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Working parents’ perspectives and involvement in their young child’s learning using the *Initiating Parent Voice*

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*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Education at The University of Auckland, 2016*
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Abstract

Parent involvement in a child’s early education is of crucial importance because of the prominent role parents play in their child’s life (Smith, 2013). This research has looked at how parents in full-time employment currently see their involvement in their child’s early childhood education and how their participation could be enhanced with the use of the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ (IPV). IPV is a form, which presents a photograph of the child busy with a specific learning interest at the early childhood education and care centre, prompting dialogue between the child and the parent. This provides an opportunity for written feedback to the centre about the learning interest before a learning story may be written (Whyte, 2010) thus giving the parent and the child an extra opportunity to contribute their voice to centre planning.

In this qualitative research project I have explored the use of the IPV form with fifteen parents who were in full-time employment and whose child attended one of five long-day education and care centres. I drew on a multiple case study design as described by Yin (2009), using interview data, documentation of the children’s learning and the documented Initiated Parent Voice forms. For the analysis of the study, post-structural and interpretive paradigms were employed (Cannella, 1997, Foucault, 2002; 1977). Furthermore Activity Theory was employed to investigate collaborative activity, taking into consideration data obtained through additional interviews with the managers of the centres (Engeström, 1987).

The collaborative activity between the parent and the child opened up possibilities for a greater understanding and appreciation of the child’s learning by the parent and increased opportunities for learning for the child. The IPV provided a specific focus, which enabled the parent to find time in their busy schedule and be engaged with the child in the ‘here-and-now’. Opportunities for the child-parent dialogue to build on the child’s learning interest at the centre were afforded by the return of the IPV to the centre manager. Possible reasons for not taking up these opportunities are included in the discussion. Research findings indicated parents themselves prefer dialogue about the learning to take place on a regular basis (Whyte, 2015a).
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Chapter One

1.0 Introduction to the research

The research question I have chosen for this research is: “How does the use of the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ form influence working parents’ perspectives on and involvement in their child’s learning?”

*Te Whāriki* asserts that parents are their child’s first teachers. Parents are thus seen as powerful informants of and collaborators in further planning for their children’s learning (Ministry of Education, [MoE], 1996, 2002). Likewise, the Early Childhood Regulations signal for teachers to provide parents with opportunities to be involved in the teaching-learning process (MoE, 2011a). Research into current early childhood practice however shows a lack of ‘Parent Voice’ and engagement in assessments from parents and families (Stuart, Aitken, Gould, & Meade, 2008). This is in contradiction to present discourse from post-cultural and socio-cultural theorists who see families as actively contributing to their child’s education where both adult and learner are active participants in the process of co-constructed learning and are inseparable from the socio-cultural context in which learning occurs (Hedges, 2003; Hedges & Cullen, 2012; MoE, 2011a). A current concern is that time spent in early childhood education services has increased for many children with more parents in full-time employment and parents are becoming less confident in their role as parents (Collins, 2015, April 1; 5.2.2; Smith, 2013; 2.0.1). It is therefore important to examine how parents in full-time employment perceive and experience their involvement in their child’s learning and investigate how this can be enhanced.

1.0.1 My personal reasons for conducting this study

The reason I wanted to carry out this research was because throughout my career of eleven years as an early childhood teacher and head-teacher
in community and public kindergartens, I noticed a lack of Parent Voice included in the planning. Many parents seemed to be putting the teacher on a pedestal and seeing education of their young child in the centre as separate from learning at home, whereas I was acutely aware of the importance of the connections between learning at home and the centre for the child. I wanted to investigate parents’ own perspectives on involvement and what would help them to become more involved. When parents are working full-time this becomes even more of a challenge (Knopf & Swick, 2008). Therefore I decided to focus my research on parents in full-time employment, whose children attend a long day early childhood education and care centre. In my research I have employed post-structural perspectives, an interpretivist approach and Activity Theory in order to try to come to new perspectives that offer some alternative options for the present challenges to parent involvement (Cannella, 1997; Engeström, 1987; Foucault, 2002, 1977).

1.0.2 The main chapters in this research

Chapter two explores the literature on assessment in early childhood education and the importance of including multiple voices in assessment and planning, which is formative and dynamic (Carr & May, 2000; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; MoE, 2004a). After investigating multiple perspectives on teaching and learning in early childhood, parent perspectives and involvement in their child’s learning and challenges to effective participation are explored.

Chapter three explains the parameters of the research and the case study methodology employed in this research. This chapter describes the procedures for analysis in detail and addresses questions concerning ethics. The reason why the scope of the research has expanded and how Activity Theory can be applied to respond to necessary changes and challenges arising during the research is also explained (Yagamata-Lynch, 2010).
Chapter four brings in the Parent Voices of the fifteen parent participants, which guides us through the findings of the research, starting with investigating the parents' views on their child's learning and development and subsequently continuing with how they see their role in the teaching-learning process. Contradictions between parents' views of their child's learning at home and the centre become clear with parents positioning the teacher as the expert and undervaluing their own role as first teacher. Collaboration between the parent and their child using the Initiating Parent Voice (IPV) however resulted in the parent and their child regaining ownership of their learning. Minimal response from the teachers to the Child’s and Parents' Voice provided through the IPV impeded the potential for the learning to expand beyond the child-parent dialogue. Meanwhile parents indicated they would welcome more dialogue with the teacher about the learning. The challenges for parents around timing, quality and relevance of the photos on the IPV and the non-response from the teachers are discussed in this chapter. Apart from misunderstandings about their role in the teaching-learning process, parents lacked information on the importance of connections between learning at the centre and at home for the child's learning. The IPV provided an opportunity for the parent and their child to make these connections. This chapter finishes with a summary of the findings, revealing the many benefits of the IPV for the parent as well as the child, such as seeing their child as more capable, improved communication between parent and child and the child revisiting their learning, leading to increased ownership of the learning.

Chapter five engages with Activity Theory in response to challenges and contradictions concerning the collaborative relationships between parents and teachers (Bozalek, Ng’ambi, Wood, Herrington, Hardman & Almory, 2015; Engeström, 1987). How learning has expanded for the parent and the child as a result of their collaboration is considered, as well as potential expansion for learning when teachers are brought into the dialogue. While expansive transformation has helped parents’ self-efficacy and agency, power-inequalities have impacted on the possibilities for further expansion of the learning.
Yagamata-Lynch (2010) suggests that the researcher “stays attuned to the changes that occur during the study and modifies data collection procedures as necessary” (p. 64). Therefore, when discrepancies in understanding between teachers and parents around the notion of parent partnerships became apparent during the research, the interview questions for the second interview were adjusted to investigate this further, looking at how parents view their role in the teaching-learning process. Parents’ views on Learning Stories are noteworthy as these were clearly seen by the parents as the ‘Teacher’s Voice’. The perspectives from the managers from the four centres who agreed to a finishing interview have been included in the discussion as well. Some managers indicated a Parent Voice was not always needed because they saw the purpose of the Learning Story to inform the parent of the learning. Contradictions between the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations and division of labour are discussed, particularly concerns about the role of the parent if they are not involved in decision-making about the child’s learning.

In chapter six the main findings and conclusions coming out of the discussion are pulled together and implications for further research are considered. The research as a whole reveals that parents are keen to be involved in their child’s early learning but currently there are many misunderstandings between parents and teachers about what this entails at centre level, how Parent and Child voices can help shaping the planning and learning and how the division of labour can be distributed more equally. The research also reveals that parents’ and children’s learning expands through collaborative engagement and that further engagement of the teachers would enhance learning for teachers, parents and children at the centre as well as at home. Managers have a key role in this. How managers see their responsibility for the parents’ learning and role in planning needs to be further researched.
Chapter Two

Literature review

2.0 Introduction

2.0.1 Background of the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’

My research question: “How does the use of the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ form influence working parents’ perspectives on and involvement in their child’s learning?” was investigated with the help of fifteen parents with children between the ages of 2 - 4.5 year old, attending 5 centres in the Auckland area, over a period of four to six months. The Initiating Parent Voice form (IPV) was developed in an action research project in 2010, to find a meaningful way for parents and children to share their thoughts with teachers on a recent learning interest (Whyte, 2010). The IPV form shows a photo of the child at play and invites the parent to ask their child to talk about their learning interest in the photo. This is done at a point in time before the learning story has been documented and shared by the teachers. Sharing a photo before the learning story has been written, gives the child an opportunity to share their thoughts with their parent, before their learning interest has been described and interpreted by the teachers.

Communicating the Initiating Parent Voice to the teachers placed the child and the parent at the forefront of the assessment and planning in the 2010 action research project, which ran over a period of one month. The response of the parents in this small action research project was around 76%, compared to 3% of the parents contributing a parent voice before the research. Each IPV generated dialogue between teachers, parents and the child in 95% of the cases, often leading to subtle but significant shifts in the teacher response in terms of planning. Learning stories were written after teachers took the (initiating) ‘Child-and-Parent Voice’ into account in planning for further learning.
An example of the IPV:

![Image of Initiating Parent Voice]

From: Whyte (2015a), translation: see appendix D: cooking- MataiC1

A short explanation on the IPV reads:

This is a photo of .................’s interest we have observed. Please ask your child to tell you about this photo. Please write down their words and non-verbal response first. Does your child have any questions? What do they like to do or find out about next? Is there any connection to what your child is doing or experiencing at home, family, etc.? We would love you to share your ideas from your discussions about the learning interest.

Many Thanks

While the 2010 action research project took place in a kindergarten and actively involved teachers as action researchers, the focus of this 2016 research is parents in full-time employment and centres on parents’ own perspectives of and involvement in the child’s learning journey. Anne Smith (2013) indicates that in 2009, in two-thirds of two parent families both parents were in employment, albeit mothers were often working part-time. Three out of five children (60%) are attending long day early childhood education and care centres as opposed to 2% going to kindergarten. Teachers are not central to the collection of data for the 2016 research project but are an essential part of the findings and the discussion of the overall research process.
2.0.2 Shifting power-relationships by putting the child and parent voice first

My hypothesis on assessment and planning is that parents’ ideas around their child’s learning are strongly influenced by documentation completed by the teachers on the child’s learning, making it difficult for the parent to contribute their own view. Similarly, research by Stuart et al. (2008) found most Parent Voices to be summative and not contributing to the teaching-learning process. Hughes and MacNaughton (2000) indicate teachers’ knowledge is often highly valued and viewed as professional, as opposed to parents’ discourse, which is viewed as informal, subjective and anecdotal by the teachers and leading to unequal power-relationships. This can become a cause for the parent to overlook their potential in their ability to contribute ideas. The IPV can empower both the child and the parent to initiate conversations about the learning-teaching process (Hunt, 2015a, 2015b; Whyte 2015a). Without the teacher’s voice coming first, the child brings new aspects to the fore about their learning interest and what they would like to do or find out next. This could inform and change parents’ and teachers’ perspectives on the child’s learning and subsequently influence parent involvement in the overall learning-teaching process. Giving the parent and the child an opportunity to share their voice first, potentially gives the parent an important role in teachers’ planning and assessment for learning: that of contributing, listening to, documenting and sharing the Child Voice. In addition, parents are sharing their own knowledge about possible links between learning at home and learning at the centre.

2.0.3 Investigating the parent’s role in the learning-teaching process

Parent involvement in early childhood education is important for the social and emotional development of the child, establishment of relationships and a sense of belonging in the centre (Duncan, Te One, Dewe & Te Punga-Jurgens, 2012; May, 2013; Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996). In contrast to this research, the Early Childhood Education Licensing Criteria however place the main emphasis for parent involvement on assessment practices. To be exact, the licensing
requirement of teachers is to empower parents to be part of the decision-making process with regard to their child’s learning (MoE, 1996, 2011a). How this is partaking in the decision-making process is to be achieved however is unclear. The Licensing Criteria only detail that parents should be informed about what their child is learning at the centre, be offered an opportunity to share important information about their child and relevant learning at home, and share their own aspirations for their child’s learning with the teacher (MoE, 2011a). It is left up to the teacher what they do with that information. The literature on the other hand strongly indicates that assessment and planning for the child’s learning needs to be a mutual undertaking, contributed to by the teacher as well as the parent. Children’s preferences are paramount and the Child Voice should be heard when decisions are made around planning for learning in the learning-teaching process (Carr, Cowie & Davies, 2015; Carr & Lee, 2012; MoE, 1996, 2011a).

As indicated above, Stuart et al. (2008) found that few parents are contributing formative feedback. In addition, the Education Review Office (May, 2013) found that around half of 387 Early Childhood Education [ECE] services investigated were not sharing adequate information about children’s learning while in 24% of the centres the learning was not visible to the parents at all, let alone having parents provide feedback on documented observations. Assessment methods in early childhood education have not only been critiqued for a lack of transparency about what the child is learning but also for the lack of clarity about what is being assessed (Blaiklock, 2008). It is therefore fitting to start the literature review by exploring assessment processes in early childhood education, followed by a review of different perspectives on the young child’s learning, and what form parent involvement currently takes in early childhood education in New Zealand. Lastly some considerations around power dynamics will be discussed.

