional material and training for teacher education. The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) was first established in 1973 as an advisory body to central and state governments on teacher education related matters; it was formalized as a statutory body in 1995 with the specific objective of planning and coordinating teacher education development across the country and properly regulating the norms and standards in the teacher education system (NCTE homepage 2014). Additionally, teacher education institutions at the state and district levels are continuously reviewed and upgraded by a central government body, the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS). In 1987, a CSS called the Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education was set up to ensure a sound institutional infrastructure, maintain a technical and academic resource base, and continually evaluate and upgrade the knowledge, competence, and pedagogical skills of elementary school teachers in the country. Four regional committees of the NCTE approved the recognition of teacher-training institutes throughout the country, permitting them to run teacher-training courses.

The NCTE proposed iterations of curriculum frameworks in 1978 and 1988. In 1998, after a process of nationwide consultations with teacher educators, teachers, and educational philosophers, a revised curriculum framework for teacher education was presented at a national seminar. Its primary aim was to free teacher educators and teachers from rigidly prescribed instructional and assessment strategies. This framework urged (1) the development of teacher education curriculum and programs on the guiding principles of commitment, competence, and performance which would be responsive to the needs of the local communities, ensure that pedagogy was culture specific, and hold the view of teachers being life-long learners;

and (2) the separation of course structures into primary and elementary levels, and into Academic and Vocational streams (Pandey 2010).

However, despite the policy recommendations proposed in all three revisions of the framework (1978, 1988, 1998) teacher education in India remained markedly disconnected from ground realities of Indian classrooms and from socio-cultural changes in society due to globalization. Teachers' theoretical preparation was significantly disconnected from their practical experiences in classrooms; teacher education curriculum was outdated and rooted in Western colonialism with regard to pedagogical knowledge; the emphasis continued to be on Western psychologists and developmental theorists who emerged in the Euro-American context prior to the 1960's; an ethos of socio-cultural constructivism and pedagogy was lacking; student teaching experiences were inadequate due to limited amount of time in classrooms and a lack of diversity in the placement settings (for more see Gupta 2006/2013). Thus, much of the teacher education reform in modern India remained rooted in its colonial past.

In a turning point, policy reforms in 2005 known as National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF 2005), urged to move teacher-directed pedagogical approaches toward more learner-friendly approaches for India's overall national educational system; in other words there was a shift in the epistemology of learning from passive absorption of knowledge to active construction of knowledge. But it soon became clear that such a reform in constructivism could only succeed if teachers were trained in the new pedagogy of engaging in reflective, constructivist, and inclusive classroom practice.

Since then major restructuring efforts have been underway in the area of teacher education in India. NCTE proposed several changes in the curricular content and methodologies of teacher education programs in a new set of guidelines called the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 (NCFTE 2009)—a carefully crafted curriculum design that draws upon theoretical and empirical knowledge as well as student teachers' experiential knowledge (NCFTE 2009, p. 24), and is divided into three broad curriculum areas of Foundations of Learning, Curriculum and Pedagogy, and School Internship. Based on these guidelines, sweeping changes for teacher training institutions were implemented in 2010 with regard to increased rigor: (1) minimum eligibility criteria for admission into teacher education colleges raised from 45 % to 50 %; (2) qualification for faculty and lecturers raised from requiring a B.Ed. or Masters degree for teaching to requiring a Masters or Ph.D. degree in one content area, an M.Ed., and a National Eligibility Test score (NET) which is the national level entrance examination administered by the University Grants Commission for postgraduate candidates who wish to qualify for university level teaching jobs in India; (3) a new curriculum to reflect the changes of NCF (2005) including the teaching of content areas such as environment, peace education, information and communications technologies; (4) stronger emphasis on in-service teacher education for improving and constantly updating teacher education; and (5) enhanced attention to both quality and quantity of teacher training institutes; strict checks on and limits for the numbers of institutes in each state are proposed to curb the growth of sub-standard teacher training centers. Briefly, it underscores more rigorous criteria for admission into

teacher education colleges, higher qualifications for faculty and lecturers, a new teacher education curriculum to reflect the changes of NCF (2005) including a learner-centered pedagogy, a stronger emphasis on in-service teacher, envisioning a longer teacher education program, and a stronger emphasis on quality.

NCFTE (2009) has the potential to enhance the professionalization of teaching but the ethos of professionalism needs to be infused and instilled in all areas of teacher education and practice. Today, the primary issue in education in India in need of comprehensive attention is teacher education, and especially early child-hood teacher education, since there is an urgent need for a large number of well-prepared and qualified teachers across the nation.

13.4 Recent Attention to Early Childhood Teacher Education Policy in India

As discussed earlier a university degree program to specifically prepare early childhood teachers did not exist until recently. Early childhood teachers either had no formal training at all, or held diplomas or certificates from teacher train-ing institutions, or had been prepared in an elementary education degree program. In recent years there has been pressure to develop and improve ECE in India. This pressure came from, among other sources, India's goal to achieve the con-stitutional mandate of free and compulsory education for all children 6–14 years of age, in conjunction with the 2015 deadline for UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) goal of providing free and compulsory primary education and expanding ECE in every region of the world. The need for a nationally and professionally organized ECE field quickly became prioritized in the policy agenda of the Indian government. India's 11th Five Year Plan (2007–2012) urged the development of early childhood care and education (ECCE). It is only in the last three-four years that a more organized system of ECE has begun to emerge onto the Indian educa-tional landscape. India's 12th Five Year Plan (2012–2017) continues this empha-sis on early childhood education and promises to include pre-primary classes in at least 50 % of primary schools (Planning Commission, Government of India 2013).

A simultaneous need developed for the professional preparation of early child-hood teachers through formal degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels to prepare teachers. This was a shift from an earlier mindset that teachers of young children did not require a university degree in education. The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017) lays particular importance on strengthening pre-service teacher preparation curriculum in the area of early childhood education (Planning Commission, Government of India 2013). Private training centers have mush-roomed across the country in response to this need, but many of these centers lack quality pedagogical standards and are run like sub-standard businesses. The Indian government has been working on creating university-related quality degree pro-grams. At the time of writing this chapter four universities in India are now offer-ing degrees in early childhood teacher education.

Some of the most significant policy documents and initiatives in India that impact early childhood teacher education, with regard to both professionalization and professionalism, include the National Curriculum Framework 2005, National Focus Group Position Paper on Early Childhood Education (2006), Right to Education Act (2009), the previously discussed NCFTE (2009), and the National Policy on ECCE (2013). Together they constitute significant changes in education policy in India with direct implications for early childhood teachers. Brief discussions of these reforms are needed to contextualize the development of the field.

13.4.1 National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF 2005)

Changes in India's educational policies are informed to a large extent by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the revisions made to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 1975, 1988, 2000 and 2005. These documents provide the framework to determine the syllabi, textbooks and teaching methods for schools within the educational system in India. NCF (2005) is significant because of the deliberate shift that aims to steer the Indian educational system away from the centuries' old colonial and rote memorization-based pedagogy toward a more learner-friendly pedagogy. This policy document was drafted by a National Steering Committee consisting of 35 core members, and is supplemented with 21 National Focus Group Position Papers on a range of topics related to school education including the topic of Early Childhood Education. The strong recommendations of NCF (2005) include the following principles to guide curriculum and teaching strategies in schools: (1) connecting knowledge to life outside the school; (2) ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods; (3) enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks; (4) making examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life; and (5) nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country (NCF 2005).

NCF (2005) acknowledges that all the pedagogic efforts of these recommendations and the important goal of ensuring primary education to all children, along with the content of primary education itself, depends largely on the planning and expansion of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The document emphasizes that "Knowledge needs to be distinguished from information, and teaching needs to be seen as a professional activity, not as coaching for memorisation or as transmission of facts. Activity is the heart of the child's attempt to make sense of the world around him/her. Therefore, every resource must be deployed to enable children to express themselves, handle objects, explore their natural and social milieu, and to grow up healthy" (NCF 2005, p viii). This is in contrast to the colonial approach to education which has been rigidly academic, textbook-centred and examination-oriented. It was the Indian government's hope that with the mandate of NCF (2005) all private and state-run schools in India would move further in the direction of child-centred education.

13.4.2 NCERT National Focus Group Position Paper on Early Childhood Education (2006)

This document is one of the twenty-one Focus Group Position Papers that emerged from the guidelines of NCF (2005), and has been crafted by a fourteen-member Focus Group on ECE specifically. This Position Paper as a comprehensive report is comprised of the following sections:

Section I: A Global Perspective on Early Childhood
Section II: The Indian Context: Situational Analysis and Appraisal
Section III: Critical Issues, Social Realities, and Policy Implications
Section IV: Moving Ahead: Changing Policy Paradigms
Section V: Curricular Framework for ECCE

The document makes references to global research and trends in ECE, specifically to neuroscience and developmentally appropriate practices which are "Western" discourses that closely shape approaches to early childhood by international and world organizations.

For the purpose of this chapter it will suffice to highlight the recommendations offered for the Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework as per the guidelines of NCF (2005). Accordingly, there are three broad objectives of ECCE: the holistic development of the child, preparation of the child for schooling, and providing support to women and girls. While addressing these overarching objectives the curriculum is to be guided more specifically by the recognition of the following ideas across all domains of child development: learning as being play-based and art-based; valuing characteristic features of children's thinking; valuing experience over expertise; incorporating the familiarity and challenge of everyday routines into learning experiences; blending formal and informal interactions; blending the textual (basic literacy and numeracy) with the cultural; using local funds of knowledge; demonstrating a developmentally appropriate practice and flexibility; and emphasizing health, well-being, and healthy habits (NCF 2005).

In brief, this comprehensive document presents the currently existing a range of practices in a range of settings of ECE seen in India, and then clearly maps out a revised and integrated early childhood curriculum as per the above recommendations of NCF (2005). The Position Paper also notes that, historically, an experiential and play-based approach to teaching children has been a cultural and traditional way of viewing early education by several Indian educators and philosophers.

13.4.3 Right to Education Act 2009

The Constitution of India drafted at the time of independence included Article 45 that sought to provide free and compulsory education to all children between

the ages of 6–14 years within ten years of the writing of the Constitution. The 86th Amendment to India's Constitution in 2002 inserted an article into the Constitution that free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6–14 years would be considered a fundamental right. As a result, the program called Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in 2002 (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, NCERT 2006a, b) by the Indian government in its efforts toward achieving Universal Elementary Education by providing free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6–14 years. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of 2009 was the resulting legislation of this Constitutional Amendment to ensure that every child had the right to full-time quality elementary education which satisfied basic norms and standards (Government of India, Sarva Shiksha Abyaan, Framework for Implementation 2011). The RTE Act 2009 went into effect in April 2010 and thereafter changes were made to the existing SSA vision, norms and strategies to more closely align SSA with RTE 2009. As per the Government of India's document on the SSA Framework for Implementation (2011) the revised SSA emphasizes the following: (1) Holistic view of education as recommended by the NCF (2005); (2) Equity to facilitate school enrollment, attendance and retention of disadvantaged groups of Indian society; (3) Access and deeper understanding of the educational needs of excluded and disadvantaged groups of children including girls, minorities and children with special needs; (4) Gender concern to bring about a fundamental change to the status of girls and women in Indian society; (5) Centrality of teacher to be responsible for the creation of an inclusive classroom culture; (6) a Moral compulsion and greater accountability imposed upon teachers, parents, educational administrators, and other related stakeholders; and (7) an integrated system of educational management. These features are not only based on the recommendations of RTE 2009, but also on the earlier child-centric recommendations of NPE 1986/1992 and NCF (2005). The revised SSA guidelines provide a broad framework within which individual States may determine more detailed approaches and strategies that are contextualized within their own social, economic and institutional contexts.

However, the RTE Act 2009 did not include children below the age of 6 years. The availability of universal quality early childhood education for younger children, in fact, must be considered as a pre-requisite for India's efforts to ensure that all children 6–14 years of age are provided with free, compulsory and quality education. Two recent policies that did suggest the importance of early education are the National Plan of Action for Children (2005) which includes the universalization of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as one of the goals; and the National Curriculum Framework (2005) which emphasizes 2 years of preschooling based on a play-based developmentally appropriate curriculum. As an outcome of these events there have been demands to mandate the extension of the RTE Act to all preschool children between the ages of three and six years that will allow schooling to begin at the age of three years. Clearly, this has highlighted the urgent need for quality degree programs for the preparation of early childhood teachers. The National Plan of Action for Children (2016) provides a road map

to essentially connect the recommendations made in the previous action plans for children.

There is yet another implication for teacher education. In the practical application of RTE 2009 all schools, including those considered to be private and independent, are now required to reserve 25 % of admission slots to children who belong to economically disadvantaged communities. These trends have led to a rapid rise in school enrolment numbers in India which now include a majority of children from sections of Indian society that are low income and culturally marginalized. Particularly in the private sector, classrooms now have children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds who have thus far remained segregated and separated in Indian society, especially with regard to schooling. Teachers who have been prepared in existing teacher education institutes have not been prepared appropriately to teach children from diverse backgrounds or with varying abilities. Prejudices against poor children and their families may be commonly found among teachers. There is thus a tremendous backlog in the availability of well-trained, qualified and experienced teachers. Increasing commercialization of the field has added to this crisis by increasing the number of private schools for children while the acute shortage of qualified teachers remains. Commercialization and a shortage of teachers has led to further emergence of private teacher training institutes that are often sub-standard in quality. Further, the lack of qualified teachers has impeded improvement in learning outcomes. According to the national assessment survey in India, although more than 96 % of children between the ages of 6–14 years are enrolled in school, evidence indicates that there has been no significant improvement in children's ability to read since the RTE was passed, and they continue to struggle with basic math (ASER 2013). Such classroom challenges that have emerged as a result of policy changes have created a dire need for teacher education programs that will prepare teachers more adequately and appropriately for the realities of classrooms in the 21st century.

13.4.4 National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009

Policy recommendations for a more child-centered pedagogy can only be effectively implemented by teachers who have been appropriately trained in this new pedagogy and are able to work with culturally diverse children in their classrooms. Given that the current teacher education system in India has thus far been a colonial legacy that has excluded the field of early or pre-primary education, the task of preparing teachers adequately in order to implement the recommendations of a new curriculum framework is in itself a critical need in India. In the NCFTE 2009 document there is a section devoted specifically on preparing teachers and teacher educators for ECCE, recognizing that ECCE must aim for the development of the whole child in a learning environment that should be joyful, child-centered, play

and activity-based. Teacher education programs must therefore prepare ECCE teachers to implement a pedagogy that is developmentally appropriate and based on child-centered, play and activity-based experiences. Chapter 1 of the document also urges teacher education to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect upon and critically engage with curriculum and syllabi; broaden the curriculum so as to include different traditions of knowledge; and help develop in teachers a social consciousness and finer human sensibilities.

13.4.5 National Policy on ECCE (2013)

A national policy for ECCE was adopted by the Government of India in 2013 "to reiterate the commitment to promote inclusive, equitable, and contextualized opportunities for promoting optimal development and active learning capacity for all children under the age of 6 years" (Resolution, Ministry of Women and Children, Government of India 2013). According to the 2011 Census, there were about 158.7 million children between the ages of 0–6 years in India. The policy reiterates a quality and holistic approach to ensure optimal education, care and development, recognizing the interdependent relationship between health, nutrition, psycho-social and emotional needs of each child. The Policy is applicable to all ECCE programs: private, public, and non-governmental organizations and which may be termed creches, play schools, play groups, preschools, nursery schools, kindergartens, preparatory schools, anganwadis, balwadis, home-based care, etc. The quality standards address the issue of capacity-building targeting staff that is adequately qualified and trained in developmentally appropriate practices and assessment procedures. The Policy recognizes the shortfall in the availability of trained human resources and recommends the development of a plan to strengthen existing teacher training institutes for early childhood development such as National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), NCERT, SCERTs, DIETs, IGNOU. These would focus on building early childhood care, development and education capacity in addition to that at the primary and secondary levels. Regional Child Development Resource Centers would provide continuous support to ECCE personnel including helplines, assessment centers, counselling centers, capacity development centers, and advocacy hubs. A parallel initiative for family education would be implemented to inform parents and care givers about best practices related to infants and young children on play and early education. Links between policy, research and practice would be strengthened and funds allocated for early childhood research. Policies and programs across diverse areas such as water, health, education, nutrition, sanitation, labor and finance would be revised and realigned with the Policy on ECCE. The Policy notes that these decisions have been based on evidence that indicates highest rate of returns on investments made to improve child well-being in the early childhood years, and the Policy will be reviewed every five years.

The field of ECE has finally taken center stage in the national arena, thus elevating its professional status.

13.4.6 Recent Developments

Capacity building and pre-primary teacher training have subsequently come into the spotlight. A study conducted in 2010 and sponsored jointly by Ambedkar University and the National Council for Teacher Education put forth a report titled Preparing Teachers for Early Childhood Care and Education (year unspecified, accessed on 1/31/15 at http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9-tm/Files/Preparing_Teachers_for_Early_Childhood_care_and_Education.pdf). The Report highlights the current inadequate availability and inequitable distribution of ECCE teacher education institutions across India; decreasing availability of teacher education institutions as a response to the current mandate of such programs to be of at least 2 years duration; ECCE teacher education programs affiliated with higher education institutions were more professionally delivered but are few in number (only six of the 83 programs surveyed in this study were housed in higher education with 3 programs offering ECCE diplomas and 3 offering ECCE degrees; and the increasing dominance of the private sector with over 50 % of the ECCE teacher education institutions run privately, followed by a substantial number run by NGOs, and only a very few run by government agencies.

The Report, in underscoring "that engagement with higher learning institutions will enable teacher education to become more 'professional' through strengthening of the knowledge base and reflection capacity in the process of teacher preparation" (p. 98) recommends the expansion of high quality ECCE teacher education institutions adequately and equitably distributed to prepare competent and professional teacher educators and ECCE professionals. Other recommendations for improved professionalism include: urging NCTE to review and revise its norms and specifications for improved professional standards for ECCE teacher education in consonance with the NCFTE (2009), through a consultative process involving professional experts and practicing teacher education institutions; improving facilities in schools such as physical environments and learning resources that would support the newer pedagogical practices that new ECCE teachers would now be prepared in; mandating a core faculty of appropriately qualified and trained professional ECCE teacher educators in each ECCE teacher education institution—a faculty that is well-grounded in academic course work as well as prepared intentionally in child centred and learner oriented pedagogies.