2.1 ‘Assessment for learning’ in early childhood education

Assessment in early childhood education starts from the child’s strengths and interests (MoE, 1996). Child, Parent and Teachers’ voices included in the
assessment inform learning that might happen next, which makes it ‘formative assessment’ (also called ‘assessment for learning’) as opposed to ‘assessment of learning’ (summative assessment), which measures an ‘end-point’ of the learning (MoE, 2004a, 2011a). The assessment is guided by the principles of the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki (empowerment, holistic learning, links to family and community and relationships)*, which sees the child at the forefront of their learning, sharing their ideas with others while actively exploring and making connections between learning experiences at the home and the centre (Carr & Lee, 2012; MoE, 1996).

‘Assessment for learning’ was first explored by Black and William (1998) at secondary school level to enable students to set their own learning goals and engage in self-assessment, empowering students to regulate their own learning. Instead of directing the students towards learning, the teacher would ‘sit beside’ the student, setting criteria for learning together, which enables the student to see what the next step in their learning could be. This type of feedback connected to learning goals is called ‘feed-forward’, which encourages children to talk about their own learning and ask questions, developing their meta-cognitive and planning skills. Over time this enhances students’ sense of agency and self-efficacy (Black & William, 1998; Carr & Lee, 2012). Bateman (2013) explains that ‘feed-forward’ involves careful listening, affirming the child’s responses and co-constructing knowledge through dialogue as opposed to the more traditional method of asking the child a question and then evaluating the response. Feed-forward becomes ‘assessment as learning’ when children themselves engage in self-assessment and planning (McLachlan, Edwards & Margrain, 2013). When students have a clear picture of their learning goals they are able to self-regulate their own learning by monitoring their own progress and creating relevant internal feedback (Absolum, 2006; Parr, Timperley, Reddish, Jesson & Adams, 2007).

During research on ‘assessment for learning’, conducted in primary schools, Cowie and Bell (1999) noticed the students’ communication about their learning experience outside of the formal assessment they were involved in. They suggested using this information to develop a more interactive method for
assessment and planning, comprising three parts in the planning process: Noticing, Recognising and Responding. The ‘Noticing’ includes the ‘Student Voice’ and shows how information shared by the student is connected to their prior learning and teachers’ own knowledge of the student. Cowie and Bell (1999) highlighted the importance of staying present and documenting the ‘Student’s Voice’ as it occurred, because they observed that once the information had passed it was unlikely that the same details would re-surface again at a later stage. The ‘Recognising’ of what learning was happening and the ‘Responding’ in terms of ‘the next steps’ in the learning journey were decided on together with the student, raising the students’ motivation in their learning.

2.1.1 Multiple voices providing context to ‘assessment for learning’

The planning process described by Cowie and Bell (1999) fits well with the socio-cultural theory base of Te Whāriki, and is reflected in the Early childhood Education Licensing Criteria where ‘assessment’ is defined as “the process of noticing children’s learning, recognising its significance, and responding in ways that foster further learning” (MoE, 2011a, p. 5). Consistent with Te Whāriki principles (empowerment, holistic learning, linking to family and community and relationships), children’s learning interests are the starting point of the planning. Learning interests are documented in ‘Learning Stories’ that include the ‘Noticing’ of a significant interest of the child over a period of time, ‘Recognising’ the learning that is taking place within that learning interest, and ‘Responding’ to the child’s learning interest including a Child and Parent ‘Voice’ (Carr & Lee, 2012; MoE, 1996, 2004a). Including the views of the child, parents, whānau and teachers in the Learning Story, provides multiple views on what learning has taken place and this validates the Learning Story as an assessment (Carr & May, 2000; Education Review Office [ERO], 2007; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; MoE, 2004a). Research by Stuart et al. (2008) however revealed that parent contribution to planning and assessment is lacking: only half of the time parents were invited to contribute to the Learning Stories. Likewise, in 2013 the Education Review Office found that only 17% of the nearly four hundred
services investigated, had taken account of parents’ aspirations and children’s voices in planning for learning, which is at odds with Te Whāriki’s indication that families should be “part of the assessment and evaluation of the curriculum as well as of children’s learning and development” (MoE, p. 30).

In 2007, 94% of early childhood education services were using Learning Stories to document children’s learning (Mitchell, 2008). Hatherly (2006) and Carr and Lee (2012) indicate that Learning Stories are narrative and open-ended in character: they can be revisited, ‘added to’ by the child, parents, whānau and teachers; they can even be changed (MoE, 2007b). Learning in ECE can therefore be seen as open, changeable and flexible. Sellers (2013) adds that learning experiences can be seen in an ‘additive’ way. Because of their interpretive nature, learning experiences can continue, be revisited and open up new paths in a learning journey. Due to the open-ended nature of the Learning Story, Blaiklock (2008, 2010) argues that Learning Stories do not provide a clear enough record and evidence of what the child is learning and does not regard the method as a valid assessment. Nonetheless, the Education Review Office (2013) asserts the Learning Story is a meaningful and preferable way to document children’s learning, a viewpoint that has been voiced by many other academic writers (see for example Hatherly, 2006; MoE, 2004a; Smith, 2013).

2.1.2 Competence, Community, Continuity

Cowie and Carr (2009) describe three elements that are crucial to Learning Stories: ‘Competence’ (which is generated when the child is empowered in their learning by having their ideas recorded and being listened to, which in-/forms subsequent planning and learning), ‘Community’ (which are the links to learning at home and prior knowledge) and ‘Continuity’: a record of how the learning is continuing over time. Cowie and Carr (2009) explain that Learning Stories offer possibilities for revisiting and extending learning, together with other members of the learning community (peers, whānau/family and teachers), adding to a learning journey that everyone is part of and that is unfolding over time (Cowie & Carr, 2009). Children can revisit their own learning by looking at the photos in the Learning Stories and having the narratives read back to them or re-/told by
the child, continuing the dialogue about the learning (Carr & Lee, 2012). The Ministry of Education (2004a) advises that providing parents with detailed documentation can “invite children and families to suggest developments and alternatives and [to] bring knowledge and expectations from home” (p. 6). Other research however indicates that it may be difficult for parents and whānau to contribute any perspectives that deviate from the teacher’s narrative in the Learning Story once the Learning Story has been written, because of an unequal power relationship with the teacher, often seen as the ‘expert’ (Cannella, 1997; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; Macartney, Ord & Robinson, 2008; Robinson, Absolum, Cardno & Steele, 1990; Whyte, 2010). Therefore, how teachers can come to see families as an “integral part of the early childhood curriculum” (MoE, 1996, p. 42) hence deserves careful consideration. Offering the parent and the child an opportunity to share their voice before the Learning Story is written could open up a sharing of new perspectives on the child’s learning (Whyte, 2010). This facilitates ‘multiple voices’ to be present in the Learning Story (making ‘Continuity’ of the learning more visible) because information and different perspectives about the learning focus of the child, connected to home experiences, are exchanged before the Learning Story is written by the teacher(s) (Whyte, 2010).

2.2 Documentation

2.2.1 Documentation as an active agent in ‘intra-active’ pedagogy

In the Reggio Emilia approach, documentation is seen as a part of the learning process (Rinaldi, 2006). The daily practice of observation, interpretation and documentation is called ‘progettizionone’, during which teachers, children and parents value time for reflection and dialogue to construct new meanings together. The dialogue during this process is understood as having the capacity to transform learning (Rinaldi, 2006). Similarly, Lenz-Taguchi (2010) describes an intra-active pedagogy where learning is happening ‘in between’ children, teachers and parents, in response to each other and the documentation of the learning, which is publicly displayed. She adds that documentation can be seen...
as an active agent in this ‘intra-active’ pedagogy, which means that the documentation itself can elicit a response. A photograph for example, is not fixed; it can lead to new connections and take learning into new directions. Lenz Taguchi (2010) uses Deleuze’s concepts of smooth and striated space in her description of ‘intra-active’ pedagogy. The striated space provides structure (for example providing a form to document dialogue about a photo or offering a quiet area in the centre to view documentation), which then opens up possibilities for teachers, children and parents to dialogue and take the learning and further documentation into different directions. For children, teachers and parents to make optimal use of the ‘smooth space’, it is important to listen and welcome any new ideas and contributions that are different. The documentation of these new contributions slows down the process momentarily, which allows for the dynamic to continue. The process of documentation, reflection and dialogue does not always occur without difficulties. Felstiner, Kocher and Pelo (2006) indicate that often teachers, children and parents are in an unequal power relationship, where teachers act as gatekeepers who ultimately decide what is documented and/or which documentation is displayed. For example, teachers influence the quality and relevance to the learning interest of the photos used for the IPV form for example. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) encourage teachers to allow documentation to become part of a dialogue about teaching and learning that challenges dominant practices and invites “counter discourses” (p. 109).

2.3 Multiple perspectives on teaching and learning in early childhood education

Te Whāriki’s aspiration for planning and assessment is that “children are increasingly able to assess their own learning, [to] outline their own goals and [to] decide how to achieve these goals” (MoE 1996, p. 29). This can feel a bit juxtaposed to developmental perspectives that, as Sellers (2013) indicates, are still strong in early childhood education. Piaget for example describes children’s cognitive development according to pre-set stages of development among which are the sensorimotor stage (0 - 2 years old) and the pre-operational stage
Piaget (1951) believed that during the sensorimotor stage children form mental representations of the world around them by manipulating objects (cited in Berk, 2006). During the pre-operational stage children construct their own knowledge by practising different actions through play. In Seller’s view Piaget’s universalistic perspectives are marginalising the child because they do not look at the child’s unique thinking, cultural background, specific experience, orientation or abilities and subjectivities at the time; they are seeing the child according to universal criteria or ‘set norms’.

For Vygotsky (1978) on the other hand, learning is socially and culturally mediated and therefore interactions play a crucial role in the child’s development. Vygotsky observed that during play the child was exceeding the expected stages of development mentioned by Piaget. “In play it is as though he were a head taller than himself” Vygotsky (1978, p. 102) remarked. Adults can empower the child to move a step forward in their development by ascertaining where they are at in their ‘zone of proximal development’ and offering a hint or question. Yet Sellers sees the child as ‘already powerful’, rather than in need of empowerment (2013). The child is not seen as ‘becoming’ something, rather “learning is in a constant state of ‘becoming’; there is no clear beginning and no ‘end goal’” (Sellers, 2010, cited in Whyte & Naughton, 2014, p. 32).

2.3.1 The child’s focus: Authenticity and the teacher’s role

Participation in authentic activities at the centre and at home makes learning meaningful for the child (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Hedges, 2013). Pursuing their own interests and their own ideas heightens children’s motivation and ability to concentrate and persevere with the learning goals they had in mind (MoE, 2004a; Wells & Claxton, 2001). In Hedges’ (2003) view it is neither sufficient for teachers to provide and organise developmentally appropriate play-based activities, nor is it enough for the programme to just be child-initiated. Both teacher and the child need to take an active role in the planning process. This requires the teachers to know the child and home-life of the child.
well and to be sensitive to opportunities that enhance the child’s and the family’s image of themselves as learners by making connections to learning that has been happening at home (Sands & Weston, 2010). Te Whāriki asserts that for the child to become a “competent and confident learner”, learning goals need to be meaningful and relevant to the child (MoE, 1996, p. 9). Teachers however report they often see parents more preoccupied with their child’s needs rather than their interests (Mitchell, Haggerty, Hampton & Pairman, 2006). Cannella (1997) reminds us to consider from whose point of view something has been said. Rinaldi (2006) adds that dialogue can bring clarity and has the power to transform beliefs.

**2.3.2 The power of dialogue and ‘affect’**

Open dialogue and making connections with home and community help the child develop a positive image of themselves as a learner. Wells and Claxton (2002) explain that families carry complex scripts for and about the child that become part of how they see themselves. In addition, the experience of the learning at an emotional level, called perezhivanie by Vygotsky is a deciding factor in learning (Chen, 2015; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002). Parents and teachers can increase the child’s confidence in themselves by showing they have confidence in the child. Vygotsky used the term the Gift of Confidence, explaining that learning through interactions does not only depend on cognitive ability but also on how the learning is perceived (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002). Chen (2015) describes perezhivanie as the ‘emotional experience’ of the communication and points out if the parent stays calm and ‘in the moment’ this helps the child with their emotional regulation and development. Hadzigeorgion (2014) also sees empathy as a significant aspect in learning. Instead of going straight for the ‘right answer’, the teacher needs to allow time for ‘wondering’ and imagining, showing confidence in the child’s capability to learn.
2.3.3 Credit based learning: the focus on learning dispositions

The move away from the ‘right answer’ is also visible in the emphasis on learning dispositions in early childhood education, which *Te Whāriki* calls ‘habits of mind’ or ‘patterns of learning’: positive learning attitudes that promote lifelong-learning. The key-competencies of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (the curriculum for Primary and Secondary schools) thinking, using language, managing self, relating to others, participating and contributing, can be linked to the learning dispositions curiosity, building trust, communication, thinking/persisting with a challenging task and taking responsibility for their own learning, which Margaret Carr (2001) has aligned with the strands of *Te Whāriki* (well-being, belonging, communication, exploration and contribution). Giving children the time and opportunity to investigate and discover something without being handed the solutions straight away helps children to participate and offer suggestions (Vecchi, 2004). Children need to be given time to be curious and engage in inquiry. Creating opportunities for ‘sustained shared thinking’, where an adult centres their attention on an activity or discussion together with the child, gives the child the opportunity to see how their own and the other person’s viewpoint may be the same but also different in some respect. In addition, children learn to negotiate their learning between different contexts and apply their knowledge to new situations when teachers help children make connections to community and home environments and develop resilience (Carr & Lee, 2012; Carr, Smith, Duncan, Jones, Lee & Marshall, 2010; Ker, Hunt, & Bilman, 2013).

A credit-based emphasis on learning helps children develop a positive mind-set and learning dispositions that foster ‘life-long learning’ according to the Ministry of Education (MoE, 1996, 2004a, 2007c). The goal of becoming a life-long learner is a vision that the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* shares with the *New Zealand Curriculum* framework for Primary and Secondary school (MoE, 1996, 2007c). Biesta (2013) challenges the concept of ‘life-long learning’. He draws on Foucault (1975) to explain that discourse is always intertwined with power: talking about ‘life-long learning’ at a political level carries an assumption that the individual is unable to acquire insights by themselves and turns ‘life-long learning’ into a demand, not a choice (cited in Biesta, 2013).
In reflecting on what learning is valued in early childhood education in New Zealand, Farquhar and Fleer (2007, p. 32) indicate that, according to Te Whāriki, early childhood education is “more about relationships, reciprocity, community, culture and language” as opposed to “skills, essential learning areas and learning outcomes”. Hedges and Cullen (2005) on the other hand urge teachers not to ignore content knowledge and suggest that adapting content knowledge outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum to suit the younger age group could fill this gap. Carr and Lee (2012) propose a dual emphasis on content knowledge and learning dispositions. Despite the importance of learning dispositions for learning, Stuart et al. (2008) found few Learning Stories take learning dispositions into account in the ‘what next’ of a Learning Story. Similarly, the teachers and parents might find it hard to know when and how to respond to the child’s developing ‘working theories’ (Peters & Davis, 2011). Working theories are explanations the child develops to make sense of their world. These adapt and become more complex, in response to new knowledge and understanding. The development of problem solving skills is supported through respecting and challenging the child’s working theories (Hedges, 2012).

2.3.4 Education as a process of inquiry

Due to the non-prescriptive character of Te Whāriki there are a large variety of practices in ECE centres. Woodham (2012, cited in Te One, 2013) warns that the non-prescriptiveness of Te Whāriki can cause the learning dispositions that lead to progressively more complex thinking, creativity, developing resilience and positive attitudes to learning, to be under-emphasised in early childhood education. Blaiklock (2008) on the other hand sees learning dispositions as vague and points out that due to the non-prescriptiveness of Te Whāriki, it is hard to ascertain children’s levels of literacy and mathematics in order to determine the child’s ‘readiness for school’. Bolstad, Gilbert, McDowall, Bull, Boyd, and Hipkins (2012) however suggest, in a report for the Ministry of Education on what learning should look like in the 21st century, that not only content knowledge is going to be important but also how learners can create and use new knowledge themselves. They recognise the value of promoting
diversity to encourage new ideas, the involvement of family/community in providing real-life opportunities and a place to discuss these. Freire (1972) reminds us that the 'banking concept' (the directive teaching of content knowledge to the child) negates education as a process of inquiry. Yet much of the recent discourse in education concentrates on minimising school failure and getting the child 'ready for school' (including 'National Standards'), causing some early childhood centres to set children specific tasks to learn mathematics and literacy (Nuttall, 2013). The Education Review Office (2011) indicates that such tasks are not appropriate if they are not linked to a specific learning interest of the children. Others argue for more dialogue with the child (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008; Rinaldi, 2006) and a ‘pedagogy of listening’, working towards a disposition to be innovative and facilitate the emergence of human subjectivity (Osberg & Biesta, 2007). Likewise, Osberg and Biesta (2008), with a focus on dialogue, place a greater emphasis on the child’s ability to discover and create new subjectivities than Vygotsky does for example: children’s understandings are deepened when they can identify different viewpoints and possibilities. New subjectivities arise during interactions, so that is why it is important to document the Child’s Voice and invite others to respond as well (Osberg & Biesta, 2008). In later work Biesta’s (2013) understanding of the concept of subjectivity evolves to include a emphasis on the purpose of education and explains that children need to learn to apply their knowledge of different subjectivities they have identified, using their own responsibility and initiative. Biesta argues that although the power of the teacher is weak, it is important to bring something new to the child’s education that was not already there (Biesta, 2013; Biesta, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Whitehead (2011) and Sansom (2009) urge teachers to practice mindfulness and be ‘in the moment’. A teacher needs to be able to give up some of their control and be flexible in response to children’s creativity and spontaneity. With the many different views about how the child learns, this can make it hard for parents to understand the presumed sociocultural teaching practices of their child’s teachers.


2.3.5 Parents’ perspectives on teaching and learning

In contrast to educational research as described above, Halden (1991) points out that parents’ perspectives about development and learning are often based on folk psychology, not a specific theory. In her research, many parents saw the child in terms of ‘being’. Development in this view is a natural process and happens when the child is ‘ready’. The parent’s role is to be a role model and they see their time as a resource that the child can draw on whenever needed. This viewpoint becomes a problem when the parent is in full-time employment. The problematic part is not that there is less time for activities, but rather that the absences from home mean that time is no longer a resource that is unconditionally available (Halden, 1991). Purpel (2009) also comments on parents’ contradictory responsibilities: on the one hand making sure that the child is able to compete with others in society and on the other hand providing the child with an unconcerned and joyous childhood. Wheatley (2012) points out that today’s society is too rushed: she agrees with parents’ gut feelings about the value of ‘just being’ that Halden (1991) is talking about. Wheatley talks about the value of ‘slowing down’ in order to take in things first and develop curiosity about each other and the world, which leads to greater compassion and insight.

2.4 Parent involvement in their child’s education

Duncan, Bowden and Smith (2006) indicate that parents who are involved in their child’s education experience less stress and gain a better understanding of their child. Valuing and taking parents’ aspirations for the child’s learning into consideration, is strongly advocated for in academic literature (Lee, 2013; MoE, 1996, 2004a, 2011a). The notion of involving the parents and whānau in the child’s learning prior to the teacher ‘planning for learning’ (whānaungatanga) is in line with the Māori view on education, where the child is seen as part of the whānau and the whānau part of the child and therefore fits well with the commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, expressed in Tātaiako and Te Whatu Pōkeka (MoE, 2011c, MoE, 2009). The Taskforce report for the Ministry of
Education (2011b) also recommends to make parent and community involvement a priority for policy makers, and to encourage parents to take more responsibility for their child’s education. Wells and Claxton (2002) point out a strong emphasis on love is important, listening to the Child Voice and encouraging a positive self-image, aspects that align well with parent involvement. Positive parent-teacher interactions are also beneficial for children as they learn about relationships through observing effective social interactions between adults (Keyser, 2006).

Gonzalez et al. (2005) and Jones (2006) highlight the rich knowledge families have about their children and agree that sharing this knowledge enriches and consolidates the learning happening in the centre. Gonzalez et al. (2005) and Duncan et al. (2012) suggest asking parents and whānau to share specific expertise is another effective way to build relationships with parents and getting them involved in their child’s learning. Gonzalez-Mena (2014) also suggests two-way communication diaries and collaborative photo-stories that involve both the teacher and the parent. Duncan et al. (2012) assert that building relationships requires intentional interactions. These interactions need to come from a place of genuine interest in the other person. Trust is built slowly through non-judgmental daily interactions, devoid of jargon (Duncan et al., 2012; Gonzalez-Mena, 2014; McNaughton, 2002). The Ministry of Education (2004a) signals that, when teachers show parents and whānau that their knowledge is valued, they become more confident in sharing their views and experience. Stuart et al. (2008) did not find much evidence of teachers linking learning to home life in Learning Stories, nor was there much evidence of how the learning continued in the home or the early childhood centre.

### 2.4.1 Challenges to effective participation: Reification and participation

Mitchell et al. (2006) indicate in their research that working parents often find it difficult to know what their child is learning at the centre and that many parents would like more insight into this. Work pressures have increased for parents and parents consequently have less time, but that does not mean that their role is less important (Knopf & Swick, 2008). Being ‘too busy’ could be an important
reason for the superficial and summative feedback shared by parents as a response to a Learning Story (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Stuart et al., 2008). Another reason for the lack of real and effective participation in planning by parents could be insufficient response by teachers to parents’ attempts to participation. A study by Wenger (1998) showed that people can only form a ‘learning community’ if there is a balance of ‘participation’ and ‘reification’. Participation has to do with the ability to negotiate understandings. This requires mutual engagement, ‘joint enterprise’ (all participants feel a sense of ownership) and ‘shared repertoire’, which means there is a shared understanding of words and artefacts used. If there is a lack of mutual engagement, for example a lack of response from the teacher to an ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ that has been returned, the level of participation in the planning process decreases and an imbalance in the ‘learning community’ occurs. Because the ‘learning community’ requires all participants to contribute, this dynamic affects the child as well as the parent (Wenger, 1998).

The most important aspect of participation is interaction and dialogue about the learning. Active involvement on the part of the parent and the child will help develop an ‘identity of participation’ where the parent and the child know they are making a valued contribution. The IPV form can contribute to the development of an identity of participation because it is a type of reification; it facilitates the parent and the child to share their ‘Voice’. Reification and participation enable each other. However, if reification prevails without participation, that is if there is a ‘Child-Parent Voice’ without any further discussion about it, the participation becomes less relevant; it generates less meaning. A detailed Learning Story reifies parent involvement (MoE, 2004a); however, this does not necessarily lead to participation (a real contribution to the planning, in form of a formative parent and child voice for example). Incidences of mutual ‘reification-and-participation’ create a feeling of belonging. A good indicator of this is the child and the parent sharing their stories with the teachers. Also, if these parent and child stories are included in the Learning Stories written by the teacher, this effectively engages the child and the parent in contributing to ‘trajectories of learning’, furthering a shared understanding of the child’s current learning interest (Wenger, 1998).
2.4.2 Imbalances in power and decision-making

Hughes and MacNaughton (2000) note that, for the most part, “staff-parent collaboration is at the invitation of staff”, which implies that “parental knowledge of the child is a desirable supplement to decision making rather than a necessary component of it” (p. 45). Blaiklock (2008) adds that Learning Stories are often short and include subjective views from teachers that are not balanced out by other teachers’ views or parent views. Stuart et al. (2008) suggest that parents often prefer informal conversations, which was also highlighted by Duncan et al. (2006). This information however, is often not incorporated in the Learning Stories and programme planning (Stuart et al., 2008). Opportunities for parents to contribute to the decision making of planning for learning for their child are further decreased when ‘next steps’ comments in learning stories are non-specific with no evidence of a follow-up (Blaiklock, 2008).

2.4.3 Deconstructing discourse

For Dewey (1916, cited in Biesta, 2013) participation is about a joint activity in which all participants have a real interest and a stake in the purpose of the communication. It is not just about being a member of a ‘learning community’ but having a community in which shared understandings are created and ideas can be potentially changed and transformed through dialogue. Although agreeing that communication is paramount, Derrida warns that it is important to be conscious of the multiple meanings that can be present in discourse used (Derrida, 1982, cited in Biesta, 2013). Analysing discourse used is therefore important. Becoming aware of what is left out, what is not said or forgotten is ‘witnessing deconstruction’ in the text or discourse used. Biesta (2013) points out that this ‘witnessing’ cannot be called ‘deconstruction’ of text, because it is an integral part of the text and is therefore called ‘analysing’.

Post-structuralists’ perspectives can help uncover power inequalities that affect relationships through considering multiple meanings within the discourse. MacNaughton (2005) and Cannella (1997) explain that ‘truth’ can be seen from
many different viewpoints and that poststructuralists can help us notice hidden assumptions and knowledge impacting on how we see the ‘truth’. Structuralists analyse language at the level of language structures and cultural conventions generating particular meanings or ‘truths’. Post-structuralists like Derrida show ways in which these meanings shift when they are seen from a different perspective, how they can be contradictory and what may have been left ‘unsaid’ in the discourse (MacNaughton, 2005). Derrida uses the French term ‘différence’ to discuss how meanings can differ and ‘defer’ to meanings in other texts.

2.4.4 Finding binaries and ‘othering’ in discourse

As indicated above, researchers can analyse texts by deconstructing a text or discourse. The purpose of ‘deconstruction’ is “not to reinterpret a discourse, but systematically describe it as an object, to uncover the regularity (and irregularity) of practice” (Foucault, 2002, cited in Cannella, 1997, p. 14). One way ‘deconstruction’ can be applied is by recognizing what knowledge is privileged within the text. In the Western culture, language relies a lot on ‘binaries’ (sharp divisions between two ‘opposites’), to produce meaning. The binaries used in texts (written or spoken) “produce and express cultural standards of normality” (Biesta, 2001, cited in MacNaughton, 2005, p. 84). This creates ‘otherness’, meaning that the discourse is privileging one over the other; the ‘other’ is silenced and regarded as inferior. Apart from ‘binary analysis’, other ways of analysing discourse is by applying ‘erasure’ (which means ‘scoring’ of words that may have underlying meanings), examining metaphors (for example how these affirm the dominant culture) and ‘mapping meanings’ which includes looking for the multiple meanings in a word, how these meanings are linked to other words, inherent assumptions and considering who benefits from or is silenced by this meaning or assumption (MacNaughton, 2005).