The Report notes that although "there appears to be greater awareness… about the need for appropriate practices in ECCE… market forces appear to be diluting efforts of practitioners and experts to make ECCE a more professional field" (p. 108). The Report pushes for a clear role for "institutions like NCTE and other national and state level institutions, universities, teacher education institutions to enable and promote the development of a common vision for ECCE that will

support change, develop an indigenous knowledge base in ECCE, raise capacities of individuals and institutions for professional development of the field of ECCE" (p. 108).

13.5 Tensions in Teacher Professionalization

Having presented the trajectories of teacher professionalization in the context of India's past and present it is clear that the idea of professionalizing the field of ECE has become a priority for the country's government, reflecting trends that are similarly occurring at the global level. As educators and policy makers in India proceed in this direction it would be worthwhile exhibiting a degree of caution and reflection at several levels.

13.5.1 Protecting the Narrative of ECCE

Over the last two decades, appropriate and quality ECE has come to be acknowledged as a priority in the global educational agenda. In 2000, 164 nations agreed to UNESCO's Dakar Framework for Action which mandated the coordination of UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank to ensure Education for All by the year 2015. The first of its six goals is "Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/efa-goals/). As part of this goal, world organizations and nation governments have been working relentlessly toward ensuring the development of quality ECE in the world. These efforts in South Asian countries have, to a large extent, been informed by the early childhood discourse that is dominant in the West. This discourse is rooted in the child-centered ideas of Developmentally Appropriate Practices, and in an approach which views the child from a human capital perspective with the provision of quality early education as an investment in the nation's economy (Gupta 2012). This opens up the field to neoliberal influences that encourage the privatization of ECCE centers as well as ECCE teacher education institutions. One needs to be wary about profit valuing bodies where the quality of training might be compromised to a factory model of quick turnaround supply of "teachers" who might lack passion or commitment to teaching, and may be swayed by incentives that position teaching as a gateway to a more lucrative career industry.

Further, goals-driven education has wide appeal in a neoliberal climate. Education trends in the US, where teacher education programs are being increasingly shaped by standards-based accountability reforms and teacher candidates are taught how to deliver curricula-specific lessons to comply with specific assessment systems (Mayer et al. 2008), are having a global impact. Under the influence of

NGOs and other international organizations such as the World Bank, teacher education and education in general are being framed as regulated markets governed by neoliberal policies, centered on high-stakes tests that are assumed to yield a reliable, unproblematic measure of both student performance and good teaching (Mahon 2010). An example of privatized teacher education can be found in the expanding focus on Teach for India where graduates from elite universities are recruited to go into high-needs schools for a two year stint in teaching and thus expected to make a difference. This image of the professional teacher as an elite recruit who will learn to teach in five weeks, spend two years in high-need schools, and then move on to a leadership position in another job industry goes against the traditional image of the teacher as a "guru" within the Indian cultural worldview (Blumenreich and Gupta 2015).

13.5.2 Bridging Policy and Practice

As is evident from the policy reforms and documents described above, the early childhood national policy discourse in India is now one that promotes a child-centered and learner-oriented pedagogy. But a careful examination of teaching strategies in how to achieve a learner-centered classroom with large class sizes, however, still remains absent in teacher education classrooms, and teachers in India are not being adequately trained in this pedagogy. The dilemma is that there is an acute paucity of teacher educators who themselves have been thus trained. School practitioners therefore continue to turn to the "west" to learn these pedagogical strategies through invited presentations and workshops by teacher educators who have been trained in the "west", and through teacher exchange programs in which teachers are placed in "western" classrooms to learn these strategies. Unfortunately, this perpetuates a situation where teachers and teacher candidates in India are trained in a theory of play pedagogy that has been constructed within and for the context of forms of play promoted in "western" society and classrooms. Such efforts to implement a learner-centered classroom as defined in the "west" is thus naturally challenged by the ground realities of most Indian classrooms: large class sizes, limited resources, limited time available for teachers to provide one-on-one time to individual students, limited tools available for teachers to document individual children's growth and learning, and so forth (Gupta 2011, 2012, 2013).

The pedagogy that gets implemented in many Indian classrooms does mere lip-service to notions of child-centeredness. It is manifest in the physical environment with classroom walls displaying colorful artwork, more toys in schools that can afford more resources, and learning that is based on activities. Although this is a step forward from the overly academic classroom ethos of the past, the defining marker of child-centered pedagogy is that the locus of control rests within the child. This is not the case in the so called "child-centered" classroom teaching in India as yet. The nature of the prolonged adult-child relationship in the Indian

worldview allows for the locus of control to rest with the adult and this would be a cultural impediment to the "western" definition of child-centered pedagogy. Perhaps, for India, a more culturally embedded definition of child-centeredness is required. This can be possible if a postcolonial discourse is used to frame education and teacher education (Gupta 2013). The notion of the postcolonial two-way transaction can be applied to the transactions between the child and the adult, and between the ideas of what is child-centered and what is adult-centered. The adult plays an important role in this adult-child transaction in India, including the involvement of a more extensive adult network in child rearing. It is a more prominent role than that played by adults in the life of a child growing up in the white, middle-class culture of the "west". In the context of the Indian classroom this pedagogy needs a label that will reflect the child-adult continuum more accurately and appropriately.

13.5.3 How Much Teacher Professionalization?

In the end we consider the overall view on early childhood teaching as either a vocation or a profession. Preparation of teachers within each of these frames necessarily invites a different approach. Earlier research on urban ECE teachers in a north Indian metropolis revealed perspectives of teachers who understood teaching as a "responsible and sacred profession", and projected the ECE teacher in the image of a loving mother who practiced tough love and taught children character and citizenship values (Gupta 2006/2013, p. 99):

> Judging from the information obtained from the conversations with all the educators, classroom observations of teachers, and survey responses from teachers and other educators, the general roles and responsibilities of an urban private school early childhood teacher in India may be summarized as:

- Balancing academic and spiritual development of the students
- Teaching meta-academics and values as a parallel curriculum to the prescribed academic curriculum
- Providing direction and guidance to students
- Setting clear boundaries
- Winning the love and respect of students
- Treating students in the same way the teacher would treat her own children, whether in affection or reprimand, and be a motherly figure to them
- Possessing a high degree of expertise in academic content with in-depth knowledge of a content area
- Being a role model to reinforce values, behaviour, and attitudes to children by first modelling it herself.

These qualities and dispositions seem to collide with the attitudes and technical skills called for by current expectations placed on professionalization of teachers and teaching within a neoliberal climate.

Another seemingly problematic issue in the potential "professionalization" of the Indian teacher would be the similarity of the process to the way in which

teachers are prepared in the United States as they are taken through an intricate system of degrees in teaching, certifications, and licensing. This begs the question of whether this process of intense professionalization might result in the "whole" teacher being split into a personal self and a professional self and forced to exist separately, the former out of school and the latter within the walls of the classroom (Gupta 2006/2013, p. 213). In other words, might the "over-professionalized" early childhood teacher result in a more "dehumanized" professional? To reiterate Hargreaves claim made at the beginning of this chapter, stronger professionalization does not always mean greater professionalism (Hargreaves 2000).

13.6   Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss how early childhood teacher professionalization and professionalism has developed and been defined within the Indian context. Within this purpose the definitions, criteria and characteristics of professionalism and professionalization have been addressed. In India's historical context, the issue whether teaching has a professional status or not has been controversial. In the light of the above discussions, teacher professionalization and professionalism have been viewed as meeting certain standards in education related to proficiency, and efforts to establish higher standards have been under way.

Powerful forces of globalization in the form of neo-liberalism and "western" capitalism have been actively shaping and informing the developing world, resulting in the establishment of economic, political and commercial colonies. As global and local discourses engage with and transform each other, the "discourses" find themselves in the hybrid "third space" that is thus created (Bhabha 1994). This "third space" can be the medium which fosters the emergence of pedagogical hybridity which reflects ideas about teachers and teaching that are both local and global, modern and traditional. Not only is it important for teachers in India to know about current educational research and global discourses, but also for them to be equipped with an educational discourse that will validate the underlying strengths of their own culture (Gupta 2006/2013, p. 229).

Teacher education in India has reflected the factory model for the past couple of hundred years, and is now on the verge of a profound shift in the way teachers are prepared. But since the field of teacher education has not evolved through the various stages of development as it has in the US, it needs to be re-conceptualized before it can be restructured; restructured to be a program where teachers are prepared to become critical thinkers and learn new ways of thinking about teaching, form communities for shared understanding and dialogue, learn to explore relationships between diversity, oppression/colonization, pedagogy, where teachers learn the values, skills, knowledge and culture of effective teaching, and where teachers learn to practice within a space of cultural and pedagogical hybridity. In summary, teacher education programs should be able to prepare teachers

in a pedagogy that is values based, respectful of diversity, is globally competitive and holds high academic standards. This way teachers will not only feel validated and confident about their classroom practice, but also be empowered to facilitate children's learning and development in all dimensions—physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual, and prepare them to better succeed in a more globalized 21st century India.

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Chapter 14
Re-conceptualising Quality Early Childhood Education: What Does Soka Education Have to Offer?

Kiiko Ikegami and Susan Grieshaber

Rapid global changes in economics, politics, workforce demands and epistemic levels have accelerated the demand for early childhood education and care (OECD 2006, 2012). In response over the past decade, many governments have established educational reforms aimed at raising standards and improving the quality of early childhood education and care. As an example, in April 2015 the Japanese government announced a new system called 'Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-rearing' in order to promote a quantitative expansion of and qualitative improvement in early childhood institutions (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MECSST] 2015). The new system focuses on increasing the number of early childhood education institutions for families in order to reduce institution waiting lists. It is also intended to improve teacher-child ratios, aimed at enhancing the overall quality of child-rearing support services for families. However, the demand for and growth in early education has raised concern from stakeholders such as politicians, bureaucrats, researchers, educators and parents regarding the quality of services provided by these institutions (Wong et al. 2010).

Quality early childhood education and care is contributing to individual lifelong and economic benefits (Fenech et al. 2011). However, much of the research on quality early childhood education has been conducted from western perspectives using universal measuring standards (Dahlberg et al. 2013; Fenech 2011). Studying quality from a western perspective limits insight into how diverse nations conceptualise and implement quality early childhood programs. A western

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perspective about quality coupled with non-holistic accounts of early childhood education restrict understandings of the complexities of the notion of quality, especially when conceptualised through different models, in different nations or within a diversity of cultural constructs. Non-holistic accounts refer to a focus on using universal standards as tools to measure quality early childhood education. Hearing what educators have to say about quality and integrating their perspectives into everyday practice is a valuable way of potentially moving early childhood systems beyond policy perspectives of what constitutes quality and how to improve it (Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2008; Tobin 2005). Example areas debated within early childhood education include funding, class size, salaries, regulations, professional development, and classroom practices.

In this chapter, a case study of three Soka kindergartens located respectively in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore draws upon data gathered from the doctoral study of the first author (Ikegami 2015). Soka kindergartens adopt a social constructivist view, which is based upon a Nichiren Buddhist philosophy and humanistic education (Ikeda 2010). The study explored the ontology and epistemology of 12 Soka educators and how they conceptualised quality early childhood education in their kindergartens. This chapter begins with an introduction and brief background to the Soka Gakkai International [SGI] approach, which is followed by a review of relevant literature including Soka education philosophy and modernist discourses of quality. After explaining the research design, findings are discussed. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the differences between modernist discourses of quality and those valued in Soka education. The chapter does not discuss the ontological tensions between poststructuralism and humanism (see Foucault 1970), although we acknowledge that humanist thoughts provided the dominant discursive regimes within the participating kindergartens.

14.1 Brief Background of Soka Gakkai International (SGI)

Soka kindergartens are derived from Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a worldwide Buddhist organisation with a vision of a better world through the empowerment of individuals and the promotion of peace, culture and education. SGI was founded upon Nichiren Buddhist philosophy in 1974 and has its headquarters in Tokyo (SGI 2013a). The original Soka organisation, which literally means 'Society for Creation of Value', was founded in 1930 by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of SGI and founder of Soka education philosophy. Makiguchi drew inspiration from Nichiren Buddhism to develop the organization into a broader-based Buddhist movement focused on tapping the inner potential of people to promote peace, culture and education (SGI 2016a). It continued to grow into one of the largest Buddhist organizations under the leaderships of Josei Toda (second president of SGI) and Daisaku Ikeda (third president of SGI and the founder of Soka educational institutions). The organization of SGI has involved various

peace and education movements around the world, such as nuclear abolition, human rights, peace proposals and the establishment of educational institutions from kindergartens to universities. Currently, SGI consists of 90 independently affiliated SGI organizations and has 12 million members in 192 countries and territories worldwide (SGI 2016a).

14.1.1 Soka Education Philosophy and Value Creation

'Soka' is a Japanese language term meaning 'value creation', which was drawn from the ideas of Makiguchi, the founder of Soka education. Value creation is a vital component of Soka educational philosophy. To explain relevant aspects of Soka educational philosophy, we provide brief background details on how Makiguchi developed value creation education and his aims in doing so. Then we explain the in-depth meanings of value creation within a Soka context as a prelude to how this connects to quality.

Makiguchi's philosophy of life was a theory of education he developed based on his experience, his study of educational theorists such as John Dewey (1859–1952) and the Nichiren Buddhism which he embraced late in life (Ikeda 2010). His theory was originally published as *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (The theory of value-creating pedagogy) in 1930 (Makiguchi 2010). This work focused on a belief in the goodness or unlimited potential of every person (Bethel 1989). Makiguchi (SGI 2013b) spent many years studying and implementing the pragmatic methods of education highlighted in his books, which concentrated on principles of the natural world and human life (Makiguchi 2002), and his worldview of humanistic education (1997). These works were written from voluminous records based upon Makiguchi's own teaching experience. One of his core beliefs was that the aim of education should be the creation of happiness in life and the fulfillment of children. From the idea of value creation as the precondition for happiness in life, Makiguchi (1997) declared that the purpose of education was for living life, and defined value-creation as "a knowledge system for teaching people to create the value that is the goal of life" (p. 13).

The concept of value creation is a philosophy applicable to life in general and incorporates concepts such as beauty, gain and good (Makiguchi 2004). Within Soka philosophy, beauty indicates aesthetic values and the positive sensory response evoked by that which is recognised as beautiful. Gain refers to what we find rewarding and in the broadest, most holistic sense includes but is not limited to the conditions that make life more convenient and comfortable. Good refers to that which enhances and extends the well-being of an entire human community, making it a better and more just place for people to live (Makiguchi 2004, 2006). According to Makiguchi (2004), the aesthetic values of beauty can be found anywhere, within anyone, including sensory objects and people. The term beauty refers to the positive side of each person as a form of beauty in itself (Makiguchi 2006). To be able to see beauty in our daily lives depends on

individual perspectives. In applying this individual perspective of beauty to education, all educators face various challenges during their everyday work of teaching, and working with children, families and other educators. Viewing these challenges as negative forces may lead to anxiety, distress or frustration. In contrast, seeing challenges as a form of beauty, such as a process of improvement or growth, presents them as positive, which leads to continued motivation and productivity. This example about challenges provides an understanding of how an individual perspective depends upon each educator's determination and discourse. The value created from any given situation can be positive or negative, minimal or infinitely great. Educators can create value at each moment through their responses to students and the environment, such as during everyday classroom practices (Makiguchi 2006).

Relationships are also significant in Soka education. These include relationships among people, people and objects, and people and the environment, with such relationships occurring anywhere and anytime (SGI 2015). The value of these relationships is an important concept within Makiguchi's (1989b) ideas of value creation. The following example about water illustrates the concept:

> Water in and of itself has no value. It often goes disregarded. Nonetheless, as soon as someone wants a drink of water, it has bearing. Then water is seen to possess the capacity to quench thirst, just as the person is able to be satisfied with water. At other times, water means nothing but disaster to people, as when a flood strikes. The value is not inherent in the subject (person) nor in the object (water) but is manifest in the attracting or repelling force between them (p. 72).

Relationships among people and objects and the attracting or repelling forces among them is an important part of the concept of value creation. The value associated with people, objects and the environment can and does change, and this depends on one's self-perspective (Makiguchi 1989b). The Soka concept of a value creation relationship assists in understanding Soka educational practices. Relationships among people are acknowledged as integral to genuine education: "People are shaped by people. There is no genuine education without earnest life-to-life interaction and inspiration" (Ikeda, cited in SGI 2016b, para. 3). Life-to-life interactions and inspiration are positive forces, and refer to when people engage in sincere and enthusiastic approaches that inspire the lives of other people. Soka education emphasizes that people grow through their interactions with and from inspiration from others (Ikeda 2009).

For the process of creating value, it is important for educators to have set goals (regardless of specific education needs), plan activities/curriculum carefully, and adopt self-reflection based upon classroom practice. In regard to the personal attitudes of educators, Makiguchi (1989b) highlighted the necessity of Soka educators having a sense of respect, compassion, appreciation, and giving hope to others (children) when creating positive values within classroom practice. Soka education literature emphasizes that relationships between educators, a sense of respect, caring for children and appreciation for each child's individual potential (goodness) is where quality classroom practices are formed (Makiguchi 1989b; Ikeda 2010). Respecting and caring for a child using compassion and appreciation assists

educators to consider the child's interests and requests instead of focusing on the educator's own thoughts. The idea is that if interactions between educators and children are based on respect and care, relationships are positive and supportive (SGI 2014). Positive and supportive relationships are an important component in promoting quality classroom practices (Thijs et al. 2011).

Within Soka education, quality classroom practices are associated with creating shared learning; creating positive and supportive relationships within learning environments, and embracing cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (SGI 2016b). Creating shared learning is about educators providing opportunities for children to learn collectively based upon their own interests and abilities. Positive and supportive relationships refer to positive interactions and communications among educators and children and provide the basis for Soka educators to embrace cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. As each child is unique, respect and support for each individual is an important contribution to each child's learning.

The philosophy of Soka education includes a lifelong pursuit of self-reflection as part of creating value in all people through daily living (Makiguchi 1989d). Quality education is about educating people to have a profound awareness of relationships with nature, the society and the individual in order to assist in perceiving the character of existing problems, and to resolve them. Quality lies in helping each child to bring forth his or her potential from deep within, focusing on developing the wish to lead a life of contribution, and fostering of respect, compassion and appreciation of others (Ikeda 2010; Makiguchi 1989a). Soka education founder Makiguchi (1989a), and Soka kindergarten founder Ikeda (1996), concluded that the ultimate goal of Soka education is to foster children to become global citizens and create positive value in their own community. The Soka interpretation of quality is different from modernist approaches that apply 'scientific' quantitative means to measure quality or use standards to define quality.

14.1.2 Modernist Perspectives of Quality

Whilst quality early childhood education remains a major concern globally, there are increasing tensions between definitions of quality and methods of identifying and measuring it (Dahlberg et al. 2013; Fenech 2011; Logan and Sumsion 2010). These different views are the result of beliefs, discourses, philosophical thought, and different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Rivalland 2007).

In spite of different perspectives, much literature regarding quality early childhood education is closely linked with modernist perspectives and applies quantitative indicators drawn from scientific positivism such as standardized assessments and universal measurements (Fenech et al. 2011; Logan and Sumsion 2010). An example is the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms et al. 2005), which is designed to measure quality in early childhood education programs and has been translated into French, German, Hungarian, Norwegian, Spanish and Japanese. These translations suggest that the quality of

classroom environments can be measured almost anywhere on the globe using an instrument created in the USA, and that culture and context are of little or no concern. The ECERS-R assesses quality (mostly through observation) in programs for children aged 2–5 years using 43 items organized into seven sub-scales (Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Language-Reasoning; Activities; Interactions; Program Structure; Parents and Staff). Standard assessments and universal measurements are limited because they are unlikely to provide a holistic picture of the complex dynamics of quality (Karoly et al. 2013). Positivist based perspectives can be valuable when considering structural aspects of quality (e.g., educator-child ratios, physical environment, safety, staff qualification standards; Fenech et al. 2011), but have limitations when investigating quality in terms of human beliefs and cultural influences (Lubeck 1994). Universal ratings of quality do not necessarily capture educator beliefs and values because quality is a socially constructed discourse. Beliefs, values, politics, philosophy, and cultural factors have influenced the way quality discourses have been constructed (Dahlberg et al. 2013). This has led to debate regarding the reliability of specific observational measures in assessing classroom quality (Karoly et al. 2013) and highlights issues of accuracy and accountability associated with the instruments used and subsequent findings when measuring quality.

In rejecting universal or modernist perspectives of quality, Dahlberg et al. (2013) located quality within an environment of diversity, subjectivity and multiple perspectives. Postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial, critical and anthropological views consider quality more broadly than most positivist perspectives (see Dahlberg et al. 2013; Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2008; Tobin 2005). Considering the quality of early childhood education from poststructural perspectives rejects the idea of universal, decontextualised and external standardisations (Dahlberg et al. 2013; Tobin 2005) and re-conceptualises quality in terms of process and context (Dahlberg et al. 2013).

This chapter views quality from holistic perspectives where local contexts and processes are considered within the philosophies of Soka education. It also draws on the work of Foucault (1972), who critiqued enlightenment and scientific positivism that ascribed universal understandings of truth. In conjunction with the philosophies of Soka education, the interrelated concepts of discourse, power and knowledge (Foucault 1972, 2003) are used as a broad frame for understanding the perspectives of 12 Soka educators about quality early childhood education. As Foucault (1972) argued, "Every education system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it" (p. 227). Discourse refers to the ways people think, their values, beliefs and practices, and is "a useful tool for explaining and exploring social meanings, arrangements and power relations" which are situated "socially, culturally and are historically negotiated, contested and produced" (Macartney et al. 2008, p. 138). In this understanding, knowledge is connected to the way in which power is exercised, and the exercise of power produces certain types of knowledge. Accordingly, the exercise of power and the production of certain types of knowledge occur through the operation of discourse. From this perspective,

there is no one way to construct and understand quality because values differ from place to place due to history, culture, ethnicity, geographical location, socialisation and norms.

14.2 Research Design

The research adopted a case study design (Stake 2006) that was informed by poststructuralism (Foucault 1972). The main research question guiding the investigation was: What conceptions of quality early childhood education are held by kindergarten educators working in the three Soka kindergartens, and how do these conceptions influence practice? Data sources included informal conversations, interviews, observations, photography, field notes (Creswell 2012), and documentation such as policies and lesson plans. The data drawn on in this chapter come mainly from informal conversations and interviews with four principals (two from Japan and one each from Hong Kong and Singapore) and eight educators (four from Japan, and two each from Hong Kong and Singapore); and observations from classrooms of the eight educators. Data were organized, transcribed and translated (where applicable), with all Chinese and English interview transcripts, and Cantonese to English translated transcripts checked by participants to ensure accuracy of information. Principals and teachers at the Hong Kong and Singapore kindergartens accepted the invitation to examine the interview transcripts to ensure that what was stated was represented accurately. Interview and observational data were analysed using literature such as *Soka Education* (Ikeda 2010) and *Value Creation* (Makiguchi 1989b).

Data analysis was thematic (Creswell 2012) and began with coding which was then reduced to themes. Two key themes and eight sub-themes emerged. The key theme of Beliefs and knowledge had three sub-themes: value creation education, happiness education and humanist education. The key theme of Practices produced five sub-themes: kindergarten policy; health and hygiene; structure (physical) environment; learning environment, and relationships. In what follows we analyse data from the sub-theme of value creation education and discuss data about value creation in regard to shared learning, positive and supportive relationships, and diversity.

The research was approved by the Monash University (Australia) Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the data generation stage. Formal approval confirmation letters were sent by SGI Tokyo Headquarters to the researcher and principals of the participating Soka kindergartens before the fieldwork commenced. Individual participants signed and returned consent forms on the first day of the fieldwork, after prior explanation by the researcher and principals about what the research involved.

14.2.1 Findings and Discussion: Value Creation

As might be expected, the discourse and knowledge of Soka educators is deeply rooted within the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism and Soka philosophers including the ideas of Makiguchi (SGI 2013b), Toda (SGI 2013c) and Ikeda (SGI 2013d). Educators often referred to Soka philosophy when discussing quality education and how this influenced daily classroom practice. This section begins with educators' ideas about value creation and then considers value creation in regard to quality classroom practices, the construct of shared learning, positive and supportive relationships, and supporting cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

14.2.1.1 Conceptions of Value Creation

In this section, transcript excerpts demonstrate how participants understood value creation and how it might occur in classrooms. The twelve Soka educators made statements that supported the idea that the concept of value is not limited to economics or quantitative measures. Their ideas indicated they considered how value could be created through themselves (as teachers) for others, as well as for the community in everyday life. Educator 1 (ED1) from Hong Kong explained her views about value creation:

> Soka beliefs in value creation [are] an important contribution to quality education, as we focus on each person to create positive value to achieve a better life. The quality of Soka education is to add value or create value…whether this is knowledge or behaviour. If… a teacher can bring out a child's positive side, this creates value for the child as well as the teacher too, I think this is Soka education and also a quality of education (ED1, Hong Kong).

To Educator 1, an example of value creation is bringing out a child's positive side, which creates value for the child and the teacher. In terms of Soka education, the addition of value for the child and the teacher is considered a contribution to quality education. Creating positive value is also an important part of achieving a better life.

Like Educator 1, Educator 2 (ED2) acknowledged that bringing out a child's positive side creates value for teachers as well as children.

> I keep asking myself what kind of value are we creating and what values…are beneficial to our children in the classroom? So I think the positive values come in recognising the goodness and positive [positivity] in each child and this includes me as an educator. When I plan my activities I refer to my daily teaching journal and see what teaching methods help children to learn as well as how I developed different levels of activities for all the children. Those questions have been helping me to reflect and improve my teaching, which assists me to work towards quality education (ED2, Singapore).

Educator 2 was concerned about what and how to create value in ways that were beneficial to each child in the classroom. She too looked for children's positive attributes and to work with those as a way of creating value and contributing

to a better world. Educator 2 indicated that she used questions about the kind of value being created as a way to reflect on and improve her teaching. She also consulted her daily teaching journal for information about methods that assist children's learning, which helped in future planning and with the ultimate aim of quality education. Soka educators are required to reflect on their daily teaching as an integral part of creating quality classroom practice (Makiguchi 1989b). Improving educator reflection involves a deeper understanding of the relationships between educators and classroom practices (Makiguchi 1989c). Creating a positive attitude (value) towards life through educator reflection can potentially have a direct impact on quality education because the reflection process provides a lens for educators to reflect on their own thoughts and actions as a way of opening educators to new perspectives for their teaching (Ikeda 2010).

Like Educator 1 from Hong Kong and Educator 2 from Singapore, Educator 9 from Japan (ED9) also noted the importance of seeking positive attributes of individual children and further developing them: "I always try to find something in which the student is very good, all the children are different" (ED9, Japan). The consistency of these comments from three educators from three countries signals the importance of the Soka principle of identifying and working with the positive attributes of children.

The excerpts from Educators 1, 2 and 9 show that each talked about recognizing and/or bringing out a child's positive side as a way of creating or adding value. According to Soka philosophy (Makiguchi 2006, 2010), the educators were adding value not only for the child, but also the teacher; and at the same time contributing to quality education in the Soka tradition (Makiguchi 1989b). The discourse of these three educators about quality is markedly different from modernist discourses of quality where children are tested regularly or that focus on indicators and measures of classroom quality such as space, language-reasoning, activities and interactions (e.g., Harms et al. 2005; see also Dahlberg et al. 2013). That these educators can talk about quality education in terms of finding what students are good at and identifying the positive attributes of children shows that they have resisted and possibly discounted dominant modernist discourses (Foucault 1984) of quality; and that they legitimize Soka discourses of quality as part of their everyday work as teachers.

14.2.1.2 Value Creation and Shared Learning

Value creation through shared learning is an integral part of Soka education (Makiguchi 1989d) and one way of creating quality classroom practice is through shared learning. Shared learning is a process of collective understanding and actions that produce negotiated agreements regarding children's roles, rights and responsibilities related to children's learning. A sense of respect is one important component of quality classroom practice (Makiguchi 2004). To promote shared learning, educators respect children's interests, needs, ideas, and support children to learn at their own pace (Makiguchi 1989d). As Makiguchi (1989d) wrote,

"Teachers can never learn for their students; students must be allowed to learn for themselves" (p. 104). Here Makiguchi pointed out the responsibility of children to be involved their learning and not just receive knowledge from educators.

Creating shared learning in classrooms often occurs when children have opportunities to voice their thoughts during learning processes. This approach to learning reflects collaboration rather than a top-down method. The Hong Kong Soka kindergarten had a purposely-built unstructured learning environment where mixed age groups of children (4–6 years) had free choice of activities based on their interests and abilities. Educator 5 (ED5) from Hong Kong explained about the environment and learning together:

> This learning environment has created opportunities for children to learn from each other in a natural way. For us as…teacher[s], to learn with them together, stimulate children's interests and scaffold their learning (ED5, Hong Kong).

This excerpt indicates the importance attached to creating an environment where teachers and children learn together and from each other. As each child's interests and abilities are likely to be different, creating an environment with choice enables a flexible approach to supporting learning. During informal conversations with the first author, Soka educators in Hong Kong (ED2) and Singapore (ED7) reasoned that enabling this flexibility of learning opportunities did not mean simply allowing children to do what they wanted. The educators planned activities carefully, with some based on discussions between educators about children's interests and areas that required strengthening. Others were planned from observations of each child and educator reflection on activities which were implemented in the previous year. Where particular knowledge and skills were required for specific learning tasks, educators used their professional judgment to provide necessary information beforehand and scaffolded children's learning as they engaged actively with the tasks (see Makiguchi 1989c).

Value creation through shared learning was evident at the Singapore Soka kindergarten where a room had been set up as a post office. The educator (ED7) explained that this was for children to create situational scenarios where they could write and send letters, learn about letter classifications, and create stamp designs. During this learning process, educators used their professional judgment and provided basic knowledge (such as how to write a letter) and skills (e.g., folding paper to make an envelope). Educators scaffolded learning when children were operating the post office and creating their own designs for stamps. Educator 7 also explained that while children really enjoyed this activity, the purpose was to encourage children to work with each other in conjunction with the educator, as well as encouraging the children to communicate with other people and places around the world, not just Singapore.

Quality learning is not simply a matter of educators offering choice and decision-making opportunities to children. For Educator 7 (ED7) from Singapore, respecting children when interacting with them is another way of creating positive value in the classroom. Educator 7 was aware of the difference between speaking 'with' and 'at' children, and quite possibly the power relationships that exist

amongst people when interacting (see Foucault 2003); specifically those interactions among children and teachers in which teachers are often conceptualized as authority figures:

> As…teacher[s] we all try to create positive value in our classroom practices, we need to respect children's views in developing themselves…as young as they are. This belief is always in my mind. I will respect my children and have heart to heart dialogue instead of only telling them what to do. I think that is very important. Listening to children is one thing, talking to them is another thing, a lot of times we talk to children but I more prefer to use words to speak **with** them and not speak **at** them…because I think that two-way communication is very important (ED7, Singapore).

Educator 7 emphasised respecting children in a similar way to which she might engage with adults, that is, by speaking with rather than at them. Speaking with children and listening to them suggests an approach to teacher-child relations where children's ideas are valued, and their contributions to the classroom are sought. These approaches to communicating with children establish an environment where shared learning is more likely to occur than if educators positioned themselves as authority figures. They also illustrate how respect, an important component of Soka educational philosophy (Makiguchi 2004), is enacted as part of quality classroom practice.

The Soka discourse of value creation occurs through daily life experiences that focus on identifying and working with the goodness in each child (Makiguchi 1989b). Educator 2 from Singapore indicated how discussions with children and knowing children's interests provide direction for shared learning:

> We consider that each child has their own good and positive side…we changed our themes based on children's interests or something children felt was important…we discuss different ideas and from there I can see what they want to learn and then we try to move on from there to allow them to see and later to investigate (ED2, Singapore).

Soka discourse values children's ideas and encourages educators to provide opportunities for children to have choices in the classroom (Makiguchi 1989c). Educator 2 explained how themes were changed according to children's interests. The observation data also showed the kindergarten in Singapore had arranged events based upon the children's ideas in group discussions. For example, the children suggested holding a fund-raising event at the kindergarten and donating the money to the Red Cross society. Teachers, children and parents worked together to support their community, with educators changing the curriculum to incorporate the children's ideas and creating further opportunities for shared learning to occur. Creating value through shared learning is a way of crafting quality learning in Soka kindergartens (Makiguchi 1989c). This example shows how children were positioned powerfully (see Foucault 2003) in curriculum decision-making, as teachers changed plans to follow children's ideas to uphold Soka (Ikeda 2010) values of working for the benefit of children, teachers and the community.

14.3 Value Creation and Positive and Supportive Relationships

Soka discourses of value creation emphasise the significance of establishing and enacting positive and supportive relationships for children and educators as a way of creating quality classroom practice (Makiguchi 1989d). Makiguchi (2006) expressed the idea that people are shaped by interactions and there is no genuine education without earnest life-to-life interactions and inspirations. Such relationships are also fundamental to quality early childhood education (SGI 2016a). During the interviews, Educator 3 (ED3) from Hong Kong talked about the importance of respect, compassion and appreciation of each child for both educators and children.

> I think, it is very important to look into each child, not only when teachers see a difference between children but…how to bring out the potential of each unique child. Each child is important and we also should foster children to respect each other's differences. For me, it is most important to have compassion and respect for children and to teach them how to live in harmony together with others. A kindergarten is like a small society, children learning to appreciate, respect and care for others (ED3, Hong Kong).

Educator 3 spoke of the value of respecting individual differences and teaching children to live harmoniously with others. A sense of caring for children and appreciation of their individual goodness was frequently noted during interviews with the Soka educators. The following observation noted how Educator 11 from Japan conducted a music activity in a large hall and the interactions that occurred between the educator and children:

> During this activity, the children listened to music and walked around freely until the teacher shook a tambourine; which meant that the children had to freeze. This game is often found in early childhood settings but the teacher implemented a supportive attitude by constantly smiling and using a soft gentle voice to communicate with the children. The teacher checked each child's actions and looked at each child's face with a smile. Although the activity was conducted in a large hall and the children were given freedom to run around, the teacher used only a soft and gentle voice to communicate with the children. During this activity the children behaved well and there was no pushing of others, or running too fast. Children concentrated and were involved in this activity (ED11, Researcher observation journal).

Educator 11 provided warm encouragement by checking each child and directly interacting with each individually. With a soft and gentle voice she prompted the children to move in time with the music and used individual eye contact, both of which encouraged a calm approach and potentially avoided children running too fast.

The educators in the study often mentioned that quality educator-child relationships are constructed during daily classroom practices over a period of time. Another observation which was noted spontaneously, and which indicated a close and sincere relationship between educators and children in Japan, occurred when the children left at the end of the school day:

Children, one by one, said goodbye to the teacher. When teachers said goodbye to each child they knelt down and smiled to each individual child at eye level and offered either a 'high five' or 'big hug'. It was observed that both the children and educators enjoyed that moment because their faces were full of smiles and some children kept holding on to the teachers and didn't want to let go (ED 6, ED 9 & ED 10, Researcher observation journal).

Kneeling at eye level and giving either a 'high five' or 'big hug' when saying goodbye shows a sense of respect through taking time to farewell each child individually. The depth of the relationship between educator and child was reflected in the action of those children who didn't want to disengage from the big hug.

Positive relationships were often found in the expressions between the educators and children's body language, which included positive, happy and harmonious feelings as depicted in the farewell routines of Educators 6, 9 and 10. Positive relationships appear within life-to-life interactions and inspirations from others (SGI 2016b) and are positive forces where people engage in respect, sincere and enthusiastic approaches which inspire the lives of others. Educators engaged in positive relationships with children, endorsing the importance of positive life-to-life interactions and creating a supportive environment for children to feel secure, safe and respected. A sense of respect and compassion when considering each child's goodness (potential) is an integral aspect of quality classroom practice (Ikeda 2010).

14.4 Value Creation and Supporting Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Diversity

Value creation through cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is another important part of Soka education and quality classroom practice (SGI Charter 2016). Soka philosophy is embedded within Nichiren Buddhism, which recognises human diversity as a fundamental principle: "The Buddha's teaching begins with the recognition of human diversity. The humanism of the Lotus Sutra [The final teaching of Shakyamuni] comes down to the tenet treasuring the individual" (Ikeda et al. 2000, p. 72). Recognising human diversity through treasuring each individual is evident in how cultural, religious and linguistic diversity was supported in the kindergartens.

Three examples are drawn on, one from Singapore and two from Hong Kong. The example from Singapore relates to respecting religious diversity and those from Hong Kong are about supporting linguistic diversity. Both kindergartens have diversity policies that include respect for different cultures and religious practices.

Our teachers and children at this kindergarten are from various religious backgrounds. We don't want anyone to feel left out. For example, some children and teachers have a Muslim background. We had a policy change a few years ago in which the food provided for teachers and children is now officially Halal. I feel that this is a way to show our respect for diversity. I feel good relationships are based on respect, understanding and caring for each other (ED7, Singapore).