Derrida (1997) notes that the focus in deconstruction is on what it affirms, such as what is excluded or ‘othered’ (cited in Biesta, 2013). Examples include dichotomies such as ‘adult-child’ and male-female or ‘othering’ of a particular
group of people for example when their culture is selected for ‘celebration’. Hughes and MacNaughton (2000) reveal that parents are often ‘othered’ in early childhood education texts or policies and suggest that teachers could either respond by trying to reach consensus with parents on their child’s learning and subsequent planning, (a construct influenced by the philosopher Habermas) or alternatively teachers could allow multiple views to exist and pay attention to power-knowledge relations that could exist between teachers and parents. The latter approach amongst teachers could be guided by the work of Lyotard who argued that “dialogue in which disagreement or dissensus (not agreement or consensus) prevails creates change, emancipation and, therefore, greater equity” (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000, p. 247).

Power-knowledge relations could also be investigated by considering questions posed by Gordon and Foucault (1980), such as: “What knowledge has been excluded, whose knowledge has been disqualified?” and “Whose truths have been hidden?” (cited in Cannella, 1997, p. 14) showing norms and standards that are taken for granted and hidden within the discourse. Teachers adopting Habermas’ strategy on the other hand face a challenge. They have to decide how to respond if the parent disagrees with the teachers, whether to allow disagreement to remain or call for existing norms and values to be discussed and reviewed, which is a challenge because by sharing narratives, knowledge-power relationships can shift (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000). Anne Grey (2010) has found that the teachers and manager of the centre often set the tone and urges managers to reflect regularly on unequal power-dynamics. Moss and Dahlberg (2008) suggest that with many parents coming from different backgrounds, it is important that teachers do not to impose their own values and beliefs but negotiate with parents to come to an agreement. This can challenge teachers in their role as professionals (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000).
2.4.5 ‘Normalising’ judgements

Foucault (1977) describes how norms and standards have evolved in our society, by studying the history and development of the punitive system since the 18th century, describing how, as society became more complex, the need for rules and surveillance of these rules emerged and were fine tuned over time. The ‘panoptic’ technique was developed by the prison system through the perceived need for the surveillance of large groups; people could not be watched all the time but because the prisoners did not know if and when they were watched they behaved as if they were watched. Subsequently, the dominant culture established a ‘normalising judgement’ system, which has become part of our socialisation and interactions guided by ‘morals’ and is consolidated at a micro-level by comparison, differentiation, hierarchy, homogenization and exclusion (Foucault, 1977; Gilbert & Powell, 2010).

One situation in which a panoptic view can be recognised is when teachers share data (which is inherent in team work). Learning Stories and the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ might be seen in this way as part of the data sharing in a centre. In analysing the unities of discourse, it is important to question ready-made syntheses and groupings normally taken for granted for example ‘education’, ‘early childhood centres’ or ‘children’ (Foucault, 2002). The researcher therefore needs to carefully describe the groups and sub-groups present in the research, and identify possible levels of analysis. Special attention needs to be paid to how discourse used to make categories, may be hinged onto other discourse for its meaning. Similarly in describing the relationships between groups or themes, one needs to look at the gaps or any contradictions present. One can identify what made a finding or theme look consistent, however it is also important to note at what point this ‘consistency’ discontinues. How and what made it change?

There is also the context in which things have been said to consider. It is interesting to consider what counts as knowledge and from which ‘subject position’ this has been viewed. In doing this, different positions of power and levels of agency can be identified. If a position of power is identified our understanding can be enhanced when we find out from which ‘site’ and
authority the subject is speaking and what gives them this authority (Foucault, 2002). Teachers often talk about ‘parent involvement’ from a level of authority as this term assumes that the teacher needs to help the parent to be or become involved. Cannella (1997) on the other hand points out “parents are already involved in the lives of their children, in multiple ways and in multiple forms” (p. 107). Cannella (1997) also identifies underlying assumptions in the discourse of ‘child-centred’ pedagogy, such as ‘readiness’, ‘choice’, ‘needs’, ‘play’ and ‘discovery’. Readiness for example assumes readiness according to a set norm that the child is expected to respond to, leading to deficit thinking if the child ‘lags behind’. The notion of ‘choice’ is often a ‘limited choice’ in practice and ‘discovery’ can be seen in different ways from different cultural perspectives. The reason why Foucault engaged in discourse analysis is to find out why people talking about the same field, experience or practice can have such different and contradictory opinions. He wanted to identify “the positions and the functions the subject could occupy” (Foucault, 1977, p. 220). This research will therefore also draw on Engeström (2006), using Activity Theory to uncover different and possibly conflicting viewpoints on the relationships between teachers, children and their parents in the context of assessment and the learning process. This will be explained in chapter three and chapter five.

2.5 Summary of the literature review

The Child Voice and the Parent Voice are essential components of the teaching-learning process in early childhood education (Carr et al., 2015; MoE, 1996) however Child and Parent Voices are under-represented in Learning Stories in early childhood centres (ERO, 2013). Multiple voices are needed to validate the assessment and make the Learning Story an authentic informant of the child’s learning (Carr & Lee, 2012; MoE, 2004a). With multiple voices included this can become a three-way process between the child, parent and teacher. When the documentation is seen as intra-active and dialogue is invited education becomes a process of inquiry that not only teaches existing knowledge but also creates and uses knowledge in new ways (Bolstad et al., 2012; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010).
For parents in full-time employment it is harder to be involved in this process, but not less important as it is ultimately the parent the child will fall back on (Smith, 2013). Unfortunately parents and children are in an unequal power relationship with the teachers. Parents see teachers as the experts, so real participation is dependent on the extent to which the teacher invites the child and the parents to share their voice (Cannella, 1997; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000). There are also differences in perspectives on how the child learns. Parents tend to see the child in terms of ‘being’ whereas teachers emphasize the learning that is happening. The Initiating Parent Voice can shift existing power relations because it enables the child and the parent to contribute their voice before the teachers are writing the Learning Story (Whyte, 2010, 2015a). This can potentially open up many opportunities for dialogue between the teacher, child and parent about the teaching-learning process.
Chapter Three

Research methodology

3.0 Introduction

3.1 The case study design: The parameters of the research

This research project is a qualitative inquiry employing a multiple case study design (Yin, 2009). In addition to the analysis of the case studies across the five early childhood centres, Activity Systems Analysis will be employed to investigate the collaborative activity in this research (Sannino, Daniels & Gutiérrez, 2009). The research was carried out with the help of fifteen parents and their children attending five long day education and care centres in Auckland. Using a multiple case study approach incorporating a range of centres provides additional variables and the possibility of triangulating the data (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2009). "A case study is an empirical study inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The phenomenon in this research study is parents’ perceptions on and involvement in their child’s learning, using a specifically designed form called an ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ form, or IPV, which enables the parent and the child to share their voice before and independent from the Learning Story (Whyte, 2010). The boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not firmly defined since learning is taking place at home, in the centre and in the wider community. In accordance with Yin (2009) who asserts that a case study investigates a ‘phenomenon’ that is current, the IPV fulfils this parameter and provides a method to look at a specific context which, in this research were parents in full-time employment whose children were attending a long day early childhood education and care.
centre. Punch (2010) affirms that in an empirical study, data are built on observation or experience rather than theory or logic. Although I will not be collecting data through direct observation, the ‘parent participants’ will be writing down some of the exact wording of the Child Voice and also their own responses at the time will be recorded and reflected on in the post-research interviews in which parents report on their experience.

The ‘participating parents’ will create the data for the Initiating Parent Voice forms together with their child in their own homes. Creswell (2003) indicates that in qualitative research, participants are often involved in collecting the data as the research is taking place in the natural environment of the participants. I did not know the ‘parent participants’ at the start of the research, nor working in any of the early childhood services the children are attending. Three of the long day education and care centres have been randomly chosen from the ‘white pages’, out of a pool of thirty Auckland based centres. These centres were contacted in random order, and asked to participate over a period of six months. The first two suitable centres willing to partake (named Matai and Rimu) were chosen to provide around three parent participants each for this research. A third centre (named Kauri) was randomly chosen because the first centre was following a specific approach to teaching and learning and the manager and teachers in the second centre were showing a lack of engagement with the research, due to circumstances outside the research. Ideally there would be some engagement of the teachers with the Initiating Parent Voice as this is seen as a potentially powerful informant of the Learning Story (Whyte, 2010). This choice was left open to the teachers. Two further centres (named Tawa and Nikau) were subsequently selected for their merits on empowering children in learning and parent involvement, to add this variable to the research. As these centres came on board later in the research, parents were asked to be involved over a period of four months instead of six months. Yagamata-Lynch (2010), using Activity Systems Analysis, asserts that it is sometimes necessary for researchers to make a change in the data collection from random to purposive selection when current selected participants are differing from the context decided on for the research. Stake (1995, cited in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) even indicates that it is warranted sometimes to
“change course in data collection, when one path does not help gain new meanings” (p. 70). This occurred once more when at the very end of this research centre managers were asked to do a ‘finishing-interview’ to add some of their own views on the research. Doing so is giving the data analysis more depth by adding another perspective. All centres consented to the ‘finishing interview’, but one centre did not want the data of this interview to be included in the analysis. Because of the multiple layers of interactions in centre contexts, Activity Systems will be employed to analyse what factors may have impacted on the interactions and the learning of the participants and potential tensions between these factors (Bozalek, et al., 2015; Engeström, 2006; Sannino, et al., 2009; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Yamagata-Lynch (2010) asserts that Activity Systems Analysis fits well with case study design.

3.2 The data collection procedures

3.2.1 The interview procedures

Pre-, and post-research interviews conducted by me at the beginning and at the end of the six-month research period encompass the main data in this research. These are complemented by physical data namely the IPV forms, my diary notes and the Learning Stories of the participating children over the past year. Data collection through interviews rather than questionnaires has been chosen because data from questionnaires can be misleading. Yin (2009) explains that interviews concentrate on specific case study topics and can provide causal inferences and explanations. McNiff (2003) concurs interviews are a better choice because this method produces richer data and stresses that it is important to ask the participants the questions in the same order. For this reason, an interview protocol with a set of ‘core questions’ is developed (see appendix B to view the interview questions). The questions need to be relevant and closely aligned to the research question, which is beneficial for the analysis. Each question should have a clear point and not include two questions in one (Dawson, 2009). If any of these questions changes, which can happen because qualitative research is emergent and new academic insights might impact on the researcher’s understandings of rival theories, the changes will be
made in a uniform manner across each case (Creswell, 2003). The interviews include open-ended questions, but are semi-structured by the ‘core’ set of around ten questions for each of the interviews, to enhance internal validity (Dawson, 2009; McNiff, 2003; Punch, 2010).

Although interviews have many advantages, a weakness with this method is potential bias caused by questions that can be interpreted in a different way by the interviewee, inaccuracies due to poor recall (which can happen in the ‘post’ interview) and parent participants adjusting their answers according to what they think the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 2009). Parents, teachers and managers may also be self-conscious and feel nervous about being judged or seen in a negative light. Because of this I believe it is important to be mindful of my own feelings and thoughts and at the same time aware that each parent has their own feelings, sensitivities and desires, that stay in the background but may impact on the interview in subtle ways (Rosenberg, 2015). This is why it is important to listen closely to the interviewee, including non-verbal communication, and ask questions in an un-biased way as much as possible. Becker (1998, cited in Yin, 2009) suggests choosing ‘how’ questions over ‘why’ questions for example.

3.2.2 Using mindfulness in interviews

I am mindful of contextual variables such as family structure like marital status and siblings, other whānau involved, factors impacting on time and motivation of the parent and child, how well the process has been understood by the parent, the ability of the parent to document the child voice and the ability of the child to communicate their thoughts. These issues are kept in mind in the first interview and noted in a research diary. Yin (2009) explains that there are different levels of questions in an interview. The ‘first level’ questions are the questions directly asked by the researcher. Then there are the ‘level two’ questions that the researcher keeps in mind for example the ways in which the context of each case varies and the overall aim of the research. Level three questions are asked after each interview in order to discover patterns between and across cases. Level four questions are overall questions asked about the
study as a whole, taking academic literature into account. Lastly, the level five questions lead the researcher to draw conclusions about the research and think about further research (Yin, 2009). Considering these questions during and after each interview helps the researcher to increase internal validity through careful data collection and recording, analysing all of the data and presenting it in an un-biased manner (McKay, 2006).

3.3 Case study design conditions: Construct validity, internal and external validity and reliability.

3.3.1 Construct validity

Careful data collection is important in order to achieve construct validity, which increases the credibility of the study. Part of this construct validity is identifying a set of operational criteria that guide who will be suitable candidates for the study. This research concentrated on parents in full-time employment, who were willing to participate and spend a minimum of ten hours over a period of six months and whose child was attending one of the long-day education centres selected to take part in this research. The parent also needed to consent to the method of data collection (two recorded and transcribed interviews) and be able to converse in English. Yin (2009) advises against over-screening of each case at the beginning, because this would turn the case study in a collection of single cases instead of taking into account triangulation of multiple cases. Construct validity is achieved when three principles of data collection are followed according to Yin (2009, p. 114): “using multiple sources of evidence”, “creating a case study data base” and “maintaining a chain of evidence”.