Educator 7 explained how the food policy changed to support the religious diversity of children and staff at the kindergarten. The SGI movement is dedicated to peace, culture and education for the happiness of all humanity, which is based on Buddhist respect for the sanctity of life (SGI Charter 2016). Within Soka discourse, special emphasis is placed on respect for the natural environment, and appreciation and respect for other cultures and religions (Ikeda 2010). Enacting the food policy as well as daily classroom practices of respect, understanding and caring for each other are ways of creating quality early childhood Soka education.

During the interviews, Educators 1, 7 and 12 commented that although Soka kindergartens are grounded in Buddhist philosophies, none included prayers or any religious activities in their respective curricula. Because Soka kindergartens are open to children from all religious backgrounds, in order to respect other religions, no religious content was included in classroom practice (SGI Charter 2016). The practice of respecting cultural and religious differences was highlighted by the founder of Soka kindergartens, Ikeda (2003). Moving towards the Soka education goal for world peace through respecting religious diversity in this way creates positive value (Ikeda 2003).

An example highlighting respect for linguistic diversity was found at the Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten:

> The Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten has a small group of Japanese children… [they] and their parents…cannot speak Cantonese [the language of instruction in Hong Kong]. Based on the Soka kindergarten goal of humanist education, we have to consider the needs of each child. Our kindergarten has arranged [for] teachers who speak Japanese to be placed in those classes to support Japanese-speaking children…all the communication notes to these parents are translated into Japanese. Although there was only a small group of Japanese speaking children we respect them and appreciate that they chose our kindergarten although they understand the language used is Cantonese. The children and parents had a sense of wellbeing and that is what I call Soka education (ED1, Hong Kong).

This narrative illustrates how Soka education values each individual child and how supporting linguistic diversity helped children and parents to develop a sense of well-being. This is a significant financial and administrative commitment and an example of Soka kindergarten policy being enacted in daily practice with material effects of well-being and potentially happiness. The well-being and happiness of all children is a component of quality education and one of the ideals of Soka education (Makiguchi 1989a). In this case, the well-being and happiness of children is likely to extend to their families. Well-being is a sense of happiness and enjoyment that can manifest through interactions between oneself and other people/objects (SGI 2016b).

Another observation from Hong Kong showed that the Soka education policy and discourse of linguistic and cultural diversity encouraged educators to establish classroom practices that supported the cultural and linguistic diversity of children and their families.

> There was a large selection of Japanese books and cultural activities for Japanese children…Informal use included a display of books in the classroom with easy access for children and formal use occurred during story…and group times for Japanese speaking parents or educators to read the children a story (ED 5, Researcher observation journal).

These data show that through supporting children's cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, a sense of respect and well-being for children, their parents and educators can be created. Supporting linguistic diversity through the provision of these resources could also create opportunities for Cantonese speaking children to explore other languages and cultures. Inviting Japanese parents to become involved in activities such as storytelling establishes a sense of inclusion within the kindergarten community. In this sense, Soka goes beyond academic pursuits such as reading and writing to consider the overall well-being of children and their parents.

The discourse of creating respect, well-being and happiness in the classroom is qualitatively and quantitatively different from modernist measures of quality. Policy statements and educator discourse of respect and well-being for children produce a specific type of knowledge that is valued in Soka education and enacted in classrooms in particular ways. Power relations (Foucault 2003) are also expressed in policy statements about human diversity and enacted in classrooms in ways that support cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

14.5 Conclusions and Implications

This chapter has presented Soka perspectives on how educators conceptualised and enacted quality within the discourse of value creation. Consistent with the Soka aim of quality education being the creation of well-being and happiness in life and the fulfilment of children, the educators sought each child's goodness (potential) as a way of creating positive relationships and interactions, and establishing quality classroom practices. Value was created by establishing a shared learning environment in classroom practices; by enacting a sense of respect and compassion to form supportive and positive relationships with each child, and through embracing the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the children and their families. Soka education emphasizes that people grow through their interactions with, and from inspiration from others. Accordingly, educator thinking and actions at each moment focus on creating positive value (rather than negative experiences), which depends upon one's mind and determination in respect of the value created. The quality of Soka education is about how to tap into each individual child's goodness and create life-to-life interactions to enhance the children's well-being and happiness.

As modernist discourses of quality are situated within positivist perspectives and universal norms, it is necessary to consider alternative perspectives when exploring quality. Quality early childhood education in Soka contexts is not just about physical resources (classroom size, educator-children ratios etc.) and standardized learning: it is about a process of creating positive value. Dimensions of quality exist beyond academic achievements and universal standards, and in Soka education include processes of creating supportive and positive relationships as part of the ultimate aim of enhancing and extending the well-being of entire human communities, making them better and more just places for people to live (Makiguchi 2006).

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Chapter 15
Is China Pre-primary Teacher Workforce Ready for a Big Jump in Enrolment?

Minyi Li, Liwei Liu and Xin Fan

15.1 Introduction

The success of China's productivity and growth over the last three decades is attributable in part to its commitment to building a robust education system, which included the implementation of a nine-year compulsory education system and later a massive higher education structure. However, early childhood education or pre-primary education did not feature in this plan and in fact, relegated by policymakers to a much lower position. In rural, poor, remote and western areas in China, attention given to pre-primary education is far worse and has long been stagnant.

Internationally, early childhood education, or pre-primary education defined by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as level 0, refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component. These programmes target children below the age of entry into primary education (ISCED level 1). These programmes aim to develop cognitive, physical and socio-emotional skills necessary for participation in school and society (OECD, EU & UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2015). Internationally, early childhood education has become a top advocacy and priority academically and politically. There is an increasing body of evidence to support the long-term effects of early childhood education on personal

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development, social harmony and stronger national productivity in an increasingly competitive global economy (Heckman et al. 2009; Dumas and Lefranc 2010; Reynolds et al. 2011; Melhuish 2011). In all 34 OECD countries that participated in PISA in 2009, students who attended pre-primary education for more than one year outperformed students without learning experiences in early years (OECD 2010). The relationship remains strong after socio-economic background is accounted for. Shanghai-China performed well above the OECD mean and supported that fact that performance tends to be greater in school systems with a longer duration of pre-primary education, smaller pupil-to-teacher ratios in pre-primary education, and higher public expenditure per child at the pre-primary level of education (OECD 2010).

China changed its policy landscape in early childhood education in 2010. With a landmark national plan, *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)*, the Government committed to increase funding for pre-primary education over the next decade, calling for the expansion of national coverage for pre-primary education (State Council 2010b). Both central and local governments have taken bold steps to prioritize the development of early childhood educational programs since then.

Nationally, the number of children in pre-primary institutions reached over 40million in 2014, with the gross enrolment rate (GER) in pre-primary education increasing from 35 % in 2000 to 70.5 % in 2014 (Ministry of Education 2015d). This rapid increase has been boosted by the central Government's commitment of 50 billion RMB to expand pre-primary education in the poorest and remotest parts of the country. From 2011, local governments have been mandated to develop three-year action plans for pre-school education in accordance with the requirements of the State Council, which has brought more than 160 billion RMB investment from the local governments (Li et al. 2015). The Chinese government pledged to build new pre-primary school facilities, enhance and scale up teacher training, provide subsidies for rural families for access to early learning opportunities, and promote support for private pre-primary education centres (Ministry of Education 2015d).

In order to meet the needs for this significant increase in pre-primary enrolment, the central government (State Council 2010a) issued the *State Council's Opinions on Current Development of Pre-primary Education* (hereafter referred to as *Ten National Initiatives*), which introduced a system design for reforming and developing pre-primary education, and ten powerful policy initiatives, indicating a significant breakthrough of system and institutional mechanisms in pre-primary education. One of the ten policy initiatives states that the pre-primary teacher education workforce will be strengthened in multiple ways. Different types of kindergartens[1] should have an adequate supply of teachers and staff according to the

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[1]In mainland China, preschools have a different name "you er yuan" (幼儿园), which literally means "kindergarten" in Chinese, usually refers to full-day programs serving 3–6 year-old children with a focus on education and care. Children are generally grouped by age in kindergarten. Government regulations in 1981 recommended three groupings: juniors (3-year-olds), middle (4-year-olds) and seniors (5-year-olds). Class size increases with age, usually ranging from 20 to 40 children. Each group typically has two teachers and a nurse. Large, affluent centers often have one or more on-site doctors to care for sick or injured children. They also provide other health-related services, such as performing health screenings, giving immunizations and planning nutritious meals.

national and local standards. There should be a sound preschool teacher qualification system, which ensures the same wages and benefits as pre-primary teachers in public and private sectors, and improves teacher education and training systems (State Council 2010a).

By making pre-primary education and development a clear government priority and emphasising the most disadvantaged areas, China is taking a momentous step toward ending the inter-generational cycle of poverty, achieving the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations 2000) and brightening the future for all of its citizens. However, providing enough qualified kindergarten teachers for universal pre-primary education is still one of the most challenging problems for the government. Since the pre-primary education workforce has suffered a long time from meagre pay, low social status, poor entry qualifications, fragmented pre-service training systems and unequal development of training institutions (Li et al. 2015), the government has been urged to upgrade the kindergarten teachers' license system, provide better salaries and benefits, and build a skilled and qualified teacher workforce for all children. Furthermore, with increasing investment in early childhood education, quality has become a critical topic, and monitoring staff quality has gained momentum in informing policy making around the world (OECD 2015).

This paper investigates how the Chinese pre-primary education workforce has evolved since 2010, in terms of quality and quantity, when it comes to meeting the demand of rapid expansion in pre-primary enrolment. The overarching research questions are: What are the characteristics of the pre-primary workforce in China since 2010, and how might the workforce be strengthened to meet the challenges of rapid expansion? A provincial-level dataset is utilised to illustrate the pre-primary education workforce in terms of quantity and quality and to examine the characteristics and challenges.

15.2 Context of the Pre-primary Education Workforce in China

The new policy agenda for universal access to pre-primary education has significantly changed the landscape of the workforce in terms of quantity and quality. Furthermore, additional related policy documents have set up a new framework for professional development.

15.2.1 Teachers in Demand in Terms of Quantity and Quality

Even though China has made great progress in nine-year compulsory education and accelerated the coverage of higher education, pre-primary education has not received the same attention as primary and secondary education in the

overall education system. The gross enrolment in three-year pre-primary education has been growing rapidly, exceeding 60 % in 2011, and reaching 70.5 % in 2014 (Ministry of Education 2015d). China has already met the 2015 target of 65 per cent set by the Government in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan of National Education Development (2011–2015) in 2013, with 67.5 % enrolment of children aged 3–6. Furthermore, the government aims to reach 75 % enrolment by 2016, and has encouraged developed regions to offer universal pre-primary education, with the central government providing special support for the most disadvantaged and poverty-stricken areas in the west of China (Ministry of Education 2015d). Undoubtedly, the government will fulfil its promise of universalising pre-primary education before the scheduled date mandated in the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development* (2010–2020), in terms of gross enrolment rate.

However, such expansion has benefitted urban, easier-to-reach populations more than those in poor, remote, and rural regions, or where ethnic minority groups are located. Providing qualified teachers for children attending programs in the most disadvantaged areas remains a challenge. The issue of quality needs more attention. As an indicator of quality, the pupil-to-teacher ratio is 17:1 nationally, but it is 9.5:1 in the cities, 19:1 in county towns, 34:1 in rural areas, and even worse in the most disadvantaged areas, such as in Ningxia and Guizhou. Full-time kindergarten teachers in rural areas only accounted for 24.1 % of the total teacher workforce in pre-primary education in 2010 (World Bank 2011). Furthermore, in 2012, only 12.82 % of kindergarten principals and full-time teachers had a bachelor degree (Li et al. 2015).

In order to regulate and reduce the pupil-to-teacher ratio, the Ministry of Education (2013) issued the document *Standards for Staff-to-child Ratios in Kindergartens,* which mandates the minimum staff-to-child ratios (see Tables 15.1 and 15.2). In mainland China, kindergartens typically have a range of staff to support pre-primary education programs, including educational staff, care staff, assistant staff and administrative staff. As one of the main focuses in the Second-round Three-year Action Plan, kindergartens are required to meet these standards by 2016. However, considering the complicated nature and variety of development in China (World Bank 2011), the *Standards for Staff-to-child Ratios in Kindergartens* (幼儿园员教职工配备标准) looks like an ideal roadmap rather than an achievable solution.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education upgraded the professional standards for kindergarten teachers and directors with two important policy initiatives in 2012 and 2015: *Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers* (Ministry of Education 2012), and *Professional Standards for Kindergarten Directors* (Ministry

Table 15.1 Ratio requirements for kindergartens by 2016

Types of programs	Staff-to-child ratios	Educational staff-to-child ratios
Full-day	1:5–1:7	1:7–1:9
Half-day	1:8–1:10	1:11–1:13

Ministry of Education (2013)

Table 15.2 Requirements for class size and rations for kindergarten teachers and care staff by 2016

Age category	Class size (children)	Full-day program		Half-day program	
		Professional teachers	Care staff	Professional teachers	Care staff
Junior class (3–4 years)	20–25	2	1	2	One childcare worker is required, if possible
Junior class (4–5 years)	25–30	2	1	2	
Senior class (5–6 years)	30–35	2	1	2	
Mixed-age group	<30	2	1	2–3	

Ministry of Education (2013)

of Education 2015a). Since 2012, the quality of pre-primary staff has become a key policy discourse. This will be exacerbated with the universal two-child per family policy issued in late 2015, as a baby boom is expected in China because of the recent change to the one-child policy. As estimated by Wang and Zhang (2012), each year will see an additional six million infants, reaching twenty-one million in the next five years. Due to improvement in the income level of Chinese families, it is expected that parents will invest more in children's education, and pursue high-quality pre-primary education. The challenge is how to build a skilled and sustainable pre-primary workforce for the universalization of pre-primary education including the increase resulting from the expected baby boom.

15.2.2 Key Policy Documents for the Pre-primary Education Workforce

Since 2010, the government has issued many policy documents to advance the development of pre-primary education, and some initiatives aimed at a skilled and sustainable pre-primary workforce for all children (Table 15.3).

   Two key points need to be highlighted concerning these documents (Table 15.3). On one hand, some documents set prime targets for the pre-primary workforce, such as Standards for Staff-to-child Ratios in Kindergartens. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education is eager to improve quality, especially for teachers and principals, and has developed the *Curriculum Standards for Teacher Education* (Ministry of Education 2011), which set up a national guideline for pre-service training colleges and universities, and identified six modules that need to be implemented in the curriculum. These six modules are: (1) child development and learning; (2) the foundations of child pedagogy; (3) child activity and guidance; (4) kindergarten, family and society; (5) professional ethics and professional development, and (6) practicum and field studies. In the *Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers* (MOE 2012), 62 areas were listed as requirements for teacher competence.

Table 15.3 Key policy documents to promote the pre-primary workforce

Date	Issued by	Titles
June 30, 2010	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance	National Teacher Training Program for Primary and Secondary Schools
July 29, 2010	State Council	Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)
November 24, 2010	State Council	State Council's Opinions on Current Development of Pre-primary Education
March 23, 2011	Ministry of Education	Setting up a Leading Team to Promote Three-year Action Plan for Pre-primary Education
October 8, 2011	Ministry of Education	Curriculum Standards for Teacher Education
February 10, 2012	Ministry of Education	Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers
October 15, 2012	Ministry of Education	Early Learning and Development's Guideline for Children Aged 3–6
January 23, 2013	Ministry of Education	Standards for Staff-to-child Ratios in Kindergartens
November 3, 2014	Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission and Ministry of Finance	Opinions on Implementing the Second-round Three-year Action Plan for Pre-primary Education
January 10, 2015	Ministry of Education	Professional Standards for Kindergarten Directors
January 15, 2015	State Council	National Child Development Plan for Poverty-Stricken Areas (2014–2020)

Note Information retrieved from the central government and MOE website

The combination of top-down mandates, aggressive enforcement and expert advice has yielded results, since the teacher workforce increased 87.05 % from 2009 to 2014, with over 66 % having at least a college diploma (Ministry of Education 2015e).

15.3 Trend Analysis of the Pre-primary Workforce in China

With such a great leap, the pre-primary workforce has experienced a rapid expansion in terms of quality and quantity. However, the contradiction between supply and demand and the inequality issue are still unsettled.

15.3.1 Unbalanced but Increasing Teacher Workforce

Targeting the underdeveloped areas, the central and local governments have invested many more resources in rural China. During 2011–2014, over 40 thousand new kindergartens were built and 71.52 % of those were located in villages and townships. Furthermore, over 86 % of the newly built public kindergartens provide full-day programs for children in such areas (Ministry of Education 2015f). However, the development is still unbalanced. In terms of the number of faculty and staff in pre-primary education, the size of workforce skyrocketed to over 3.14 million in 2014, doubling the size in 2009 (1.57 million). At the same time, the number of kindergarten teachers has reached almost 1.85 million, serving over 40 million children (Ministry of Education 2015f). When it comes to educational attainment, less than 50 % of rural pre-primary teachers have a college diploma and about 44 % of rural pre-primary teachers have a teacher certificate (Ministry of Education 2015e).

With such rapid and bold expansion, the pupil-to-teacher ratio indicator of quality has reduced significantly since 2010, decreasing from 26:1 in 2010 to approximately 22:1 in 2014 (Table 15.4). However, the ratio of 22:1 compared, on average in 2012, unfavourably with 21 European countries (11.3:1) and OECD countries (12.5:1) (OECD 2014). These figures indicate that it will be difficult for kindergartens across China to reach the requirements mandated by the *Standards for Staff-to-child Ratios in Kindergartens* (MOE 2013).The shortage of well-trained pre-primary educators adversely affects the quality of pre-primary education, leaving China and other developed and developing countries with a major challenge of how to build a strong pre-primary workforce.

15.3.2 Lower Entry-Level Education and Professional Ranks

Traditionally, teachers in China are educated in one of three types of schools: special upper secondary schools, normal colleges, and normal universities. Special upper secondary schools can qualify teachers for pre-school and primary positions

Table 15.4 Number of children, full-time teachers at kindergarten and teacher-child ratio in China[a].

Year	Children at kindergartens	Full-time teachers	Pupil-to-teacher ratio
2010	29,766,695	1,144,225	26.01:1
2011	34,245,000	1,315,634	26.03:1
2012	36,858,000	1,479,000	24.92:1
2013	38,946,903	1,663,500	23.41:1
2014	40,507,145	1,844,148	21.97:1

National Bureau of Statistics (2015)
[a]The teacher/children ratio is calculated according to the number of full-time teachers/children at kindergarten.

Table 15.5 Prerequisite qualifications for pre-primary staff in U.S.

Types of jobs	Typical entry-level education
Childcare workers	High school diploma or equivalent
Preschool and Childcare Centre Directors	Bachelor degree
Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers	Bachelor degree
Preschool teachers	Associate degree

Bureau of Labour Statistics, U.S. Department of Labour (2014)

with the equivalent of a high school diploma. Normal colleges, equivalent to junior colleges, typically train junior secondary teachers for two years following upper secondary school. Finally, normal universities train upper secondary teachers who graduate with a four-year bachelor degree program (Zhu and Han 2006). The typical entry-level education requirement for pre-primary teachers is a special upper secondary school diploma, high school diploma or equivalent.

In 2013, among the 1.66 million kindergarten teachers, 1.02 million worked in private kindergartens (Ministry of Education 2015a, b, c, d, e, f). In 2012, 14.39 % of teachers had bachelor degrees and 65.13 % had 2 or 3-year college diplomas, having risen from 11.98 and 60.30 % in 2010. Compared to developed countries, China has a relatively low entry-level education requirement for kindergarten teachers, since a high school diploma or equivalent would be qualified. The French Community of Belgium has revised the initial education level of preschool teachers so that it is equivalent to the level of primary schoolteachers (OECD 2012). In the United States, the typical entry-level education for preschool teachers is an associate degree and for kindergarten and primary teacher as bachelor degree is required (see Table 15.5).Since the Ministry of Education has marked 2016 as the Year of Quality, how to upgrade teacher quality in terms of the typical entry-level education might need more intensive focus and feasible actions to change the landscape.

In China the quality of a kindergarten teacher is measured in a range of ways, not just by the higher education standard reached. Traditionally, there are five formal hierarchical grades for teachers that indicate professional ranks in kindergartens: 1. novice teachers who then become third grade teachers; 2. second grade or intermediate teachers; 3. first-grade or advanced teachers; 4. senior-grade, and 5. master teachers. Teachers are promoted from third to second grade after five years of teaching and a school-based evaluation. Promotion to the first grade requires another five years of service, in addition to being internally evaluated at the kindergarten and externally evaluated by the district. Senior-grade teachers are the backbone of kindergartens in local areas. Master teachers are outstanding teachers and leaders. They have usually taught for many years and have distinguished achievements. Super-grade Teachers (Teji jiaoshi) is an extraordinary honour bestowed on a very few top Master Teachers after careful consideration by national or provincial level education leaders. By 2009, Beijing municipal city had only five top master teachers awarded as Super-grade Teachers in kindergartens (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f).

Table 15.6   Distribution of full-time kindergarten teachers with professional ranks

	Master teachers	Senior-grade	First-grade	Second- grade	Third-grade	Without entry qualification
2010	4,209	147,054	178,093	59,858	11,941	743,070
2011	5,769	153,397	191,706	61,376	14,458	888,928
2012	5,729	161,675	207,767	61,463	12,361	1,030,242

Ministry of Education (2015c)

In China teachers are also professionally ranked. This system positions the teacher from their initial entry qualification to third-grade, second-grade, first-grade, and senior-grade and Master Teacher levels. Teachers move through the ranks as they meet specific criteria including planning, continuing education, external reviews, and conducting research and publishing in teacher journals. The number of kindergarten teachers with professional ranks is growing gradually in China. However, the number of teachers without an entry qualification rank is increasing, which leads to a decrease in the proportion of kindergarten teachers with professional ranks. Table 15.6 shows that the percentage of teachers identified with senior professional ranks and as master teachers appears to be decreasing in the pre-primary sector in comparison to the percentage growth of teachers without entry qualifications. This may be a result of the national goal to increase the number of kindergarten teachers and the increase in the number of kindergarten teachers beginning their teaching journey.

15.3.3 Left-Behind Pre-service Training Institutions

With the huge demand for kindergarten teachers, pre-service training institutions have increased the numbers being enrolled. However, whilst this action responded to goals to increase the number of kindergarten teachers it has not necessarily addressed the aim to increase the quality of kindergarten teachers via their qualifications. The largest portion of kindergarten teacher enrolments has come from Special upper secondary or vocational schools which still only requires a high school diploma or equivalent as an educational entry-level. In 2013, over 307 thousand graduates, accounting for nearly 90 %, came from special upper secondary or vocational schools (Table 15.7). At the same time, almost 85 % of the training institutions are special upper secondary or vocational schools (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f). What the data shows is a tremendous gap between policy rhetoric and reality, characterized by low quality pre-service training. The teacher preparation system did not fit into the national policy agenda of building quality—only quantity.

To some extent, the majority of graduates from secondary institutions will face serious challenges in the near future, due to the new policy requiring at least an associate degree as an entry-level education for a kindergarten teacher. Moreover, the job market for teachers has changed into a buyer's market. In China, normal

Table 15.7 Number of students in pre-service training institutions, by educational level

Educational levels		2010	2011	2012	2013
Four-year colleges and universities	Graduates	5,086	5,403	6,279	8,499
	Admissions	12,119	20,048	22,560	23,435
	at campus	33,065	48,843	59,707	74,896
Two or three-year colleges	Graduates	26,464	28,808	24,147	28,766
	Admissions	28,139	57,123	50,980	52,049
	at campus	86,401	117,961	136,120	157,600
Special upper secondary or vocational schools	Graduates	169,584	196,767	249,868	307,351
	Admissions	292,128	429,664	439,792	443,071
	at campus	700,448	939,315	1,141,844	1,233,579

Ministry of Education (2015c)

colleges and universities have been suffering from oversupply of graduates for a few years, since the labour market did not provide enough teacher positions. In 2014, there were almost 620 thousand graduates from normal colleges and universities (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f). However, primary and secondary schools only needed 250 thousand new teachers. Less than one third of graduates from normal colleges and universities were employed in kindergartens, primary schools, junior and senior high schools. A quarter of the beginning teachers graduated from comprehensive universities like Peking and Tsinghua University, other than normal colleges and universities (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f).

But the government preference for more trained and educated teachers is changing the dynamics. For example, Beijing now only recruits novice kindergarten teachers with a bachelor degree. Urban kindergarten teachers have typically completed high school or two-year College, however, teachers are much less educated in rural areas. Most of them graduated from vocational middle schools and vocational high schools with very limited formal training in child development and related best practice. But now more and more graduate students with a master degree are encouraged to join in the teacher workforce. The Ministry of Education (2015a, b, c, d, e, f) proposed a change in teacher education. The aim to reduce the size of enrolment in upper secondary schools and concentrate training teachers at a higher education institution will dramatically alter the type and length of teacher education. By 2020, an associate degree is a likely entry requirement to become a kindergarten teacher across the nation (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f).

15.3.4 Intensive In-Service Training

China has also adopted policies and initiatives to support the development of kindergarten teachers already working in the field. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance (2010, June) issued the National Teacher Training Program (NTTP), which is an important measure to improve the overall quality of teachers,

especially those from rural primary and secondary schools. The NTTP includes the Project of Exemplary Teacher Training (PETT) and the Project of Rural Key Teacher Training in central and western China (PRKTT). The NTTP for kindergarten teachers was allocated 1.1 billion RMB, and trained 9.18 million rural kindergarten teachers in the First-round Three-Year Action Plan (MOE 2014a, b).

As part of the NTTP, different regions have implemented creative initiatives in order to have adequate numbers of teachers for preschools with better qualifications via up-skilling and professional development. Shanghai, for instance, has proposed to build an open and culturally-diverse training system and recruit more male students, and attract students to change their majors to pre-primary education during their undergraduate years. From 2011 onwards, preschool teachers in Jiangxi Province have been involved in the "Target Training to Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Rural Areas Program", which develops three-year teacher graduates and five-year specialist qualification kindergarten teachers to work in poverty-stricken counties and villages across the country. Xinjiang Province has implemented a bilingual preschool teacher and staff training program. Over the next three years, various regions plan to expand the scale of training, start recruitment of non-pre-school graduates, and reorient teachers' professional direction from primary and secondary schools to increase the number of new kindergarten teachers to around one million (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f).

15.4 Conclusions

In mainland China, preschools have a different name "you er yuan" (幼儿园), which literally means "kindergarten" in Chinese, and usually refers to full-day programs serving 3–6-year-old children with a focus on education and care. Despite the rapid growth of the gross enrolment rate of kindergarten, as well as issues relating to the quantity and quality of pre-primary education workforce, China still faces many challenges in the pre-primary education development. Four are discussed.

The first challenge is how to improve the quality of the workforce and recruit high-quality teachers who are paid decent salaries with competitive benefits. Teaching in kindergartens in China has always been a female-dominated area with teachers seen as paraprofessionals, which accounts for the lower social status, smaller salary and longer working hours. Some more wealthy provinces such as Jiangsu, and Municipalities directly under the Central Government have initiated policies to attract more males to teach in kindergartens (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f).

As a marginalized profession, kindergarten teachers in the government-run sector are not paid the same as primary school teachers. Salaries of pre-primary educators in the public sector in some Nordic countries, such as Denmark and Norway, are of 85–100 % of primary school teachers' salaries (ILO 2012). Since the government employs only 38 % of teachers who work in government-run kindergartens in China, it is not a heavy burden for the government to provide similar payment for kindergarten teachers. The rest of teachers are paid by the local

communities or kindergartens. At the same time, almost 62 % kindergarten teachers worked in the private sector in 2013 (MOE 2015a, b, c, d, e, f). The poor pay and low benefits together with lower qualification requirements in the private sector has contributed to relatively high rates of turnover in the workforce. Ways of providing subsidies for high-quality teachers in the private sector is another urgent task. The Ministry of Education (2015a, b, c, d, e, f) has urged local authorities to relocate redundant primary school teachers to local kindergartens. As part of this, funds have been distributed annually since 2011 to provide in-service training for primary teachers. However, more effective practices and policy evaluation are needed to improve the training of former primary school teachers in becoming qualified kindergarten teachers. Primary teachers are typically familiar with intensive teacher-led instruction in separate subjects and need to be educated in early childhood theories and pedagogy that highlights integrated play-based, child-initiated curriculum.

The second challenge is how to better support the allocation and distribution of pre-primary resources to meet requirements in poor, remote, rural, or ethnic minority areas. At the same time, urbanization has brought new challenges. Migrant workers and their left-behind children should be considered in national and local policy frameworks. "Left behind" is a term commonly used to describe children who remain in rural communities while their parents move to the city for work and higher wages. Approximately one-third of Chinese children under 18, that is about 100 million children are born into migrant workers' families. Statistics suggest that more than 60 million of these children are left behind in their hometown (China Daily 2016). In February, China's State Council said that the government aims to significantly reduce the number of left behind children by 2020, which is in line with the poverty alleviation goals set in China's 13th Five-Year Plan.

The third challenge is how to upgrade the pre-service training system to complement the reform of teacher licensing and registration. In 1998, the Ministry of Education opened the door for higher education to provide teacher preparation programs in comprehensive universities (as well as in traditional normal colleges and universities), which led to a mandated national teacher licensure system in 2001 (Zhu and Han 2006). Since 2011, the Ministry of Education has begun a pilot reform in Zhejiang and Hubei, exploring a new system for teacher licensure (National Teacher Certificate Examination 2015). Since 2013, the Ministry of Education has initiated national pilot reforms in teacher license exams and periodic registration in ten provinces: Hebei, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Hubei, Guangxi, Hainan, Shanxi, Anhui, Shandong and Guizhou (National Teacher Certificate Examination 2015). By 2015, these reforms had spread to over 28 provinces, municipalities directly under the central government, and autonomous regions. However, as the majority of the training institutions are from the secondary education sector, the challenge is how to upgrade the training schools and increase the student quotas for colleges and universities.

Last but not the least, children under three are included in the National Health and Family Planning Commission. This fourth challenge is how to

integrate services for infants and children from birth to the age of six so that the National Health and Family Planning Commission can work with the Ministry of Education. The universal two-child policy applies to all couples, regardless of residence registration (urban or rural), region or ethnicity. The baby boom is imminent. Ways to support children's wellbeing from birth and to support all children to achieve their potential are key issues that need to be addressed across different government sectors. There is strong evidence that better qualified staff can provide enriched and stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy, which leads to better learning outcomes for children (Litjens and Taguma 2010). More innovative policy making and trans-sector partnerships are required to strengthen the workforce and provide universal high-quality childcare and kindergarten services. In any event, China has stepped up its efforts towards universal pre-primary education with policy initiatives and follow up action, despite the way forward being full of challenges.

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Chapter 16
Building Quality Early Childhood Education from the Ground Up: Teacher Preparation in Vanuatu

Emma Pearson and Jenny James

Across the Asia Pacific region (indeed, on a global scale), formalised provision of early childhood care and education has expanded exponentially during the past two to three decades. Through its history, formalised early childhood care has served a range of purposes, from providing care for young children while their parents work, to being a site for religious ministry. In the twenty first century, the field is driven primarily by growing acknowledgment of the important role of early childhood services in supporting young children's growth and development and, in turn, shaping the development of healthy societies. This is reflected in messages regarding both the economic benefits of investing in early childhood and the costs of failing to do so (e.g. Heckman and Masterov 2004; Rao and Jin 2010; Neuman and Bennett 2001) and powerful rhetoric from International Non-Government agencies (INGO's) that urges countries to invest in expanding access to early education opportunities (e.g. UNESCO's Education For All initiative; Baba and Puamau 1999). Related to these, the international Education for All (EFA) agenda (UNESCO 2006) and targets for human development defined by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), have stimulated rapid growth in early education and care services in most countries across the Asia Pacific region over the past two decades.

Having achieved significant advances in increasing access to formalised early childhood care and education, many countries in the region have recently become

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increasingly concerned about the importance of ensuring quality in the provision of early education and care services. With the increasing rates of enrolment that many countries have experienced, there is also heightened awareness of the risk that 'poor quality' early childhood care and education settings can, in fact, cause more harm than good. Formalised early childhood teacher preparation has, naturally, come under increased scrutiny as part of this new focus. A 2011 review of early childhood teacher status and training across Asia and the Pacific indicated that, for most countries within the region, teacher preparation is acknowledged as a key factor in efforts to raise the quality of early childhood care and education programmes. The same review, however, also highlighted the complexity involved in making decisions around how to enhance teacher quality, pointing to significant regional variation in contexts of and approaches to teacher preparation (Pearson and Voon 2011).

Given the considerable diversities in socio-economic circumstances; cultural and linguistic practices; geo-political environments, and historical backgrounds of formalized provision that exist across the Asia Pacific region, such variation is unsurprising. However, variation in standards and approaches is often viewed negatively, as it is widely assumed that divergence from published standards reflects compromises in quality. The purpose of this chapter is to problematize the view that standardising quality in teacher preparation is straightforward. There is undoubtedly ample (and urgent) space for improvement and investment in teacher preparation across our region. In many countries, early childhood teachers receive very little pre-service training or education, struggling to cope with the demands of caring for and educating young children prior to entry into formal schooling. However, this chapter draws on recent discussions around the contextual nature of 'quality' in early childhood care and education (e.g. Tobin 2005) to argue that variability in approaches to teacher preparation can and should be viewed as possibilities for innovation. The chapter takes an example from the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, where the national early childhood teacher preparation programme responds in novel ways to unique contextual circumstances and needs, to highlight the importance of incorporating the most effective elements of existing practice into attempts to enhance quality in teacher preparation 'standards' across diverse contexts.

16.1 The Importance (and Complexity) of Teacher Preparation

16.1.1 Defining Early Childhood 'Teachers'

In the field of early childhood care and education, the distinction between those who 'educate' children and those who 'care' for them has historical significance because being a 'teacher' is assumed to require specialised skills and qualifications, whereas being a 'carer' is assumed to be non-specialised and therefore has tended to attract lower status (Rosemberg 2003). This distinction has resulted in a number of challenges for the field of early childhood care and education as it

has become widely anticipated that 'quality' teaching requires tertiary-level training in formal education (as explained in further detail below). INGOs are increasingly adopting the notion of early childhood care and education as embracing a wide range of provisions for young children, reflecting awareness that holistic approaches to policy formulation in early childhood (regardless of whether formal education, or health and well-being are the key 'drivers' of policy and programming), are most likely to result in positive outcomes for children and communities. For the purposes of this chapter, therefore, and given the considerable diversity of contexts within which children across Asia and the Pacific are being raised and educated, the image of 'teacher' as applying to an individual who supports the care and education for children aged between birth and 8 years in a range of out-of-home settings has been adopted.

16.1.2 *'Quality' in Early Childhood Teaching and Teacher Preparation*

Of all the potential contributors to 'quality' in out-of-home early childhood care and education, teacher efficacy is widely acknowledged as having the greatest influence. Without the presence of committed, confident and knowledgeable human resources, the most advanced physical facilities are unlikely to engage young children in meaningful learning experiences (Alexander 2008). Clearly, investment in efforts to prepare teachers for excellence in the care and education of young children is therefore paramount in achieving quality in formalised early childhood programmes.

Less clear is evidence of what types of teacher preparation are most effective across diverse contexts. In most, if not all countries around the world, 'quality' teaching, indeed, 'quality' early childhood care and education as a whole, is associated with formal, tertiary level teacher qualifications. A large body of evidence on quantitative measures of 'quality' in early childhood care and education (Fenech 2011) indicates that the best early childhood education programmes are delivered by people who hold formal qualifications, preferably at university level (Degotardi 2010). It is also worth noting, however, that as Fenech (ibid) demonstrates persuasively, what we know about 'quality' in general regarding the provision of early childhood care and education is limited by the contexts in which research in this area has been conducted. Fenech's analysis of internationally-published and cited research on quality in early childhood revealed, for example, that more than 70 % of what we know is based on research conducted in the United States and less than 8 % is based on data from the Asia Pacific region. Despite these cautions, notions of what is 'right' for children emanating from European and American contexts still tend to dominate global discourse and therefore impact on policies and programme design in countries around the world (Penn 2008; Woodhead 1999).