3.3.2 Construct validity: Using multiple sources of evidence

Using multiple sources of evidence is important because it allows the researcher to triangulate the data, which makes the findings more credible. For the different sources of evidence, I have included “documentation, archival
records, interviews, participant observation and physical artefacts” (Yin, 2009, p. 102). As indicated above, the documentation for this research includes my research notes, documented IPV’s and relevant Learning Stories. Archival records may be former Learning Stories, personal records, philosophy statements of the centres and Education Review Office reports. The interviews are the most important data source for this study, which is why an interview protocol has been adhered to minimise bias. Participant observation was recorded through the post study interviews. Lastly, the physical artefacts included the photos selected for the IPV forms, the completed IPV forms and any documentation of the learning following the completed IPVs by the teachers. Apart from these internal sources of evidence, external sources can also contribute to triangulation of the data, such as other teachers in the field reporting on the use of the IPV and a literature review on the issues around parent involvement and the involvement of the child in their own learning.

3.3.3 Construct validity: The case study database

The case study database includes my case study notes of the interviews, document analysis and informal conversations. My reflections on each interview, identifying the main key points are also part of the data. The case study notes of the open analysis of the interviews have been colour coded and categorised carefully to identify major themes of the study, so a third party could re-trace the findings at the end of the study (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010; Yin, 2009). The case study documents, such as the IPV forms, Learning Stories and transcriptions of the interviews have been electronically stored for this reason as well. Data of each centre have been stored in separate files. After each interview, I have written a short summary so I can make connections between pieces of evidence and across cases, presenting tentative interpretations using footnotes and citations. These notes are part of the database and will not be edited. Together, they form the ‘raw data’ of the research (Yin, 2009).
3.3.4 Construct validity: Chain of evidence

The third principle of data collection that needs to be followed is maintaining a ‘chain of evidence’. An external observer should be able to see how the case study report links to the data base of the research, the research protocols and how it answers the research questions. For example, the report should make sufficient reference to the relevant parts of the case studies and it should be clear how, where and when the data were collected and who the participants were. Furthermore, it should be easy to see for the external observer that the procedures stipulated by the protocol for the interview questions have been followed and that the interview questions are clearly linked to the research question (Yin, 2009).

3.3.5 Internal validity

Apart from construct validity, the quality of the research design can be judged by looking at internal validity, already mentioned above in connection to careful data collection, external validity and reliability. Internal validity is important when a researcher looks at causal relationships explaining why ‘y’ led to ‘z’. If the researcher has forgotten to look at the possibility of ‘x’ causing ‘z’, then there is a problem with internal validity. The other problem that can occur is the researcher making inferences based on what is said in an interview, despite not having observed the events first-hand. This is why reflective and critical analysis of the data is important, carefully considering rivalry explanations, pattern matching, explanation building and checking to see if the evidence is convergent (Yin, 2009).

Further internal validity is achieved through audio voice recording and transcribing the interviews as well as giving the participants the option to edit the transcriptions of their interviews. Inconsistencies are corrected, before using coding techniques such as using open coding (margin notes, finding large categories), and axial coding (making connections between findings) to find themes and patterns across participants and centres (Mutch, 2005; Punch, 2010). The data are analysed using an ‘interpretivst’ approach to gain an insight
of each individual case in the study, with the understanding that the interpretation of the data may be influenced by the circumstances, understandings and experience of the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2003). Other ways of increasing internal validity is by comparing data from a variety of sources and discussing findings with fellow researchers, lecturers (my colleagues) and supervisors (McKay, 2006; Yin, 2009).

I am acutely aware that the interpretivist approach can be open to bias, which is the reason why I have done a thorough literature review to identify any rival theories for any of my propositions relating to my research, which have subsequently been checked with the research participants (McKay, 2006; Richards, 2003; Yin, 2009). In order to determine my propositions and rival theories (appendix C) I have explored current theories of how children learn, which have helped me identify the parent’s affiliation with a particular theory of learning and note any change in the parent’s perspective over time. My diary notes including reflections on my contact with the parent participants and the transcribed interviews have allowed me to check for possible bias (Creswell, 2003). Yin (2009) points out that in a ‘multiple case study’ there are always more variables than data. This is why it is beneficial to include multiple cases so I can look at data that “converge in a triangular fashion” (p. 18). The second lens I have used has been influenced by post-structural theory (Cannella, 1997; Foucault, 2002, 1977; Freire, 1972, MacNaughton, 2005). In the literature review, I have given an overview of relevant academic literature, including the action research study I carried out in 2010, that forms the basis of my research (Whyte, 2010). This includes academic literature on the topic of parent partnerships and pedagogical perspectives on how children learn. It is important to identify my own perspectives on pedagogy as these may influence my research analysis. An awareness of this will help me check assumptions that might not be correct (Robinson & Lai, 2006; Yin, 2009). An overview of pedagogical perspectives will also reveal parents’ perspectives on their child’s learning before and after the research. This will guide the research analysis of this part of the research. Throughout the research I have built onto my knowledge of academic literature, which challenged my own assumptions of how children learn and how parents see their child’s learning. Yin (2009)
explains “for case studies, theory development as part of the design phase is essential, whether the ensuing case study’s purpose is to develop or test theory” (p. 35).

3.3.6 External validity

External validity is said to be challenging in case studies because of data being specific to the cases studied, although researchers can strive to “generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory” (Yin, 2009, p. 43). I believe that external triangulation of the findings of this project is opened up though by having similar core questions as the core questions of another 2-year research project currently undertaken by Ruahine Kindergarten in Palmerston North, using the ‘IPV’ (in this project called ‘Learning Snapshots”), based on Whyte (2010a). Other ways to triangulate the data, using more than one data source is comparing the two centres and comparing data against my action research in 2010 (MacNaughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Whyte, 2010). It is important to keep in mind however, that cases will differ from situation to situation (McKay, 2006).

3.3.7 Reliability

The reliability of the study is enhanced by documenting the procedures and following these procedures strictly. By following the same procedures another researcher could theoretically come to the same findings (Yin, 2009). This has been done for example by carefully documenting the interview questions, taking note of any changes and applying these changes to each interview. The case study database has been compiled as per protocol outlined above and stored separately in order to minimise bias. As indicated in the protocol, the participating parents have been given the opportunity to check the transcripts of the interviews before the data analysis took place (Tolich, 2001).
3.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations included seeking informed consent from all participants, making sure the research did not harm any of the participants or the centres (MacNaughton et al., 2010). Tolich (2001) signals that because of the small population of New Zealand, it is possible for people to guess the names of the ‘anonymous’ centres, especially if the specific approach of the centre is identified. This is why I have not identified the neighbourhood nor have I included the specific approach of the centres in this research. Melinda Webber’s (2015) ground rules for the collection and dissemination of research, as presented at The University of Auckland in March 2015, which includes ‘Kia whakamana te tangata’: upholding children, parents’ and teachers’ mana, through respect and celebrating participants’ ‘core goodness’, Kia Ata: not rushing the research, and ‘Kia whai painga’: listening to and receiving new viewpoints in credit based ways, formed the basis of my ethical practice.

It is also important to inform all participants of potential use of the data in the consent form (Kumar, 2005). Care needs to be taken in analysing and reporting data; it is unethical to make unwarranted changes or report in a way that serves your or someone else’s interest (Kumar, 2005). The same interview protocol needs to be followed with each parent, being consistent in my approach of each participant, which has been friendly and respectful (MacNaughton et al., 2010). I have taken care not to get personally involved with the participants, keeping my contact limited to one to two phone-calls only per parent during the research, to avoid putting my own expectations, values and beliefs onto the parents.

Any changes in the research have been made at the suggestion of my supervisors, such as the decision to add three centres and the decision to ask the centre managers/teachers to do a ‘finishing interview’ at the end of the research. The tricky part of this is that the focal point of the research analysis needs to remain on the research question, which is the parents’ perspectives on and involvement in their child’s learning (Tolich, 2001). Managers’ and teachers’ perspectives on parent involvement and subsequent actions however, can be a deciding factor in the level of involvement of parents in the learning of their
child. Because the finishing interview with the managers was not included at the start of the research, the managers have been asked separately for their consent to use the data of these interviews. I am keeping in mind that “investigators can arrive at meaningful and trustworthy conclusions only when they have a comprehensive data set that represents authentic participant experiences” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 131).

3.5 The data analysis procedures

Before I can begin with the data analysis, I need to reflect on the case study components, such as: the research question, including an analysis of specific parts of the questions and identify my own propositions about the research questions. After this I will give an overview of how the data have been analysed, including the ‘logic’ that will link the data to the propositions and criteria for data interpretation.

3.5.1 Analysis of the case study components: The research question

The research question investigates working parents’ perspectives on their child’s learning and the impact of the Initiating Parent Voice form on parents’ understanding of and involvement in their child’s learning. Inherent in this research focus are two propositions:

- That the IPV form will have an effect on parents’ perspectives on how the child learns, and
- That it will have an effect on their involvement in their child’s learning.

The ‘units of analysis’ in this research question are ‘working parents’, the child’s learning, parents’ perspectives on learning and parent involvement in their child’s learning. This is what the data analysis will concentrate on predominantly. In this research parent involvement in their child’s learning has been analysed and discussed specifically because of the variable ways in which teachers approached parent involvement. It was assumed that all teachers
would embrace the opportunities for dialogue with parents, which was not the case.

Following a study by Knopf and Swick (2008), my hypothesis with regards to the unit of analysis ‘working parents’ is that it is harder for parents in full-time employment to be involved in their child’s early education than it is for parents who are not working or are working part-time (I have not found any further academic literature on this aspect). I have not set any further criteria for my sample of parents, such as socio-economic group, educational background, ethnicity or marital status. The reason is because a centre can be in a poor socio-economic area, but the parent may still be highly educated and/or value education highly. My other proposition is that the parent will get more clarity about their child’s learning and the way their child learns. In terms of the parent involvement in their child’s learning I believe that having a designated activity will make it easier for the parent and the child to start a dialogue about the learning (Knopf & Swick, 2008).

My next proposition about the child’s learning is firstly that it will be easier for the child to talk about their learning interest when looking at a photo and that by telling their parent about their interest the child will form ‘working theories’ about their learning focus. They will also practice their language and get better at talking about their learning and become more aware of what part of their learning interest they would like to explore next as indicated above. I also believe the photo is helping the child to talk about their learning. This element is not new and has been noted by other researchers in the field of early childhood education (Carr, 2005).

### 3.5.2 The ‘logic’ of linking the data to the propositions

The ‘logic’ of the data analysis describes how the data have been investigated. In this multiple case study I have written up each single ‘case’ study first and subsequently carried out a cross-case analysis. All interviews have been audio voice-recorded, transcribed and member-checked. Reflections on the interviews, to identify what stands out for me, have become part of the data.
Each interview question was considered at this point as well. After this initial examination of the data I have considered the propositions described above and identified themes to concentrate on for my analysis, which came from the preliminary data through open coding, interview questions, propositions, IPV forms and the literature review (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010; Yin, 2009). Codes have short descriptions and are grouped together when a similar theme is running through. Numerical coding (rating) has been included as well to indicate the relevance or significance of specific themes (Punch, 2010). Axial coding was then used to identify groups of codes and relationships between themes (Yagamata-Lynch, 2010). Patterns can be identified by looking at each of the cases, comparing the variables some cases might have in common. ‘Pattern matching’ is the most desirable technique for case study analysis because when there is a pattern of the same outcome across the board and evidence for any alternative explanation/rival theory has not been found, strong causal inferences can be made (Yin, 2009). It is important to identify themes early in the study, even before data are collected as this makes it possible to collect data on other possible influences or rival explanations. When ‘rival’ explanations are addressed, the confidence in the study’s findings increases (Yin, 2009). Patterns are identified by first looking over the whole study and rough notes in the margins of the transcriptions. After this preliminary analysis, themes that have come forward can be colour coded and checked more in detail (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010; Yin, 2009).

3.5.3 Explanation building

Explanation building relates to the fact that “for case studies, theory development as part of the design phase is essential, whether the ensuing case study’s purpose is to develop or test theory” (Yin, 2009, p. 35). The benefit of engaging in some theory development before the data collection is that it will make the case study design stronger because of a heightened awareness of rival explanations (increasing internal validity) and an increased ability to interpret data because of the prior experience of considering themes and possibilities before the study. Seeking to discuss these theories with peers,
critical friends at conference presentations will sharpen these theories and ultimately the analysis (Whyte, 2014, 2015b). Themes considered prior to the data collection can also be examined through studying academic literature. Theories around the purpose of the research, such as the Initiating Parent Voice making parent involvement more meaningful and purposeful and empowering both the parent and the child, can be explored by comparing this to other research projects on parent involvement and by looking at theories on power relationships. Doing a literature review on a variety of theories on early childhood pedagogy, will help develop the theoretical base (and the design) of the study. Linking a particular set of findings in the research to a broader theory is called “analytical generalisation” (Yin, 2009, p. 43).

3.5.4 The criteria for interpreting the findings

1. Identify and address rival explanations for the possible findings. Anticipate rival theories and include questions and information about these in my discussion. Find different perspectives in literature review and discussion with my supervisors, peers, and teachers. Identify my own values and beliefs and my propositions relating to the research question.

2. Try and interview everyone the same way. For example by having the same questions for each parent and spending around the same amount of time on each interview.

3. Upon completion of the data attempt to answer the questions in the case study protocol, using footnotes and citations. These tentative answers will be part of the database and will remain unedited (Yin, 2009).