Culturally-based notions of what is 'best' for children and their teachers are fundamental to the delivery of teacher preparation. For example, the tertiary-level

programmes through which teacher candidates progress in order to achieve quali-fied teacher status tend to be strongly underpinned by particular philosophies, or understandings, of young children and their needs. For example, a common and dominant reference point for 'quality' in the field of early childhood educa-tion programming, research, policies, and teacher preparation programmes glob-ally is the US-based NAEYC's (National Association for the Education of Young Children) policy on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). The DAP Position Statement is clearly underpinned by assumptions regarding the types of programmes that children attend, with a strong focus on supporting cognitive aspects of children's growth and development in early childhood programmes (NAEYC 2009). While the NAEYC has increasingly made efforts to draw atten-tion to the importance of considering social and cultural diversity among children in programming for early childhood education, the Statement clearly caters for a specific type of early childhood programme, ideally connected to but structur-ally separated from communities, and in which learning outcomes are prioritised. Despite this relatively narrow focus, DAP is widely promoted by agencies working around the world across highly diverse contexts as a primary resource for under-standings of early childhood 'quality' (Penn 2002).

16.1.3   Early Childhood Care and Education Across Asia and the Pacific: Problematizing 'Quality'

DAP is underpinned by a set of beliefs that reflect an individualistic orienta-tion towards human development. Individualistic ideas about human (and child) development tend to view individual development and progress as a priority. In many early childhood care and education contexts across the industrialised world, 'quality' and appropriate teaching practices, including teacher-child interactions, are strongly associated with an image of the 'agentic' child. While there is strong acknowledgment that socio-cultural environments are likely to influence the nature of individual development, essentially the primary focus is on how an individual functions (grows, learns, develops) in a particular context. Reflected in the field of early childhood care and education this emphasis is expressed, for example, in the promotion of 'child-centred' approaches, which promote children's freedom to learn through self-directed and intrinsically-motivated activity. These approaches are often characterised by activities that involve autonomy, exploration and spon-taneity in learning, such as 'free play' (Kwon 2004), which have become widely viewed as 'quality standards' in early childhood provision across very diverse contexts (Tobin 2005), exerting a profound influence on the development of early childhood care and education programmes globally.

The 'ideals' referred to above have informed and shaped early childhood curric-ular and teacher preparation programmes within countries across the Asia Pacific region, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, India and Korea, with results that need to be carefully considered and addressed. Several studies have indicated that teachers

in a number of Asian countries who undergo training that emphasises the child-centred approaches that are underpinned by concepts such as DAP find it difficult to implement in their classrooms (Chan and Chan 2003; Hegde and Cassidy 2009; Kwon 2004; Lee and Tseng 2008). Markus and Kitayama (2003) make the point that, in many Asian cultures the theoretical separation of an individual from his/her wider social context is unnatural. To illustrate with a simple example: in most European American contexts, important life decisions that are made by individuals tend to be informed by the wishes and expectations of family members. Ultimately, however, the individual decides what is best for him or her and is held responsible for the outcome of that choice. In contrast, generally, individuals raised in Asian cultural contexts tend to make decisions in accordance with family wishes and expectations. Applied to caring for and educating young children, this means that levels of conformity and social hierarchies are of considerable importance.

There is growing evidence, therefore, that the individualistic orientation that underpins dominant philosophies in teacher preparation programmes catering for teachers who will be practicing largely in European and American cultural contexts may not be universally applicable. Abilities that may be highly valued in the developing world, such as the importance of learning from community elders, connections with nature and traditional knowledge (Burford et al. 2004; Odora Hoppers 2002) are not embraced explicitly by DAP. Notions of 'quality' in early childhood care and education therefore need to be re-conceptualised to reflect diverse cultural values (Pearson and Degotardi 2009) if they are used to inform early childhood curricula and teacher preparation.

Indeed, it is worth noting that even within the socio-cultural contexts for which they were conceived, the universal relevance and application of the 'quality' standards referred to earlier is far from clear. Due to the range of influences impacting on early childhood care and education, including political and economic interests, as well as scientific knowledge about child development, European American ideals have vacillated between a focus on child-centred approaches and contented childhoods as the best preparation for primary school, and a view that children must attain a range of formal academic skills in literacy and numeracy before starting formal school. Spodek and Saracho (2003) indicate that, over the past six decades, ideals that are widely espoused for 'teaching' young children have ranged from ensuring that academically 'deficient' children are brought up to expected standards, to advancing children's social and artistic interests or potential. As Wood (2004) points out, goals for early childhood teachers are therefore confounded by dissonance between professional emphasis on child-centred approaches, and government agendas that are focused on formal academic outcomes. This represents significant challenges for teacher preparation programmes that seek to both prepare teachers and to install in them a strong sense of identity as advocates of effective early childhood provision.

These are important lessons, which can be drawn upon to advance the argument that defining quality standards in teacher preparation is a highly complex undertaking. While the field of education is often influenced by trends during which particular approaches to education are promoted as reflecting 'best practice' or the

'state of the art', a number of early childhood researchers have argued that it is unrealistic to assume educational practice may be interpreted in terms of a single or dominant theory of education or development. Particularly if theories that are developed based on input from a particular context are applied across others. Spodek and Saracho (2003) have suggested that, in striving to offer children the very 'best' in teaching and learning, early childhood teachers are often informed by and espouse models that may contrast with their own culturally-held notions regarding children, their growth and development. This pattern can result in a tendency to brush aside essential socio-cultural traditions that shape young children's community experiences. Espoused practices are therefore more often than not transformed by teachers when applied to practical classroom settings.

The intention of this chapter is neither to advocate for or against a particular set of quality 'standards', nor to suggest that quality benchmarks are not necessary. However, evidence presented indicates that efforts to understand how unique contextual factors, such as values and customs, which already shape early childhood care and education experiences might be applied in developing teacher preparation programmes are important and timely. Indeed, throughout the various transformations that early childhood theory and practice have seen, perhaps the most enduring influence in early childhood classrooms across different countries has been the culturally-defined belief systems of early childhood teachers. Examples of difficulties associated with wholesale adoption of concepts of quality that have been conceived in European American contexts, in countries where such representations compete with quite different locally conceived ideals, are therefore not surprising (Prochner 2002; Chan and Chan 2003).

16.2 Globalization and 'Quality' Teaching in Early Childhood Settings

One benefit of the recent global expansion in formalised provision of early childhood care and education is that it has stimulated important critical and reflective discussions that have increased the field's exposure to diverse policies, theories and practices. Growing acknowledgment of global, diverse perspectives on young children's well-being and on diverse values relating to the care of young children has led to the emergence of critical discussions around 'child-centred' approaches, what they mean, and how widely applicable they are.

There are repeated calls for the acknowledgment of practices and methods in early childhood care and education teaching that more explicitly support the promotion and maintenance of indigenous knowledge (Pence and Schafer 2006). Indeed, a growing body of evidence has begun to illustrate challenges associated with application of dominant understandings of 'quality' outlined above (Penn 2008; Prochner 2002). Prochner (2002) outlines the impact of approaches to early childhood education that emphasise the development of children's autonomy and independence, and reflect the cultural tendency towards individualistic notions of

growth and development outlined earlier in the chapter. As Prochner, suggests, play-based, 'child-centred' teaching practices are widely espoused as reflecting professionalism in early childhood teacher preparation programmes around the world, while formal instruction is viewed as unsuitable for socialising children to participate in a democratic society. Sarangapani (2003) has also analysed the tendency for local programmes that reflect cultural values related to student obligations to be undermined as a result of extremes reflected in dominant perceptions regarding 'traditional', 'didactic' versus 'modern', 'child-centred' approaches. Sarangapani (p. 404) highlights the essential role of 'local' ideologies in India, where emphasis on authority and discipline have often been mistakenly equated with 'totalitarian' practices. As Sarangapani explains, this interpretation may be misguided. In many community and formal learning contexts in India, high value is placed on children's reverence for adults and ability to conform to expectations. However:

> … the school is not a totalitarian institution which coerces unwilling children into accepting norms in society which go against their 'grain'. The local ideology of childhood and education provides a framework with which these are congruent and which children and teachers refer back to and recreate in the process of making sense of and giving meaning to their activities in school.

The same dichotomy between 'traditional' practices (associated with outdated, didactic teaching approaches) and 'modern' practices (associated with more appropriate democratic, child-centred views) has been referred to in relation to early childhood (Darling 1994). This has resulted in difficulties with attempts to reform and enhance early childhood care and education in a number of countries. South Korea, for example, has experienced widespread reforms recently. In a discussion on the impact in South Korea of introducing a 'progressive' child-centred National ECCE curriculum, Kwon (2004) points to the contrast between traditional Confucian values relating to hierarchical human relationships held locally with 'Western' notions of autonomy and intrinsic motivation reflected in the 'new' curriculum. As Kwon indicates, although teachers were seen to value the 'new' child-centred principles, they found it difficult to implement educational approaches such as free play in their programmes. Instead, in accordance with cultural beliefs relating to the respect and obedience of elders and the importance of academic excellence, teachers maintained their traditional practices of separating work from play, providing teacher-directed lessons and emphasising extrinsic motivation.

It is clear that difficulties arise when 'imported' approaches do not fit with contextual values that influence how teachers and students make sense of their identities and experiences. These difficulties are likely to impact upon the sustainability and quality of children's care and education. In the process of defining 'quality' in approaches to teaching young children, therefore local values and priorities must be consulted and considered. Indeed, given the current global expansion of focus in early childhood care early childhood care and education and, importantly, increased attention to the role of cultural sustainability in young children's learning development, efforts to build and uphold quality in formalised early childhood care and education require a more truly globalized evidence-base. As Myers (2006, p. 31) indicates:

> If the characteristics and processes of an educational environment are not consistent with the kind of world, country and citizenry desired … it is difficult to say that the program is of high quality.

Myers' sentiments reflect growing concern about risks associated with adoption of insights from the existing dominant evidence-base in shaping and defining 'quality' early childhood care and education across contexts, where not only values and customs but availability of funds and resources, are vastly different. Conceptualizations of 'quality' have begun to acknowledge the importance of contextual factors in determining what 'types' of early childhood care and education are best for young children. Stephens (2003, p. 2) likens defining quality in early childhood care and education to attempting to define 'motherhood'. In other words, perceptions of quality are very much tied to individual understandings and expectations:

> … (I)t is clearly a 'good thing' but elusive and likely to be dependent on the perspective of the person attempting the definition.

There can be no question that quality in early childhood care and education provision is paramount, both for the well-being of young children and if investments are to result in significant returns in the form of well-prepared and productive future citizens. As a number of well-respected international experts in the field of early childhood development and education have argued, however, understandings of what is 'best' for children (and therefore might constitute 'quality' in the preparation of early childhood teachers) vary based on local customs, resources, family and political structures, values and beliefs (Nsamenang 2006; Woodhead 2006). As this chapter aims to highlight, the range of opportunities for innovation through discovery and development of existing resources, both human and otherwise, that are currently being implemented across diverse contexts represents one of the most exciting aspects of early childhood care and education in the present time.

16.3 Lessons from Vanuatu: Situating Early Childhood Teacher Preparation in the Community

Vanuatu provides a valuable illustration (i) of the extent to which early childhood teacher preparation can, and should, be closely tied to contextual needs and circumstances, (ii) why this implies that dominant models of teacher preparation described in previous sections, although maybe useful for informing the development of teacher preparation, should not be applied globally as models, and (iii) lessons that can be learned from some of the impressive innovations in teacher preparation that are occurring across diverse cultural, geographic, political and economic settings globally.

As highlighted previously, in most European American contexts, early childhood teacher preparation programmes follow a recognised format, including the study of child development theories (framed within particular cultural contexts);

contemporary issues in early childhood education; specialist modules on content and pedagogy, and elements of reflective practice linked to teaching practicum modules. Programme content tends to be closely linked with a national curriculum and/or framework, and is underpinned by assumptions about the environments in which teachers will be working (i.e. in general, purpose-built or designed buildings that are provided and maintained by organisations managing day-to-day running of the center/school, with access to pre-purchased learning resources that complement the curriculum goals around which teachers plan and work). Clearly, there are differences across countries within the broader umbrella of 'European American' approaches, but the majority of undergraduate programmes designed to prepare teachers tend to follow, more or less, this general pattern. Consideration of whether this format for teacher preparation is suitable or practicable for preparing early childhood teachers to work in settings that differ considerably from those described above (including the organisation and management of early childhood settings; community settings; geographical and cultural contexts) is an essential question in the quest for early childhood 'quality' in teacher preparation and practice, as evidenced by Vanuatu's approaches (Fig. 16.1).

Vanuatu is a small island nation with a population of approximately 250,000, spread over 60 islands. Across these islands reside diverse groups of Melanesian communities, speaking over 150 languages and practising a variety of customs. 80 % of the ni-Vanuatu population depend on subsistence agriculture for their

Fig. 16.1 Preschoolers in Vanuatu are encouraged to develop a strong sense of connection to their cultural heritage

Fig. 16.2 Vanuatu's teacher preparation programmes encourage teachers and communities to make use of the country's pristine environment and rich natural resources

livelihoods (Vanuatu Government, 19th July 2013). Despite high levels of income poverty, Vanuatu benefits from richly diverse and pristine natural environments, as well as a strong community-based connection with these environments, as part of national heritage and identity. This important cultural orientation is reflected in these photographs of ni-Vanuatu children and early childhood settings, which illustrate the central place of natural settings and materials in young children's lives (Fig. 16.2).

16.3.1 Early Childhood Care and Education Policy Context in Vanuatu

Children in Vanuatu begin formal schooling at 6 years of age. Prior to entry into school, approximately 60 % of children in Vanuatu attend child care (ages 3–4) and/or kindergarten (ages 4–5) programmes. The Ministry of Education has recently implemented a number of strategies designed to increase enrolment in early childhood education programmes across the country, and to address the issue of 'over-age' children (who should be enrolled in primary schools) attending kindergartens. As is the case for many countries across the Asia Pacific region, the relative lack of government investment in early childhood programmes and

associated supports has presented challenges for the field. However, in response to increasing acknowledgment of the potential for early childhood programmes to support enhanced enrolment and retention in primary schools, as well as the benefits of gaining pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills, the Ministry of Education has increasingly included a focus on early childhood care and education in national plans. ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) is now formally included in the national definition of Basic Education, meaning that broader education policies must also take into account the situation of ECCE in the country.

Since the engagement of a government-funded National Preschool Coordinator in the Ministry of Education in 1990, Vanuatu has experienced considerable advances in the provision of formalised early childhood care and education. Following development of a set of country-specific Early Learning and Development Standards (written in close consultation with practitioners and communities from across Vanuatu and validated for applicability to young children in Vanuatu), Vanuatu recently completed its ECCE Curriculum. In an exciting development for early childhood in Vanuatu, the Ministry of Education has adopted learning areas outlined in the ECCE Curriculum to revise subject areas included in primary schooling.

In 2010, Vanuatu introduced its first stand-alone policy on ECCE, which is regularly revised in line with country plans and strategic goals for basic education. Current initiatives include the Government's Vanuatu Education Sector Programme (VESP, introduced in 2012) and the accompanying Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy (VESS). These initiatives are broadly concerned with enhancing literacy and numeracy attainment and enrolment in primary schools; enhancing inclusion of children with disabilities, and enhancing retention rates at primary school level. As part of the Government's strategy for achieving these goals, the Ministry of Education has included a focus in early childhood care and education on:

- Training and supporting early childhood teachers to deliver the new ECCE Curriculum;
- Strengthening the delivery of ECCE and, relatedly;
- Working with communities to engage them in ECCE and ensure that delivery is conducted through locally-relevant and efficient methods (Vanuatu Government 2013).

16.3.2 Kindergarten Contexts in Vanuatu

As mentioned briefly in previous sections, the contexts and circumstances under which early childhood care and education are delivered formally in Vanuatu differ in important ways from those that many readers residing in Australia, Europe or North American contexts might be familiar with. Financial support for early childhood programmes is very limited and, currently, there is little incentive for commercial investment in the provision of preschooling, since the vast majority of families and communities function on a subsistence basis and do not have disposable incomes to put towards privatised care and education services.

Preschool programmes are activity-based and cater for children aged four and five, prior to entry into formal schooling. Preschool programmes currently operate in districts and villages where a 'qualified' teacher (who has completed the Ministry of Education's intensive programme—outlined below) is available. These programmes promote the use of vernacular language as the medium of learning and communication and are strongly community based/supported. Indeed, Vanuatu's considerable strengths in provisioning for formalised early childhood are and education can be found in the extent of community and cultural resources. Although not supported significantly in terms of public funding, formalised early childhood care and education in the country benefits from a small but very strong and committed team of practitioners working within the Vanuatu Eli Jaelhud Asosiesen (VEJA—previously the PSABV Pri-skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu). These practitioners work closely with communities to build and extend on current support that is provided by families and community members in the form of furnishing, learning materials and resources, and basic fees to cover the salaries of early childhood teaching staff. The importance of these connections to early childhood care and education in Vanuatu is made explicit in the country's current strategic plans:

> Community responsibility for the provision of early childhood care and education has many benefits. Kindergartens are a resource for the community and not just for pupils. For example, a learning environment that supports and cares for all children promotes respect for diversity and the sharing of history, tradition, vernacular language and customs. And strong parental and community involvement in and support for early childhood care and education are key to its effectiveness. Thus Government needs to retain the pattern of community responsibility, and at the same time to become more involved in capacity building (Vanuatu Government 2013, p. 12).

The strong focus on community participation in establishing and maintaining ECCE facilities in Vanuatu (as outlined below) is unique to this country and reflects a crucial strength in the delivery of ECCE programmes. While many teacher preparation programmes underpinned by individualistic orientations described earlier in the chapter do incorporate a focus on building relationships with children's families as part of the process of teacher preparation, the ni-Vanuatu 'model' of teacher-policymaker-family-community collaboration is not only a consideration, but is central to providing quality care and learning experiences for young children. The Vanuatu approach to teacher preparation (outlined in further detail below), during which teachers are required to work with families and communities to construct and/or improve ECCE centre facilities, is unique and innovative.

16.3.3 Early Childhood Teacher Preparation in Vanuatu

Formalised, tertiary-level training that is available for early childhood teachers in Vanuatu is offered by external agencies, in the form of a BEd (ECE), for which teachers must obtain an international scholarship and travel to Fiji, or a Certificate III Children's Services (Childcare/Pre-school Stream) course offered by the

Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC). Intensive, initial teacher preparation is also offered by the Ministry of Education, with support from VEJA. A summary of the content of national teacher preparation is provided below. The applicability and effectiveness of this training, which engages less with the depth of theoretical knowledge and engagement with scientific research commonly required of professional training, is nonetheless self-evident in the ni-Vanuatu context.