4. Find ‘themes’ (similarities and differences that stand out) and compare each ‘case’ on the same themes by pattern matching. Expected themes are:

   - The level of involvement of the parent in their child’s learning and examples of their involvement at home,
   - The benefits of the IPV, for example language efficacy of the child, the child’s ability to plan, the child further developing their ‘working theories’,

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increased dialogue about the learning and involvement of other family
members,
- Parents’ perception/understanding of their child’s learning, for example
changes in perceptions on teaching and learning at the centre/Te
Whāriki curriculum, responding to the child’s interest, their ‘image’ of the
child and their ability to learn,
- Any disadvantages of the IPV or challenges experienced during the
research,
- Changes in perception of what the child is learning.
- Involvement of the wider family.

Further themes could be found in the differences between the centres, for
example:

- How centres inform parents of the curriculum and the child’s learning
- Ages of the children
- Teacher response

5. Use colour coding to avoid bias and work with the propositions, comparing
these against the details of one of the case studies. Then compare this to the
other cases to find an explanation/answer to the research. While doing this I will
constantly check the data/findings against the research question and aim to
avoid drifting away from the focus of the research. It is very important to store
the data under the main topics and sub-themes of the research.

To achieve a research analysis that is of a high quality, it is important to have
looked at all the evidence and that all parts of the research question are
covered. In addition, I will make sure that the most important rival explanations
have been addressed. By showing an awareness of current discourse on parent
and child involvement I will be able to further appraise the importance and
likelihood of the findings (Yin, 2009). Each section will address a specific
theme, with information from each case running through, while making sure
each centre remains unidentifiable. After these individual chapters a more
general discussion will tie in the findings with academic literature discussed at
the beginning of the thesis after which implications and limitations of the study
will be discussed.
3.6 Challenges in doing this research: Validity and reliability

3.6.1 Selecting the centres and parent participants

A main challenge was choosing the participants and the centres. I decided to approach each centre personally, the managers of the centres first because they need to agree with the IPV method. I also realised that once parents were approached I would not be able to turn them down because this could reflect badly on the centre. Punch (2010) agrees it is important to identify possible harm and risk for centres as well as participants. This is why I approached only a handful of centres at the time. During the interviews with the parents I was careful not to share my views about the centre or participants’ answers to the questions. When a parent shared concerns about the centre I advised the parent to discuss their concerns with the teachers.

Some of the dilemmas that came up included a centre with a specific approach and one centre being linked to my own work. It was decided not to identify the specific approach to avoid identification of the centre. The centre that has a link to my own work was excluded from the research. Another issue was that some of the children were not attending the centre full-time (attending four days per week). It was decided full attendance was not strictly necessary as long as the parents would be working full-time (some children are spending one day per week at their grandmother’s house).

3.6.2 Teachers’, parents’ and researcher’s assumptions

Teachers’, parents’ and the researcher’s assumptions have been noted and reflected on as soon as these were detected (Argyris & Schön, 1974). One teacher of a centre that ended up not partaking in the research because they did not have enough children attending full-time, thought teachers were required to do a follow-up learning story after receiving an IPV. This made me realise that the example I chose for the IPV to show parents and teachers was indicating quite high expectations (the parent had followed up on the child’s voice immediately). After realising this, I chose a variety of examples and explained that there are no specific expectations in relation to the time frame.
the form was handed in or the follow-up on the learning. Whether this happened or not is part of the findings of the research.

Because the research involved interviews, it was important for parents to meet me first. Parents who had not met me appeared to be less likely to participate or worry about the time the interview would take. Meeting the parents myself enabled me to reassure them that the interview could be done flexibly (for example either face to face at a time that suits or by Skype). One of my propositions is that parents will feel more involved in their child’s learning through the use of the IPV. A rival theory is that parents might put more effort in because they think this is expected of them. To mitigate this rival theory to some extent I have made sure to say that I had no specific expectations and that there was no requirement to complete the IPV’s in any particular way or time.

3.6.3 Teacher-parent dialogue

Another challenge was finding that three out of the five centre managers decided not to involve the other teachers in the research. Dialogue about the learning and having teachers on board with socio-cultural assessment practice of including multiple voices in the Learning Stories was important as the information generated by the Initiating Parent Voice is seen as having the possibility to flow into the Learning Story or be added to the learning story (MoE, 2004a; Whyte, 2010). Therefore, including at least one centre with a strong focus on Learning Stories was essential. One of the additional centres already had many parents involved in other research projects so only one parent (with two children at the centre) came forward. The other centre found four parents willing to participate. Engeström (2006) indicates that adjustment in research is appropriate if the initial scenario is insufficient.

A look into Activity Theory can provide the researcher with an insight into possible tensions in the collective activity (Activity Systems) and opportunities for change (Bozalek et al., 2015; Engeström, 2006; Sannino et al., 2009; Yagamata-Lynch, 2010). Incorporating unexpected findings and changes in
research is recognised as an important part of research in Activity Theory (Engeström, 2006). New insights often emerge as we come to see the research from multiple perspectives and we acknowledge the different mediating factors impacting on planning and assessment and therefore also on parents’ understanding of their child’s learning and how they feel part of their learning at home and in the centre. The impact of the IPV on parents’ perspectives and involvement in their child’s learning is linked to parent-teacher communication and the way the parent and the teachers see parents’ roles in the planning and involvement in the curriculum at the centre. Teacher-parent dialogue about the Initiating Parent Voice is therefore an important factor in considering the role the IPV plays in the planning and assessment (Whyte, 2010). Research findings that emerged from the findings included the type of questions asked by the parents, the availability of time, the age and language ability of the child, the time and place chosen to discuss the photo on the IPV and the quality of the photo chosen by the teacher. The next section shows the findings of the research in detail.

3.7 Summary of the methodology

In this research a multiple case study approach will be used to enable the researcher to triangulate the data (Yin, 2009), which means making sure there are enough data to compare to each other. In this research there are 15 parent-participants from five centres, providing a good database, which gives the research a degree of validity. A case study database has been formed though interviews, research notes, relevant Learning Stories and documented IPVs. Some external triangulation is also provided, by looking at one other study that has researched the same topic.

Construct validity has been taken into consideration by clearly identifying how the data will be analysed. Colour coding including descriptions of a similar theme running through has been used to identify specific categories, which will form the basis of the analysis and discussion. Axial coding and pattern matching will help to further narrow down the main themes of the research (Yin, 2009). The researcher will employ post-structural theory and interpretivist
theory in order to consider different causes for findings, which increases internal validity. Lastly, reliability has been thought of by documenting and following through with the data procedures step-by-step so another person could replicate the study and come to the same findings.
Chapter Four

Findings

4.0 Introduction

In keeping with my methodology, I interviewed parents about their perspectives of their child’s learning prior to the timeframe during which the parents used the IPV and also checked their perspectives and involvement after this period. After the initial interview, the parent participants started to use the Initiating Parent Voice form (IPV) once to twice per month noting down their child’s story about a photo of a learning interest of the child and links between the learning at the centre and at home. I was interested in how parents view their involvement and ability to communicate with their child about their learning, and in their hopes and aspirations to be or become involved in the learning. To investigate the impact of the IPV on involvement in learning at the centre, I interviewed parents again after their involvement with the IPV. Some factors that impacted on parents’ general understanding of their child’s learning that emerged from this research, have also been included.

4.0.1 Research participants

There were five centres involved in my research. The centres have been given Māori tree names for reasons of confidentiality, and the parents and children have been given the centre name and a number, using ‘P’ for Parent and ‘C’ for Child. The number ‘1’ or ‘2’ at the end of the name indicates interview one or interview two, for example RimuP4.1 means: Parent number four from Rimu centre in interview one just like MataiP2.2 would be Matai parent number two, interview 2. Interviews with the managers were included at the end of the research and named: TRimu, TKauri, TTawa and TNikau. The Matai team agreed to an interview but later on withdrew their permission for the data to be used for the analysis.
As described in the ‘Methodology’ chapter, three centres: Matai, Rimu, and Kauri were involved for six months and two centres, Tawa and Nikau, for four months. The manager of each centre was asked to offer parents an IPV form once or twice per month as required. All parent participants in this research were employed at the time of the research; most parents have done study prior to their job and have good communication skills. Four of the centres had three or four parents participating in the research, together with their children. A fifth centre, Tawa, had one parent participating with two children. All centres had good ratios, over 80% fully qualified teachers and received ‘well-placed’ to ‘very well placed’ ratings in recent Education Review Office reports. All of the centres had a very low turnover of teachers and all of the children had been at the centre for at least one year, so the teachers knew the children well. Many of the children, across all the centres, started attending at a very young age (around nine months old).

This study examined parents’ perspectives and therefore did not look at the centre itself, for example the cultural make-up of the centre, specific approach or curriculum. Also parents’ jobs, income and family make-up will not be reported, as these aspects are not significantly related to the aim of the research. This study did look at the documentation of learning in the centre and how the learning is communicated to the parents (MoE, 2004a). In the event a centre follows a specific approach, this is not identified because this might make it possible for readers to recognise the centre. Parents emphasised relationships and social skills more than the approach or philosophy of the centre. For the purposes of this research I have only identified whether a Learning Story focused on a child’s individual learning interest or if it was reporting on generic experiences happening in the centre.
4.1 Parent perspectives of their child’s learning at home

(interview one)

4.1.1 An image of the child as ‘being’

As indicated in the methodology, the parents were interviewed before they started to work with the Initiating Parent Voice forms. I will report on parents’ perspectives on their child’s learning at home first and then their perspectives on learning at the centre. What stands out for me from the interviews with the parents across the five centres is that all parents are sharing details about their child’s character, such as ‘strong-willed’, ‘determined’, and ‘clever’ when asked their perspectives on their child’s learning. One parent said for example:

*He is determined and stubborn. He very much likes to explore. Loves new things and new experiences…* RimuP2.1

This is similar to Halden’s (1991) finding that parents see their child in terms of ‘being’, rather than focusing on ‘the next step’ in their learning.

4.1.2 Parent as a ‘resource’: Teacher as ‘expert’

Some parents (for example TawaP1; RimuP1 and P3 and MataiP3) indicated that offering a variety of experiences is important, showing enthusiasm for learning and allowing lots of time for their children to explore. When asked about learning at home, 90% of the parents mentioned that their child learns through copying their parents and/or older siblings. Parents saw themselves, the resources in the home environment, and socio-cultural experiences within the family and community, as important learning resources for their child. Once the child is going to a long day ‘care and education’ centre, a new element is introduced into this natural, unrushed view on development: an emphasis on improving potential areas of further development, which challenges the value of the child as ‘being’, and potentially diminishing parents’ views of themselves as primary educators of their children (Collins, 2015, April 1).
As a parent we are a lot less trained... in the learning than teachers, but I have to say that I’m amazed every day at the things they connect with... for example A. is at the moment learning writing; she is learning to write her name ... what letters are... and she notices on the bathroom floor there is a strand of my long dark hair in the shape of an ‘S’, she stops and says: “That’s a letter, that’s a letter!” and so there is a massive amount of connection between how they develop in the brain and imagination and that sort of thing. They are pretty creative in their learning; very creative and they don’t have boundaries; not defined. TawaP1.

This example clearly shows that the parent is aware of the learning happening during play (Cullen & Hedges, 2005; 2.3.3; MOE, 2004a). By positioning the teacher as the professional however, the parent is devaluing her own potential of teaching her child, despite her knowledge, attachment, and rich learning experiences at home.

I was surprised at the rich variety of learning experiences in the home and the extent to which learning experiences at the centre are different from those at home. For example, two year old N. (RimuP2) does carpentry with his father, and his mother engages with him on the home-built playground and they read N. three to four books at night. Because the learning experiences from home do not always match the experiences at the centre, the child has to somehow negotiate his way through these differences (see discussion 5.4.2). Parents tend to see different learning experiences as an advantage and do not recognise this potential challenge for the child.

4.2 Parents’ perspectives on their child’s learning at the centre

Parents saw seeing the learning their child experiences at the centre as ‘adding to’ the experiences from home. RimuP3 even indicated preferring the child’s
learning experiences at the centre to be significantly different from experiences at home. This parent saw the centre as a place where the child is offered experiences that the parents cannot offer at home. Connections between the learning at home and the centre are not regarded essential by the parent. This is concerning, given the evidence of the importance of links to prior learning in academic literature (Carr et al., 2015; Cowie & Carr, 2009; MoE, 2004a). This also brings up the question about whose responsibility it is to inform the parent of this important aspect of learning, which will be further discussed below. An overview of the Learning Stories over the past year and IPVs for each parent (see figure 5) shows the lack of dialogue about the child’s learning with the parent and the absence of links to home. Parents’ expectations and perspectives of their centres will be covered next.

4.2.1 Rimu centre: Informal conversations and a friendly atmosphere

Rimu parents received updates of the centre’s learning experiences through Learning Stories as is also the case for the other centres either through a paper-based portfolio or electronically. All centres in this research, including Rimu centre, have a planned parent-teacher interview twice a year, where the teacher reports on aspects of the child’s learning and parents are asked to share their ‘aspirations’ (see discussion 5.4.6). Teachers in each centre have regular informal interactions with the parents. The frequency of information given through Learning Stories and informal interaction was highly variable across centres and individual parents. Rimu centre, for example, provides one, sometimes two Learning Stories per month. Most of these are ‘group’ Learning Stories’ with little individualisation (see figure 5). Over the time span of one year typically only two to three Learning Stories are individualised for each child and do not always show a specific interest.

Parents at this centre see the Learning Stories mostly as the Teacher’s Voice. No Parent or Child Voices are included. One of the parents in my research provided two ‘stories from home’, however these were not linked to any follow-up of the documented learning visible in the portfolio; the parents were relying on informal conversations instead. The parent-participants of this centre found
the teachers very approachable: a good atmosphere, friendly staff, low staff
turnover and ‘warm relationships’ were highlighted by the parents, who enjoyed
that there was a sense of stability and belonging. Parents also indicated they
liked the fact that the centre was giving their child some structure and that their
child was learning basic self-help skills and forming friendships. All four Rimu
parent-participants in this research signalled however, that they would have
appreciated more specific dialogue about current learning with the teachers;
Rimu parents 4 and 2 for example explained that their child did not say much
about what they did at the centre.

*It would be interesting to see how… he … views his world*, said
RimuP4.1

4.2.2 Kauri parents: No specific expectations

Kauri parents say they have ‘no specific expectations’. Parents enjoy the
different learning experiences the centre offers to their child, and value the
social interactions, language development and friendships. “I've noticed they do
learn a lot more at day-care than they do at home”, said KauriP1. Again,
relationships are important:

*He will tell me which teacher that he likes [teacher’s name] and
I ask ‘why?’ and he says: “Oh because he love me and he kiss
me” …so I will try to be that way too.* KauriP2.2

The Learning Stories in this centre are written as a summary (generally without
a child or parent voice) to inform the parent of the activities that have taken
place recently in the centre.

*This is more like a reactive thing. Like: this is a summary,
rather than what they are doing right now.* KauriP3.2

Another parent adds:
For [the] portfolio maybe what happened the whole month, he [her child] learned a lot, but not that specific, not let the parent know more about their kid. KauriP2.2

This parent valued the ‘daily diary’ when her child was in the ‘under 2’s’ and found it hard to lose this ‘daily update when this was replaced by the portfolio in the ‘over 2’s. KauriP2: “I suddenly found I lost all the information!” The ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ provided more immediate information about her child’s interest: “Yeah, Parenting Voice… parenting Voice, such like: I just get the information back!” she said.

KauriP3 learned about her child’s current interest at pick-up time:

“Mummy, mummy do you know, chicken comes from the eggs!”
So she was telling me […] got from the Chinese book … I was trying to ‘catch up’ with this teaching progress! I say: “See this is ‘human being grow in mummy’s tummy’… That is fascinating really…KauriP3.2

4.2.3 Matai parents: Many learning experiences

A large variety of learning experiences is also highly valued by parents of the Matai centre, resulting in many up-to-date reports on the electronic portfolio. Some Learning Stories contain a Child Voice and one of the parent participants has shared a Parent Voice in response to some of the Learning Stories. Similar to the parents from the other centres Matai Parent participants valued the relationships their children form with others. In addition to this, MataiP1 and MataiP2, whose children speak Chinese as their first language, liked the fact that their child is learning English. When asked if their child shares their learning experiences at the centre:

MataiP1: Not too much, but sometimes she will talk me about… some English word… but not too much. That centre got the web site… with some… picture… yeah, I know about what she do in
the centre… and I will ask her… yeah, but she don’t talk too much about that.  MataiP1.1

MataiP3: His language is slow, because we have 3 different languages at home.

MataiP2 asks her child about her learning at the centre but her child says ‘she has forgotten what she did most of the time’. Some ‘continuity of learning’ is visible in the documentation: an interest in spiders is followed up by a visit of the bug man for MataiC2, MataiC1 was offered another opportunity to climb and the documentation of MataiC3 shows a continuation of the interest in construction.

4.2.4 Tawa parent: A way of ‘being’

Similar to the other centres, TawaP1 values the relationships her children form at the centre. In addition, she shared:

I think they learn a lot of stuff here, and I don’t necessarily mean ‘learn about things’, I mean ‘a way of thinking’, ‘a way of being’, you know which is I think beneficial to them. Being exposed to things.

The children’s interests are represented in Learning Stories, however there are many Learning Stories that are reporting on centre activities in line with the special character of the centre, instead of reporting on the child’s own interest. TawaP1 was seeing the teachers as the professionals:

I don’t know if that’s a fine-motor skill development or…necessarily language… so you have us parents that are not trained in early childhood education and those who are… observe things in a different way.
4.2.5 Nikau parents: Team work

Documentation in the Nikau centre is seen as a joint effort of teachers, parents and children and mostly addressed to the child. The documentation identifies the child’s interests, as opposed to ‘general Learning Stories’, and includes many Child Voices. Half of the parent-participants contributed some Parent Voice and teachers included comments on each other’s Learning Stories.

*What I like at day-care is that they support him with his self-esteem*… NikauP4.1

Parents also liked the ‘team-work’ their children engage in at the centre and the social interactions. Another parent (NikauP1) agreed that the centre has opened up a lot of learning for her child, socially, emotionally and in terms of outdoor learning. Children’s on-going individual interests are coming through in the portfolio book, but are a bit harder to spot for an outsider (the researcher) as these have not been clearly identified by the teachers (the portfolio book is a mix of entries from all stakeholders), however both teachers and parents are well aware of the special interests of the child:

*She likes gluing things …yeah sticking and gluing things. The teacher says that quite often… when I pick her up she’ll go back and try gluing and sticking things… she really loves that!* NikauP2.1

4.3 Parents’ views on the IPV and changes in their perspectives on their child’s learning

4.3.1 The impact of the photo on the conversation

A photo showing a specific interest made a clear difference to the child’s ability to talk about the photo:

MataiP2: *Oh I think so, yeah because if there’s anything with animals and bugs she would definitely remember, but more of the uhm… sort of like… I think there was one where they were…*
sort of role playing something… she could not remember what it was…But if it was the vet… there was one where they had heaps of bunnies and stuff… She would remember all of that: Oh we are playing vets.

She loved them; she loved and wanted to draw on them and take them away and…everything, so it was hard to keep it away from her… NikauP2.2

MataiP1: ‘L.’ [child’s name] is very happy to talk about the photo. Sometimes goes away and comes back to tell more.

I think the portfolio is different (from the IPV) because it’s the teacher’s voice really… but this is the ‘child voice’, this is what the child is saying about…[their play] whereas the teachers are writing about what they saw the child do… RimuP4.2

All parents said their child loved to talk about the photo, however responses varied, depending on the quality of the photo and whether it was a recent photo, for example:

The first photographs… they were so old!
He could not remember them; it becomes irrelevant.
RimuP4.2

Another parent could see her (two year old) child was not interested in ‘Spiders’, one of the photos on an IPV.

Yeah… actually… he’s got his head on his hand …

Photos that are less meaningful or clear made it harder for the child to talk about it and take ownership of their learning.
4.3.2 Listening to Child Voice: ‘Parent-Child conversations’

Despite a lack of response to the IPVs from the teachers, parents reported they increasingly enjoyed listening to and communicating with their child about their interest (parents in this research noticed this change after three months). By being asked to write down the Child Voice first, the parent is 'suspending' what they themselves wanted to contribute, which creates a pedagogy of listening and respect for the child (Rinaldi, 2006). This gives the child time and space to discuss what they want to talk about (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009). Many parents, such as KauriP3, RimuP4 and RimuP2, and MataiP1 and MataiP2 noticed a language improvement and the child going more into detail. Parents also discovered the value of motivation and being in the 'here and now' with their child:

*It encouraged me to ask him more about his day, which is what we are doing now.* RimuP4.2

*It actually made me to….pay more attention on…what is happening around us, and then sometimes I can talk to him more about, yeah…Yes we do ‘the explore’ together… that’s the interesting things!* MataiP3

This parent started off with predominantly ‘closed questions’ when asking her child about the photo, such as: “What colour is your painting?” and “What is the name of your friend?” When I noticed there was no feedback coming from the teachers to the parents, I decided to have one ‘check-in’ phone-call for each one of the parent-participants, during which I suggested asking the children open-ended questions and use ‘I wonder’. I noticed this helped several parents become more ‘tuned in’ with their child’s interests. MataiP3 reported enthusiastically in the second interview: “I realised my boy’s interest!” She added:

*Before I was asking only one or two very boring questions, like I don’t know what question should I ask … and I actually don’t know… ‘what should I write?’ … I’m just asking him… “Ok, what is this photo? Who is this? ; What are you doing?” And uh… he*
just gave me a really simple word: ‘train…’, ‘building…’, ‘car…’ uh… ‘sandpit’… that single word… so it was very hard for me; I got totally lost. I don’t know how to, you know, how to… do this!

Yeah! But then… after we talked on the phone … then I think ‘yeah you have to… link to the’ before’ and ‘after’… yeah… so I think that helped a lot and then, it actually help him a lot!

MataiP3.2

After realising the importance of her child’s interest in construction, this parent is pointing out road works and big machinery to her son. She is now much more successful in choosing library books as well!

*Before he would only like 2 out of 10 library books; now 5 out of 5!* Yes, it is interesting for me as well. I know now he likes funny stories (on diggers and construction); it opened the door for us. MataiP3.2

MataiP1 has also realised the importance of talking and listening to his children. He now sets aside time to talk specifically to both his children and now watches the new ‘electronic portfolio’ stories together with his child.

Parents also commented on the ‘special time’ together that the IPV provided:

*He enjoyed telling me about … what he was doing in the pictures yeah… it gave us that time that we don’t usually spend together… so that was pretty good. I guess I do spend time… but we just focused on something that was just ‘me and him’, so that was really nice… it was … different.* RimuP4.2

*I would recommend it to other parents; I think it is valuable for us to observe how we are with our children… how we engage…* TawaP1.2
Another parent commented that the ‘structured nature’ of the IPV gave her a specific purpose for the conversation:

*It gave us bonding time: that 10 minutes was just really good to have him sit down and just focus on this ‘one-on one’ relationship and I really learned how much he is thinking. I learned that it is very important to have that ten minutes of a chat…. to talk about what went on in the day. That’s different from the ‘bath time chat’, because we are sitting together; there is no other distraction. The bath time: there is the water to splash…there are containers to fill… there are bath toys... With the papers, there are no other distractions but the papers, so there is that focus...*

NikauP1.2

4.3.3 The IPV provides a specific focus for conversation

When asked in what way their understanding of how their child learns has changed due to their involvement in the research, parents talked about having a *specific time and focus* for communicating with their child, their child sharing more in general, and going into more detail. Children are also revisiting their learning and are taking ownership of their learning. Parents valued the conversations they were having with their children while looking at the photo on the IPV form. NikauP3 indicated that by having the photo of the child playing at the centre her child was able to talk more about what he is doing at the centre, but also about *other things* he was doing at the centre as well.

* NikauP3: *It triggers other things he has done.*

Likewise, RimuP4:

*I think I already knew what his interests were… but I got a better understanding what he does during the day: he talked about… not just the picture, but what was going on… around it....*
... and I love her to think about... in terms of... what else went on with it ... not just about the activity in the picture itself ... but also 'we’re allowed to do this' and ‘we are not allowed to do that’... and ‘we do this on that day’... that makes her think more than just that. TawaP1.2

Another parent, KauriP2, said that by letting the child talk about their learning spontaneously and freely and not forcing learning, her child is now offering to teach something to her instead:

He says: ‘I know from Kauri-centre, mummy, I know lots of songs. Do you want learn?’ I said: Yes! Can you teach me?

He learns lots of things, but I don’t know. Once he shows me: I know. But if he did not show me: I don’t know what happened. KauriP2.2

There was an appreciation coming through for the child’s thinking and their ability to recall what they did:

It amazed me how he could remember stuff. RimuP4.2

It was interesting to listen to his perspective. NikauP4

Being in the ‘here and now’: I’m always asking after the fact... what she has done... but I’ve never asked her... what she is thinking about... while she is doing it... RimuP1.1

Maybe 5 minutes or 10 minutes talking so I think that’s teaching me: maybe in the future... every day take maybe 5 or 10 minutes talk to him. KauriP2.2

When you talk to your children then you got to ask them more specifics, rather than ‘What did you do today?’... because they did so much... NikauP2.1
In the beginning this parent did not think she had time and saw it as ‘home-work’, but later on changed her mind on this:

*Now I think that’s a good idea yeah…*  KauriP2.2

*Actually… we do have time … We just forgot to talk to them…*  
[says this quietly in a very serious manner] *It made me realise the ‘5-minutes’ time.*  KauriP2.

*She’d probably verbalize more… and that’s because we... sat down, you know?  Yeah a little bit longer, more time, yeah…*  
TawaP1.2

### 4.3.4 Consolidating prior learning

As opposed to the more prolonged conversation parents of older children had with their child looking at the IPV, parents of younger children (around two years old) noticed their child was showing a more ‘direct response’ by physically showing the parent what they knew about the activity in the photo:

*He is telling me he is doing this and then he will go and run off and go and do it, yeah, showing you: ‘This is how it’s done mum!’*  RimuP2

*She was showing me what she was doing ‘I’m doing it like this…’, so she stood there and was doing the actions and that… yes I actually got a lot out of that one…*  NikauP2.2  
(parents of a two-year old child).

Two children who have learned English as a second language demonstrated the activity as well as talking about it (Matai P1 and P3).