The teacher preparation programme typically consists of a five week, intensive training programme (Guild and Tuivaga 2002) that is first delivered to 'key teachers' at national level by the National Preschool Coordinator. The key teachers then implement the same training programme to early childhood teachers working across the provinces, building a strong network of teachers across the dispersed regions of Vanuatu that has continued to strengthen as a result of the links made between key teachers, VEJA, the Ministry of Education and 'local' teachers who are located at provincial and village level (an illustration of the model is provided in Fig. 16.3).

A major aspect of the five week training that teacher candidates receive, in addition to introductory modules in child development theory and practice,
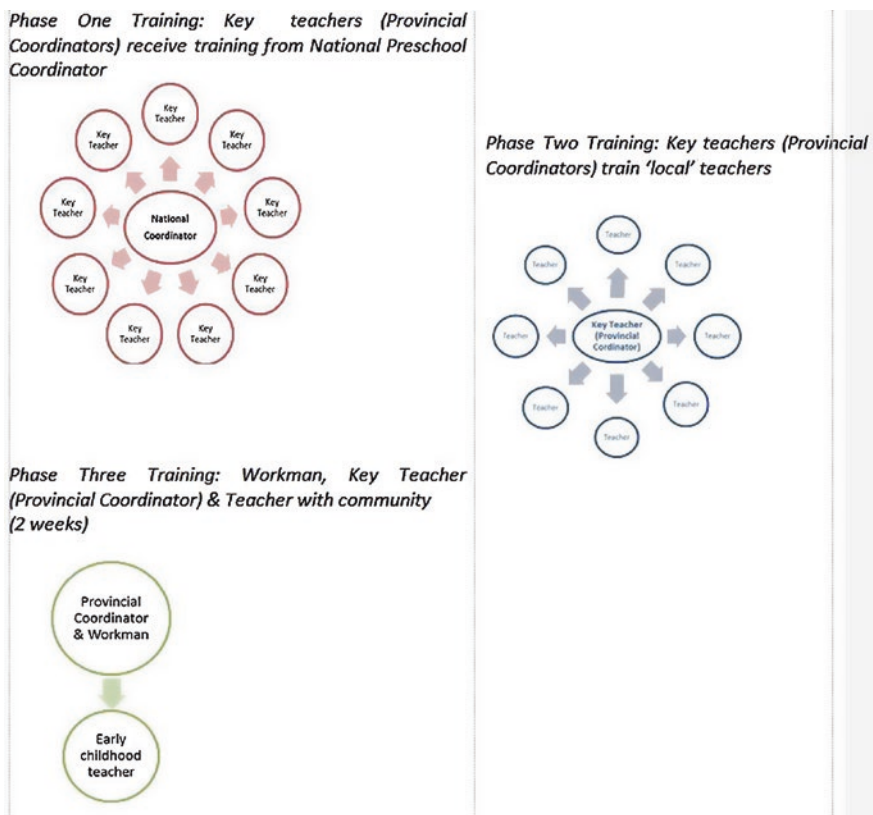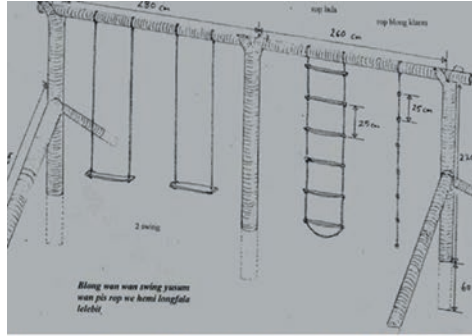

Fig. 16.3 Initial teacher preparation in Vanuatu

Fig. 16.4 Preparation for
teaching includes learning
about how to make the most
of local natural resources in
creating stimulating learning
environments

involves learning about construction of pre-school buildings and equipment using readily available natural resources. When the key teachers travel to the provinces to conduct training for local teachers, they are accompanied by a builder who will then assist the local teachers and local communities in building new pre-school facilities, where necessary, and upgrading existing facilities. Teachers also receive training on how to make use of local materials to construct learning materials for the classroom. Teachers learn how to make a collection of materials using natural resources (including natural dye for colours), as illustrated in the photographs provided in Fig. 16.4.

The significance and relevance of this aspect of the Vanuatu model of teacher preparation is highlighted by the current National Preschool Coordinator, who works closely with early childhood teachers across Vanuatu:

> One of the commonest complaints from ECCE teachers is the lack of resources for teaching. Such a complaint need not be heard again….(i)n the Pacific, where our surroundings are full of natural resources and our communities are caring, we can count ourselves very fortunate. Where children are in need, and teachers and communities have the skills and imagination to invent, there can be no truer saying than necessity is the mother of invention (James 2007, p. 122).

16.4 Conclusions

As this chapter has repeatedly highlighted, of all the potential contributors to 'quality' in formalised, teacher quality is widely acknowledged as having the greatest influence. The ni-Vanuatu model of teacher preparation, situated in and responding to a unique set of strengths and challenges, serves as a valuable illustration of the need for consideration and promotion of locally-bound definitions of 'quality' in teacher preparation. It supports Alexander's (2008) position that including contextually-appropriate indicators of process, in the design and evaluation of teaching and learning is critical to achieving a 'quality' education system that engages and retains teachers and children.

It is important to acknowledge that this model and the context within which it is functioning, as is the case for most others, is by no means perfect. The National Preschool Coordinator has explained that early childhood teachers in Vanuatu do face significant challenges in engaging some communities and are pressurised by the demands of having to produce all their own resources. Because teachers depend upon community support to keep preschools operating, sometimes they do not receive a full salary for long periods of time and struggle, therefore, to offer 'quality' learning experiences for the children under their care. As explained earlier in the chapter, the purpose here is not to present any particular model as ideal for providing high quality early childhood care and education services, Rather, the purpose is to advocate for acknowledgment of the unique strengths that can be found across diverse contexts in which these services are provided, and the innovative approaches that are being applied to address challenges.

The skills that are taught in national ni-Vanuatu teacher preparation programmes, including the establishment of strong, intimate and mutually supportive relationships with community members and a deep level of self-sufficiency in producing teaching and learning materials, are necessary for the sustainability and relevance of kindergartens and early childhood education, given the unique circumstance outlined. Any effort to enhance teacher 'quality' and therefore teacher preparation should, therefore, be grounded in these unique features, and not in an imported model that is best-suited for very different contexts.

Indeed, research carried out in other 'resource-constrained' contexts, such as Papua New Guinea, Malawi and Zambia (VSO 2002) indicates that teacher motivation, and therefore 'quality', may be significantly impeded when there is little community-wide value attached to the work that teachers do:

> Teachers are key to a quality education. They must have the recognition, the professional support and the remuneration necessary to enable them to do the job they need and want to do and to feed and clothe their own families (Annan 2001, p. 71).

Acknowledgment of teachers within local communities in these settings is therefore not just desirable but vital.

Vanuatu provides an example that could not only be valuable for informing teacher preparation programmes that prepare early childhood teachers for working in resource-constrained environments (where community mobilization and engagement are critical for sustainable early childhood services). Its examples also provide valuable lessons for policy makers and programme designers located in more resource-plenty environments who strive in their curricula to promote young children's awareness of ecological sustainability. The value attached to environment and community in providing for young children's care and education in Vanuatu deserve to be promoted as unique strengths from which other countries can learn.

As the focus on providing formalised early childhood care and education continues to spread across the globe, often carrying messages about best practice that are shaped largely on the basis of a rather narrow set of ideals relating to young children's growth and development, it is critical that the field acknowledge the important insights that can be gained through learning from experiences, challenges and innovations from across the extraordinarily wide range of contexts in which teachers are being prepared to provide quality early childhood care and education experiences around the world. This will enrich the global field of early childhood care and education, as well as helping to ensure that deeply-held, essential cultural values are not brushed aside in efforts to achieve 'quality' in early childhood services.

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Chapter 17
Ready for Ethical and Critically Reflective Practice in Supercomplex Times? Discourses, Knowledge and Values in the Postmodern Society of Hong Kong

Gail Yuen

How often do we, as teacher educators, ask ourselves what kind of teachers are required for early childhood education in a postmodern era? How ready are we to prepare ethical and critically reflective teachers to meet challenging lives and issues in early childhood settings? In what ways can we work with pre-service and in-service teachers to build a professional capacity to stand up to these challenges? The reflective thoughts documented in this chapter were inspired partly by a collaborative endeavour to introduce postmodern ethics to early childhood teacher education programmes in Hong Kong, with the goal of developing culturally appropriate strategies to enhance professionalism. In the discussion, I attempt to make visible some of the frequently neglected discourses, knowledge and values that are embedded in macro contexts, government policy and teacher education. This in turn may have prevented us from preparing the kind of early childhood teachers that can profess ethically in turbulent times. The reflective journey that I have undertaken is an awakening call to someone who tried to explore new possibilities using a Western critical lens, i.e., a postmodern ethics, but became deeply troubled by the daunting task involved in building much needed professional capacity.

To begin, I first explore the notion of being professional in a postmodern era, highlighting the challenges of postmodern life for teachers, the hegemony of modernist discourses in defining professionalism, and the urgency of reconstructing professionalism in early childhood education. This is followed by an examination of the changing political, economic and social realities in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) that further complicate the ethical work of early

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childhood teachers. An analysis of the official rhetoric about the 'professional' teacher is then provided to reveal the government's approach to professionalise the sector, including its technical orientation towards professionalism and conscious effort to sustain the early childhood market, all of which offer little help to nurture professional ethics and critical reflection. Last but not least, the making of early childhood teachers through teacher education is problematised for the narrow theoretical base dominated by developmental psychology and the inadequate attention to macro and policy issues that affect teachers' relational work with young children and families. The taken-for-granted Chinese culture as lived in Hong Kong and manifested by Confucianism, as well as the uneasy tensions between Confucian and a postmodern ethics are also examined. My reflective journey ends with a final remark on what we can do to support ethical and critically reflective practice.

17.1 Being Professional in the Postmodern Era

Postmodern life presents constant contestations for what it means to be professional as teachers. The conventional understanding of professionalism that was once used to construct a stable teacher identity and secure epistemological authority and professional autonomy has been uprooted by an age of supercomplexity (Barnett 2008). Barnett (2008) defines supercomplexity as "a condition of multiplying and contending frameworks of understanding" (p. 194). This 'liquid' condition, in which old frameworks may fade with no guaranteed replacements by new and more definite frameworks, has turned fragility into a life feature. Frameworks of understanding or discourses represent the world in a specifically structured and collective way, legitimising certain knowledge and values. Under the condition of supercomplexity, discourses may mix, collide or co-exist, continuously changing their forms of existence in relation to each other, with no capacity of offering any resolutions (Barnett 2008). Adding to the force of deprofessionalisation, digitalisation and marketisation continue to re-order professional relationships in education (Barnett 2008). Barnett (2008) points out a serious concern about the ethics of performance in neoliberal times. In his terms, this ethics of performance is a "hollowed-out ethic", dealing with the "here-and-now" or the 'is'—the *realpolitik*—of professional life" (emphasis in original, p. 198). It squeezes out the 'ought' that questions what professionals ought to do. It undermines the emotional, caring and relational work of teachers by privileging technical competence to construct a specific notion of professional identity.

Being professional in the postmodern era is far more emotionally and intellectually challenging than before (Day 2012; Jeffrey and Troman 2010; O'Connor 2008). As teachers in an age of supercomplexity, knowing oneself in the world and understanding how one is interconnected with being in the world, is pivotal to the ethical space of professionals. Barnett (2008) argues that "the *challenge* to professionalism lies in the handling of multiple discourses"; "the *task* of professionalism

lies in the critical deployment of discourses" and "the *achievement* of professionalism lies in discursive creation" (emphasis in original, p. 190). To be a critical professional is to know how to "steer a discursive path that has some boundaries to it" and how to free one from being entirely besieged by some discourses through a strategic deployment of other discourses (Barnett 2008, p. 201). It demands constant and intensive emotional and intellectual engagement of teachers in charting their course of professionalism in a world of competing and interlocking forces.

For early childhood education (children aged 0–6), being a critical professional is a deeper struggle in light of the hegemonic influence of neoliberalism. Irrespective of its potential contributions to liberating lives and constructing an equal, democratic and sustainable society (Moss 2014), early childhood education is often isolated from the rest of the public system and kept as a private service. In doing so, it enables the meta-narrative of neoliberalism to stay alive "for governing children and adults alike, for reproducing the already known, for inculcating belief in necessity and essentialism, for fostering the values of and the subjectivity required by a rapacious, technocratic and harmful economic regime" (Moss 2014, p. 2). Moss (2014) problematises two dominant neoliberal discourses, one about quality and high returns and the other about markets. The former is positioned as an easy equation to increase human capital and reduce social problems. The latter is presented as a self-evident efficient mechanism to ensure choice and quality through competition. Both discourses, however, circulate regimes of truth that promote universalism and rationality, neglecting context and complexity on the one hand while rendering alterative thinking about early childhood education impossible on the other hand. A narrow understanding of professional relationships as contractual and calculative in nature means that being professional in early childhood settings is nothing more than the technical delivery of pre-determined outcomes in accordance with expert knowledge and market demand. Likewise, professional ethics is reduced to the "dispassionate application of general and abstract principles" (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, p. 69), allowing the distancing of oneself from specific situations to make autonomous and rational decisions.

Contrary to modernistic views of universalism and rationality that neglect context and complexity, early childhood teachers engage in ethical work that is highly complex, intellectual, emotional and relational. Early childhood settings are sites of political and ethical practice that value critically reflective practice grounded in an ethics of care (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) reiterate that ethics is about how people relate to and treat each other as well as attend to situatedness, plurality and difference. Ethical practice in postmodern life is uncertain, messy and ambivalent. But professionals are entrusted to have the ethical capacity to make contextualised decisions. Ethical and critically reflective practice means doing what is best in a given situation. It allows the re-personalisation of ethics, demanding that professionals take responsibility through making choices (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). Ethical and critically reflective practice, however, requires alternative constructions of professionalism beyond those limited to the technical delivery of pre-determined outcomes.

A ground-up activist approach is considered necessary to counter the hegemonic notion of professionalism advanced by modernist discourses (e.g., Clark 2013; Fenech et al. 2010; Osgood 2015). Osgood (2015), for example, argues for the concept of "professionalism from within" as a culturally, socially and politically specific discursive construct (p. 119), which points to the significance of emotionality, collaboration and critical engagement with prevailing discourses that position and shape teachers in particular ways. Similar to Osgood (2015), Fenech et al. (2010) propose resistant-based professionalism to reshape the professional habitus so as to value ethical actors, respectful relationships, professional autonomy and agency. In discussing professional ethics and identity, Thomas (2012) highlights the danger of falling into the binary of resisting modernist discourses by replacing them with postmodern ones. That is, the former adheres to certainty (e.g., norms and claims of expertise) but the latter suggests uncertainty (e.g., fluid relationships and identities). As Thomas (2012) argues, disrupting "an ethics reliant on either/or positioning of certainty and uncertainty enables a more contextually responsive, messiness in the enactment of ethics" (p. 94). Such messiness is a more accurate reflection of the condition of postmodern life and introduces the idea of ethical decisions that include context.

17.2 Changing Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Realities in Hong Kong SAR

The political, economic, social and cultural contexts of Hong Kong have set the stage for the changing realities. The city was a British colony for over a century, the terms of which expired in 1997. In the colonial years, the government placed great emphasis on building legitimacy through economic success. The colonial trajectory and ascribed international status of the city as a liberal economy have made it difficult to untangle itself from the processes of globalisation, including the pervasive influence of neoliberalism (Mok and Currie 2002). This status has opened up Hong Kong to a wide spectrum of Western discourses, knowledge and values, as well as the continuous impact of the global economy. With the 'One Country, Two Systems' governance structure of Hong Kong under the People's Republic of China, contentious debates and significant changes in various aspects of life have become inevitable. Apart from the political and economic landscapes, Hong Kong is predominately a Chinese society and at the same time, it is home to 457,813 ethnic minority peoples, making up 6.4 % of the total population (Census and Statistics Department 2013). Confucianism, as a dominant cultural discourse, is very much a way of practice in life. In face of the Chinese emphasis on education and a strong sense of pragmatism developed from the historical past (Sweeting 1995), children in Hong Kong shoulder mounting pressure (e.g., interest classes, tutorial lessons and push on academic learning) in the education race (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child 2013). Regardless of the

prevalence of Confucianism and Western perspectives, conscious discussion and critical reflection on their influence (e.g., Leung and Yuen 2014; Shun and Wong 2004) are largely confined to the realm of academic study.

The changing realities in the form of political, economic, social and cultural tensions complicate the professional work of teachers in Hong Kong. Recently, two major political events, namely the proposed implementation of national education and the Occupy Central movement, have resulted in widespread contestations and deep-rooted divisions in education and the general public. The first event involves scepticism about the construction of a Chinese national identity (Ngai et al. 2014). The second event, which took place between October and December in 2014, concerns Hong Kong's democratic development that granted the right to vote to local citizens for their choice of the chief executive, the most senior public office in the SAR. Both events have exerted tremendous pressure on teachers to think and act 'professionally' and schools to reconsider the role of education in nurturing critical and independent minds (Leung et al. 2015; Ngai et al. 2014). Like other countries, Hong Kong has experienced stagnant real earnings and a continuous decline in the ability to repay mortgages (Centre for Quality of Life 2014). Economic pressure has forced many to work long hours, on average 49 h per week of full-time employment (Labour Department 2012), and there are few signs of narrowing the rich-poor gap. The Gini-Coefficient has remained at the same high level (0.5) since the mid-1990s (Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit 2012), with over 20 % of children aged 0–14 (180,000) living in poverty (Hong Kong Council of Social Service 2013). With reference to the social development index compiled by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2014), family solidarity measured in terms of divorce, family violence and family poverty has declined, dropping from 100 in 1998 to −221 in 2012, with children most affected among all vulnerable groups. Closer ties between the city and Mainland China have resulted in frequent cross-border marriages, employment and travel. This in turn has led to an increase in the number of mainland immigrants and cross-border students who are Hong Kong born citizens (Leung 2012). In such circumstances, huge diversities in terms of family situations and student backgrounds (e.g., socio-economic and cultural practices) challenge teachers' capacity of 'doing professionalism' ethically and reflectively (Osgood 2015).

Teachers have to handle not only changing realities resulting from various sources of tensions, but also the already complex teaching context of inadequate government attention to longstanding issues of inclusion. As mentioned, a sizable number of ethnic minority peoples live in Hong Kong. However, the integration of ethnic minority groups, especially those from South Asian countries (e.g., Nepal, India and Pakistan), has not been well supported (Legislative Council Secretariat 2013). There are also long waiting periods for special needs assessment, treatment and placement in full-day kindergartens among young children (Social Welfare Department 2013). As a result, many of these children attend kindergartens without any form of assistance and their problems are magnified in subsequent levels of education. In response to the policy inertia and discriminatory practices experienced by ethnic minority and special needs groups, the Equal Opportunities

Commission (2012a, b) issued two separate reports to urge the government to take prompt action. Similarly, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) has criticised the government for neglect and delay in establishing a comprehensive policy framework to address these longstanding issues.

How ready are early childhood teachers to live in and through the supercomplexity of postmodern life in Hong Kong? The changing realities are associated with a flux of discourses embedded in political, economic, social and cultural contexts, some of which concern structural inequalities, inequities and injustices. What discourses, knowledge and values are made available by government policy and early childhood teacher education in Hong Kong for teachers to negotiate their professional space to engage in ethical and critically reflective practice?

17.3 The 'Professional' Early Childhood Teacher in Official Rhetoric

The language of early childhood professionalism in Hong Kong is mostly confined to the professionalisation of teachers working with children aged 3–6 years, due to the split care-education administrative structure that commonly exists in other countries (Kaga et al. 2010). For those who want to work with young children in local kindergartens (regulated by the Education Bureau and predominately non-profit in nature), they are required to complete a 2-year sub-degree pre-service programme to attain the qualified teacher status (QTS). There is an alternative path for those with a non-education degree wanting to join the profession. A 2-year post-graduate diploma in-service programme is available for completion within the first 2 years of service. For principals, the Education Bureau requires a degree qualification plus the completion of a principalship course. In 2013, 54 % (6311) and 30 % (3525) of the workforce (11,612) in local kindergartens possessed a sub-degree and a degree in early childhood education, respectively (School Education Statistics Section 2014). Post-graduate diploma holders (335) made up of 3 % of the workforce. The remaining percentage (about 13 %) had minimal or no training (School Education Statistics Section 2014). Teachers holding a sub-degree or degree qualification can also register as child care workers to work with children aged 2–3 years in kindergarten-cum-child care centres; or children from birth to 3 years in child care centres, which operate under the regulations of the Social Welfare Department. Official qualifications are stipulated for this particular segment of the early childhood workforce, i.e., completion of a 1-year pre-service programme for child care workers and a 2-year sub-degree pre-service programme for child care supervisors.

The care-education divide has created confusion and ambiguities towards professionalism. It serves as a regime of truth to normalise the meaning of professionalism by justifying rationality through technical competence (education) while negating emotionality (care). Unlike the practice of other levels of education,

setting the entry requirement of kindergarten teachers at sub-degree level means that professionalism can be 'performed' in a rational approach by mastering and applying a given set of universal standards, expert knowledge and technical skills. The government's differential treatments (e.g., qualifications and status) of those working in kindergartens and child care centres (Yuen 2012) and its insistence to define services for three and above as more education oriented and services for three and under as more care oriented (Working Party on Harmonisation of Pre-primary Services 2002) have worked in tandem to shape subjectivities in hierarchical and dualistic terms. Subjectivities, as Fenech et al. (2010) and Osgood (2015) explain, are important to constructing professional identity.

The road to professionalisation of early childhood education in Hong Kong demonstrates the minimal concern of the government about the professional work of teachers of young children. In the 1980s, an international panel expressed grave concern about the quality of kindergartens and the workforce and recommended follow-up action by the British colonial government (Llewellyn 1982). Meanwhile, early childhood advocates pressed policymakers to speed up the provision of initial teacher education in the pre-service mode. Unfortunately, not much happened until the last few years before the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. The policy initiatives in the mid-1990s focused mainly on legislation and in-service programmes.

In 2000, the Hong Kong SAR government initiated a major overhaul of the education system. It was the first time in local early childhood history that professional qualifications were legislated for kindergarten teachers (initial training: 1 year for pre-service and 2 years for in-service) and kindergarten principals (sub-degree level). Child care workers and supervisors were also required to complete similar training (see Yuen 2008 for a comparison of policy debates during the colonial and SAR periods). The second wave of change in professional qualifications took place in 2007 when the SAR government implemented a voucher scheme in local non-profit kindergartens. This time, professional qualifications were raised to sub-degree level for teachers and degree level for principals. Child care centres were excluded from the voucher scheme (Education and Manpower Bureau 2006). Between 2000 and 2012, the early childhood workforce witnessed a slightly more systematic effort of professionalisation, although resource support was given only for professional upgrading to meet the stated requirements and not for continuing professional development.

In spite of consistent research evidence on the close relation of professional qualifications to quality provision and child outcomes (Sylvia et al. 2010), there remains strong bureaucratic resistance to adopting an all-graduate approach to the profession. High quality provision dedicated to serve in the best interests of young children and families is complex and multidimensional. It takes a high level of intellectual and emotional capacity to deliver and sustain it (Fenech et al. 2010). In the circumstances, local early childhood advocates, including myself as the convener of an alliance of 30 organisational members calling for 15-year free education (3 years of free kindergarten education plus 12 years of school education), have pushed for a new teacher qualification at degree level and a new legislation

requiring 50 % of teachers at each kindergarten to be degree holders. The ultimate goal is an all-graduate target (Alliance on the Fight for 15-year Free Education 2014). Beside concerns about quality and equity, early childhood advocates cast serious doubt about the readiness of young sub-degree graduates (probably around 20 years of age) to handle the supercomplexity of lives and issues in and beyond the classroom (Working Group on 15-year Free Education 2012). After 2 years of advocacy, the final report submitted to the Education Bureau by the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (2015) recommended raising the entry qualification to degree level in the long term. The report shows a preference for continuing professional development as the pathway of professional upgrading. Making an all-graduate profession a long-term goal without setting a time schedule and interim targets to move towards the goal is no different from the recommendation of the Education Commission (2000) made for the millennium education reform 15 years ago. Teachers with graduate status, as opposed to vocational status which is technically oriented, are more confident and capable of resisting prevailing technical discourses and taking up alternative positionings (Osgood 2015). Hence, bureaucratic resistance to an all-graduate profession can be understood as a form of subjugated control of a 'hyper-feminine sector' upon which neoliberal values of performing professionalism in the rational and universal sense are imposed (Osgood 2015).

The narrow construction of professionalism is evident in curriculum matters. The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) (2006) issued the *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* in 2006 in response to the millennium education reform. This guide includes a curriculum framework consisting of goals, principles and learning domains; curriculum planning; pedagogy; assessment; transition to primary one and home-school collaboration. It spells out in detail what to teach and how to teach. In comparison with *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments 2009), the Hong Kong curriculum guide (Curriculum Development Council 2006) presents step-by-step technical advice on delivering a developmentally appropriate curriculum from a hierarchical position of expert knowledge based on developmental psychology. The vastly different orientations towards professionalism and teacher-child relationships are notable in both two documents. To name a few, the word 'should' is used extensively in the Hong Kong curriculum guide whereas it appears only once in the Australian framework. The guide conveys a clear boundary of what can and cannot be done instead of a message that entrusts teachers to make contextualised and ethical choices. The word 'ethics' is used for children (moral education) in Hong Kong, but for teachers in Australia, ethical practice is used. Here, it best demonstrates how the work of teachers with young children in Hong Kong is conceived very much in terms of curriculum content. In the Hong Kong Guide, teachers are someone to provide children with what adults think they need to learn and develop; children are objectified as passive and deficit in different areas according to their ages and stages. Though being recognised as active learners, children are not seen as capable of

co-constructing knowledge with adults and making contributions to the curriculum. In the Australian framework, children, however, constitute the focal point of professional practice. Teachers make intellectual and ethical decisions on what is best in support of children with reference to a wide range of theoretical perspectives (e.g., socio-behaviourist, poststructuralism and critical theories) (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments 2009). The comparison made between the two official documents illustrates clearly the technical image of Hong Kong teachers whose job is to reproduce 'good' practices according to prescribed standards.

The discussion thus far on professionalisation and professionalism has taken place in the context of an early childhood market in Hong Kong that scrutinises ethical and critically reflective practice. As Ball (2006) argues, ethical issues resulting from the value clash between the market and the professional are abundant. The former promotes such values as individual performance, attracting customers, competition and allocating resources to the more able, whereas the latter embraces values regarding individual and community needs, collaboration, and allocating resources to those having most learning difficulties. When compared with the British colonial government, the Hong Kong SAR government has adhered to a market approach to a greater extent. The implementation of the voucher scheme symbolises a re-privatisation and re-marketisation of the sector (Yuen 2010). The voucher scheme was envisioned to make affordable and quality early childhood education available to children aged 3–6. It provides a flat-rate voucher for parents regardless of whether they use half- or full-day services in local non-profit kindergartens. It has removed a direct subsidy scheme of operation and a recommended master pay scale. The rationale given to justify the voucher scheme is built on the importance of maintaining market flexibility and improving quality through enhancing choice and competition (Education and Manpower Bureau 2006). Other quality assurance measures, including performance indicators, internal evaluation, external review, publicising external review reports and operational details online to increase transparency, as well as linking external review results with continuous participation in the scheme, are implemented to ensure accountability (Education and Manpower Bureau 2006).

The voucher scheme, together with the market mechanism and the additional regulatory measures as stated in the above, has worked to achieve a neoliberal control of performativity, thus constraining professional autonomy and agency that are core to ethical practice. The interactive forces of policy, practice and parent choice in the market intensify the pressure of technically competent teachers to deliver outcomes in accordance with the expert knowledge of the official curriculum guide and market demand (e.g., academic learning and activity-packed curriculum) (Yuen and Grieshaber 2009). The market approach not only fails to transform kindergartens into a 'loci of ethical practice' that concerns quality as meaning-making of the world by children and teachers alike (Dahlberg and Moss 2005), but also deepens the misconception that care is separable from the professional work of teachers who educate young children. Research shows care is inseparable from education because attending to children's emotional well-being is closely linked

to effective teaching and learning (The United Nations Children's Fund Innocenti Research Centre 2008). As such, a market approach reduces the personal by positioning teachers at a distance, which facilitates autonomous and rational choices, and prevents them from personalising ethics (Dahlberg and Moss 2005) or doing what professionals ought to do (Barnett 2008).

17.4 Early Childhood Teachers in the Making

Amidst the supercomplexity and fragility of postmodern life, the fast changing realities associated with the macro contexts of Hong Kong and the neoliberal orientation of government policy, early childhood teacher education seems to have lagged in building an ethical and critical professional capacity to withstand these challenges. Three factors are discussed to explain the lag.

First, a narrow theoretical base of teacher education constitutes one major factor hindering the adoption of a ground-up approach to professionalism. Early childhood teacher education in Hong Kong is provided at university and vocational levels. In addition to a 2-year sub-degree pre-service programme and a graduate diploma programme, a 5-year degree pre-service programme is available for attaining QTS in early childhood education. Part-time top-up programmes provide serving teachers with an opportunity to upgrade to degree level. These programmes have a strong influence of developmental psychology, as is the case in the United States and the United Kingdom (Moss 2014). Such influence, in brief, has a historical path that can be traced back to the pioneering work of early childhood professionals and government officials, who had received education or training based on Western theories, particularly the psychological perspective for the time being. Burman (2007) critiques that developmental psychology reduces human behaviours to universal patterns for systematic regulation and micro management. That is to say, it sets norms, creates categories and generates quantifiable data to manage the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and groups. As scientific and objective expert knowledge, developmental psychology constructs a world through normalisation, classification and measurement (Burman 2007). Lacking a deep interrogation of this dominant perspective in pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes, early childhood teachers in Hong Kong are kept from the possibility of re-personalising professional ethics (Dahlberg and Moss (2005). As Dahlberg and Moss (2005) point out, the enactment of Western psychological discourses of universalism and rationalism is a form of "epistemic violence", because it is about "violating the alterity of the Other", where the Other is made the same as everybody else (p. 65). In other words, the individualistic views and hierarchical relationships embedded in these discourses cannot assist pre-service and in-service teachers to see plurality and difference in children, families and themselves, as well as within the context of where they are situated and how they are positioned in relation to each other.

The absence of a broad and critical theoretical base in teacher education programmes to inform practice in Hong Kong makes the questioning of structural power at work impossible. The many tensions and issues mentioned before (e.g., contentious political governance, intensifying economic pressure, prolonged poverty, deteriorating family cohesion, increasing mainland immigrants, rise in cross-border marriages and children, and neglect of children with special needs and ethnic minorities) are in fact manifestations of the larger political, economic and social structures that govern people and reproduce dominant understandings of the world. As previously noted, the neoliberal discourses about quality and high returns as well as markets have vastly altered the meaning of professionalism through a series of policy measures (e.g., entry qualifications, performance indicators, operation transparency and the voucher scheme). While the audit culture of reform policy prizes measurability and performativity (Ball 2006), the lack of challenge of "the taken-for-granted assumption of an unproblematic and linear causal relationship between 'quality' and 'professionalism'" within the sector is pinpointed by Osgood (2015) as problematic (p. 125). The earlier discussion on the official rhetoric of the SAR government reflects this underlying assumption quite clearly that professional upgrading was the key to quality enhancement, the importance of which justifies a lower priority for other important aspects that constitute quality (e.g., the work environment, systemic support and resources). As such, critical engagement with multiple discourses is considered necessary for constructing professionalism from within (Osgood 2015) and reconstructing the professional habitus (Fenech et al. 2010). What this means is early childhood teachers in Hong Kong have to learn to deconstruct various discourses, especially the hegemonic ones, in order to 'take up deliberative stances towards those discourses' for discursive creation of the professional self (Barnett 2008, p. 201).

The second factor that explains the lag of teacher education programmes concerns the weak academic leadership in the area of professional ethics. In Hong Kong, early childhood teacher educators have been described as "working diligently on curriculum matters", showing a tendency to confine their role to classroom teaching and learning (Yuen 2008, p. 37). There is inadequate concern about professional ethics in practice, policy and research, especially in light of the above macro and policy issues. Active and collective leadership in research as well as public engagement to reconceptualise and reconstruct early childhood professionalism to influence policy and practice is relatively uncommon in Hong Kong. In other countries, there is an increasing awareness in the importance of postmodern ethics, namely relational ethics, to early childhood teacher education (e.g., Clark 2013; Dalli and Cherrington 2009; Giovacco-Johnson 2011). For example, in their support of in-service teachers, Dalli and Cherrington (2009) have moved from developing a code of ethics to counter negative policy effects and regain professional status, to recognising early childhood work as inherently ethical and situated; and to conceptualising professional learning as a relational concept and an ethical activity in changing times. In her attempt to prepare pre-service teachers to become meaning-makers, Giovacco-Johnson (2011) states that limited attention to ethics in research and policy has failed to construct a strong professional identity.

The inadequate awareness of the importance of ethics among local teacher educators seems to demonstrate the very same problematic trajectory that has prepared early childhood teachers in Hong Kong.

The third factor, perhaps most hidden, is the missing cultural link in early childhood teacher education. As mentioned earlier, Confucianism is a major cultural discourse in the Chinese society of Hong Kong. Because of its dominance, the pervasive influence of Confucianism in shaping thought and action may have gone unnoticed or unchallenged. Studies in Taiwanese kindergartens show Chinese teachers reference cultural norms and values to socialise young children (Hadley 2003) and make professional choices about practice (Hsieh 2004). Confucian ethics provide individuals with a cultural reasoning tool for understanding, cultivating and positioning the self in relation to others, the family, the community, the nation and the world. It emphasises hierarchical relationships, harmony, social order and the collective (Hadley 2003). Failing to make pre-service and in-service teachers aware and critically engage in this cultural discourse means professional identity and practice continue to be silently constructed. It also means pre-service and in-service teachers are unable to explore how Confucian ethics may mingle, collide or co-exist with modernist discourses (e.g., performance of standards and universal ethics) and postmodern discourses (e.g., meaning-making and relational ethics).

As postmodern ethics offer a way to reconstruct professionalism (Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Fenech et al. 2010; Osgood 2015), potential tensions with Confucian ethics are conceivable. According to Wada (2014) who examines Confucian ethics and an ethics of care from a feminist perspective, both types of ethics value relationships but they differ from each other in many significant ways. To name a few, Confucianism understands relationships in familial terms and places the cultivation of individual capacity with moral qualities at the core of practice. From a Confucian perspective, caring is a relational virtue. Roles categorise people in fixed, hierarchical terms and structure how care should be practiced in relationships (e.g., children are categorised as inferior; caring for parent is seen as superior, with a deferential distance between the two). Given the emphasis on the collective to maintain harmony and social order, individuals may have to sacrifice the self. On the contrary, a feminist ethics of care emphasises emotionality, proximity and situatedness of caring relationships, as well as an active carer-cared negotiation of responsibility and identity. This perspective of ethics speaks of care as practice and is concerned about the power that makes human relationships asymmetrical and unequal. Although both Confucian and postmodern ethics seem to collide on the surface, they can co-exist or even mingle if early childhood teachers know how to deploy these cultural and postmodern discourses to negotiate space for doing professionalism. This can invariably help teachers engage in ethical practice that is full of uncertainty, messiness and ambivalence in turbulent times.

17.5 Concluding My Reflective Journey

It is a daunting task to build an ethical and critically reflective professional capacity to meet the supercomplex challenges encountered by early childhood education in Hong Kong. Because of the lack of a broad and critical theoretical base, inadequate attention to professional ethics and failure to make the pervasive influence of Confucianism visible, teacher education programmes have lagged behind to contribute this capacity building. It explains why early childhood teachers are neither well-prepared to face the challenges, nor ready to take responsibility of becoming a critical professional who practices an ethic of care to do what is best in a given situation. Barnett (2008) suggests that the professional of today needs to be "a practicing epistemologist *and* a practicing ontologist" (emphasis in original), i.e., to be "a living project of knowledge in action" and to make oneself in the world (p. 206). As teacher educators, we are held accountable for reflecting and rethinking what we do, whether charting the course of professionalism or reproducing the narrow and hegemonic notion of professionalism (characterised by technicality, rationality, universalism and performativity) in early childhood education. The daunting task lying ahead requires courage to critically engage in multiple and contending discourses, including modernist, postmodern and cultural understandings of the world. We need to keep in check the danger of epistemic violence (Dahlberg and Moss 2005) when embracing Western theories for a non-Western context and also the danger of falling into the binary of resisting discourses of certainty by replacing them with discourses of uncertainty (Thomas 2012). It is a great balancing act that calls for much of our commitment to creating a discursive path for bottom-up professionalism to take off, gain momentum and sustain in the age of supercomplexity.

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