RimuP1 who has a slightly older (three and a half years old) child liked the ‘structure’ the IPV gave to the conversation, helping the child to remember what she did first, next, and so on. This child also continues things she has learned at the centre, at home.
It really reinforces her with the steps she’s learned yeah… the skills she’s learned. She continues things she has learned at the centre at home, what she obviously learned here.

RimuP1.2

One parent wrote down all the little things her two year old son said. She said she really enjoyed having a record like this.

When we were looking at a snail, he said: Oh there is a snail at day care… he was awake… and we have worms at home. Marjolein: So he is making links… making connections?

RimuP2: Yeah!

Every time they love to have a look at them [the IPV]. ‘K.’ really likes talking about the picture of every little thing she could think of, even if it was not relevant to it or repeating it … again as I was typing it (she was watching me type) she just kept, you know… she would not go through it a lot or long, but when she did speak it was continuous. TawaP1.2

4.3.5 The child and the parent taking ownership of the IPV further

The examples above show children were taking ownership of the IPV. After some time some children and parents started to take the idea of the IPV further. One child picked up on the questions from his mother and started to imitate her, asking her about her photos. He is now using his mother’s photos on her iphone to explain something to his four year old friend.

For another parent the experience with the IPV led to story-telling:

Every night I will choose just three things, such like three animals and said: ‘Can you make up a story for me?’ And I made up first … and then he will learn… and he made up his own story. And the own story is always happen in day care. Things that happen in day-care; he just turns it into… you
know the kids’ name… to an animal. He just tells me, you know… all the things happening in day-care… by story!

KauriP2.2

Since their involvement with the research both MataiP1 and his wife also have regular conversations with their child and her sibling.

We take the book home now every week or so and talk about what they have been doing; every week, yeah… NikauP3.2

Yeah I would recommend it to other parents; I think it is valuable for us to observe how we are with our children… how we engage… TawaP1.2

I would like (laughs) something like this (IPV) to continue uhm yeah… RimuP4.2

Several parents are continuing to use photos to talk about the child’s interests with their child in the same fashion as the IPV. For example NikauP4, RimuP2, MataiP1 and P3 are using the idea of the IPV to talk with their child about the photo on the webpage, which they did not do before (the parents used to read the stories on the web page after the child had gone to bed).

She already go to bed to sleeping … and then I check the web site. MataiP1.1

It was probably a stepping-stone which encouraged me to ask him more about his day, which is what we are doing now, whereas I did not do that too much before. RimuP4.2

For KauriP2 it changed the way she communicated with the teacher. She realised it is important to talk about something specific. This parent has become the initiator of communication here, instead of the teacher being the one to take the lead:
I realise I need to talk to them more. Before, I don’t have point in talking…but now I do have a point. KauriP2.2

4.4 Parent Partnerships (Interview 2)

4.4.1 Parents’ perspectives on involvement in their child’s learning

How parents see their involvement in their child’s learning is linked to their perspectives on what is valuable learning in general and availability of time. MataiP1 indicated they have very little time to play with their daughter and son, but they do what they can in the time available: they read every night ten to fifteen minutes, go to the supermarket, and sometimes go to the zoo. Another parent (MataiP3) said they do a lot of reading, play a lot of activities, like train track, music, and singing songs. Like the other parents, MataiP1 indicated they involve their child in whatever they do. Parents find brochures for their child to bring to ‘big news’ at the centre and they do a lot of reading.

Often parents looked for cues from the information they got from the centre to ascertain what their child would be ready for next.

Because he is our first child, we are not sure when he should start using scissors. One of his interests at the moment is collage… he just loves doing collage, and I’m not sure if we would have realised… if he was home all the time… we might have just given him papers and pens and not realising he was ready for paper and scissors and glue and all the other things that go with collage… so we know which age appropriateness he is at… NikauP1.1

Sometimes parents were noticing a new interest at home that started at the centre.
KauriP3: *Even though I feel quite relaxed, I still try to catch up with some things she is doing at the day-care… for instance she has the theme about insects; we... in the evening time, at bed time we try to tell her about insect story.*

This suggests that parents are positioning themselves more as ‘clients’ than participants in centre planning. Centre ‘curriculum’ and planning was, from the parents’ point of view, decided on by the teachers, not carried out in conjunction with the parents or children. In order to learn more about the differences in perspectives on involvement in their child’s learning, I included two questions about planning and partnerships in the second interview using understandings from Activity Theory (see section on methodology and discussion). When asked about their role in planning, not one out of the fifteen parent-participants identified the purpose of the Child and the Parent Voice as informing the planning for their child’s learning. When presented with this idea, parents’ responses were divided: some parents saw the teachers as professionals and others really liked the idea.

Marjolein: *Because how it works, when you feedback to the teachers what he (the child) likes at home... how he responded at home... then they can bring that through into the planning for him [RimuP2: hmm] and how they approach him [RimuP2: hmm...], so you know, that’s kind of: you (as a teacher) need that input.”*

RimuP2: Yes, yes (laughs), that’s a really big yes!

Marjolein: *You don’t feel that you have a need to contribute to the planning?* KauriP1: No.

### 4.4.2 Parents’ perspectives on links between learning at the home and the centre

Although parents noticed their child is continuing the learning interest from the centre at home, the value of identifying links between learning at the centre and
the home-environment for the teaching-learning process, was not well understood by many parent-participants:

Marjolein: *Did you see some connections, between what you talked about and maybe the interest you see at home?*

NikauP2: *I don’t know... [thoughtful], how do you mean?*

NikauP1: *Yeah I have written some comments randomly.* *(in the portfolio book)*.

Parents from all centres involved mentioned they value that centres offer their children new learning experiences that are different from the home environment. The learning experiences offered by the centre are seen as *adding* to learning experiences provided at home, rather than being interlinked.

Many parents saw what the centre offers as fixed, not something teachers and parents decide on together:

*I’m happy for them to... I mean, they are the experts, and they deal with the kids every day, so they know what...yeah... I guess if I wasn't happy with what he was doing I would.* NikauP3.2

*No I have never [contributed to the planning]... because from his activities he is doing, I think he is developing appropriately- age appropriately...skills... reasoning... he is very happy... and I just want him to develop at his own pace and his own person.* NikauP1.2

### 4.4.3 The purpose of the Child’s Voice and the Parent Voice in the teaching-learning process

The purpose of the IPV and ‘Parent Voice’ in general as a part of the planning process at the centre was not always clear to the parents. One parent said she contributed a Parent Voice but did not know what it was for. Parents did not
always find an opportunity to ask for clarification as they are finding that the teachers are very busy:

*If you want the teacher talk to you, you need to ask them.* Otherwise, they are really busy. They can’t be waiting for you… yah, such like something specific, something happened… then they will talk to you. But if you want to ask generally, the information, you need to ask. KauriP2.2

The idea of taking the Child and Parent Voice into account in the planning ‘what next’ was a new concept for many parents. Parents consequently did not recognise the potential of a Child Voice shared through an IPV, for the teaching-learning process at the centre. RimuP1 said in the second interview:

*I think the benefits (of the IPV) are more ‘one way’ though, like I find like the benefits are there for me as a parent, but I don’t… ah… and for my child, but more at home, not so much me coming back (with the IPV) and talking to the teachers about it. I think because of the age she is… and because she did not have any ideas about where she wanted to take it, there was, there is no need for me to come and talk to the teachers about what she wanted to do, because there was nothing she wanted to do.* RimuP1.2

*I don’t think he does much planning* (laughs). NikauP3.2

Marjolein: *Do you contribute any ideas?*
NikauP3: *About what they do?* [M: yeah] *Uhm… no (laughs) I’m happy for them to… I mean, they are the experts, and they deal with the kids every day, so they know what…yeah…* NikauP3.2

Likewise TawaP1 did not have the expectation that her ‘Parent Voice’ could contribute to the planning.
TawaP1: So I’m not going to deliver in a way that... has a focus... a trained eye... in a sense yes we just pull different things from that. I tell the story as it was: a whole.

4.4.4 Parents’ understandings of ‘parent partnership’

Noticing parents’ lack of understanding about the role of the Child and Parent Voice in planning and assessment (see 4.4.1 and 4.4.3), I included a question about ‘parent partnerships’ in the second interview, bearing in mind that Te Whāriki asserts that “observations and records should be part of two-way communication that strengthens the partnership between the early childhood setting and families” (MoE, 1996, p. 30).

Some parents think that ‘parent-teacher’ conversations only occur when there is an issue of some kind. When I asked KauriP1 about parent partnerships she answered:

There is no problem... the teachers are good. I have no concerns I have really [have no need] ... for them to do more because they pretty much are doing it anyway, so...

KauriP1.2

KauriP3 pointed out:

Some parents leave it to childcare. They think most of the time the child spends there. Parent partnerships ... it is about an awareness... yeah... both parties have to be willing to, yeah... it takes two parties.

TawaP1 agreed:

“I don’t think it is necessary; I think the teachers... I think if there is a party who should step up, it is probably the parents, really...”

TawaP1.2
KauriP3 considered:

I think it is the parent too; the way we ‘carry’ ourselves. I think if we search more information; if we seek more information from teachers, they will supply, but it is not easy on a day-to-day basis... They have got soooo many children that even the manager told us in the newsletter: ‘Our conversation with the parents has to be on a brief basis. We can’t satisfy everybody, like giving lengthy discussion; you just have to be considerate.’ This was actually said in the newsletter. In the beginning, I thought ‘that is not nice’, but I understand it this time, because there are so many children... they just have to run quickly from this parent to the other one... KauriP3.2

NikauP4.2 added:

The parent partnership would improve through more ‘two-way communication’ and in-depth reporting on what they do at the centre.

KauriP3 also hinted that ‘two-way communication’ would enhance parent partnerships but indicated that many Asian parents lack the English to make themselves clear to teachers.

Asian parents tend to not interact a lot. Sometimes it is the language; it’s not easy: they [the teachers] conduct the conversation in different ways from us.... Even a joke... they don’t have the same background, you know. KauriP3.2

She added:

Yeah, there was one survey that was done in the middle of last year, done by Kauri-centre... quite a few pages... so many questions! I answered it uh... with all my responsibility; I did it really well; I actually brought up my concerns, like my language... you know ‘bi-lingual’... I said: “X. [her child] doesn’t speak my language... she is so into English... so I was trying very hard....
Yeah…. But actually, nobody comment on my comments, like ‘This is what you can do’ or: ‘This is what we can do’… yeah, yeah…. Basically there was a survey, the parent had a survey but there was not any feedback!

Rimu parents indicated they would like to communicate more about their child with the teachers and would like to work collaboratively as a team.

Something I would like to do more; being on one page is important. RimuP2.2

Another parent suggested:

So maybe they could uhm… kind of advertise: ‘This week we would love to report back to you if you have time, just grab any teacher this week’… you know and ‘We would love to have a five minute chat with you about’… RimuP1.2

Marjolein: So what you are recognizing there is… you need to have a reason to talk…or…?
RimuP1.2: Not a reason… but uh… an opportunity!

MataiP1.2: More chances to communicate with the teachers!

Marjolein: When you pick your child up and your child might have made a drawing, that’s a chance to converse but only a very limited chance… [MataiP1: yeah, yeah…] but if you have written a story with the photo, there is a bigger chance isn’t there. MataiP1.2: Yes, yes! (laughs)
4.5 Some challenges noted by the parents in this research

4.5.1 Lack of dialogue with the teachers

There were very few opportunities for parents to dialogue with teachers about the IPV. Most of the time the IPV was put in the ‘pocket’ on the wall, or the child’s bag, or emailed to the parent. Parents often have very little time at ‘drop-off’ or ‘pick-up’ time:

*We (working parents) are just -sort of-… like ships in the night… sort of thing… just passing them by…* RimuP4.2

*No dialogue; no time to talk because of work; I always forget to show it to RimuTchr1, so it is sort of more my fault than anything* (laughs). RimuP3.2

Parents of the Matai centre and Nikau centre appreciated the opportunity to talk to a teacher when the IPV was given out. For parents with English as a second language, the photo helped them to communicate with the teacher. On return of the IPV however there was no dialogue. MataiP1 commented in a soft voice and smiling shyly that he would “*prefer to get a bit more information from the teachers*”. MataiP2 agrees, saying she finds it hard to leave a message on the electronic page; she prefers face-to-face. Further difficulties arise when family brings the child, especially when there is a language barrier.

What ‘dialogue’ means may be something different for parents and teachers. Kauri teachers for example, do their best to tell the parents one specific thing the child has been playing with that day, so the parent can talk about that with their child on the way home. KauriP2 however has a different perspective:

*Sometimes when I come, they will tell me: B. had a wonderful day; B. play water, just like that… yeah. The teacher always tells me something general, but if you want to know more you need to ask.* KauriP2.2
This parent used the idea of the IPV to communicate with the teacher:

Parents need to know how to talk to the teachers as well and I think a Parenting Voice [IPV] is really good because they record it, the things happened at the moment, so the parents know how to ask teacher. If I want to know what happened I bring the photo to the teacher and I say: ‘Do you remember what happened in there?’ And then she will remember, but if I only ask: ‘What happened today?’ You know, the day is very long. KauriP2.2

4.5.2 A preference for some guidance from the teachers

As indicated above, the IPV provided an opportunity for parents and children to talk about their learning at the centre. TawaP1 suggested:

(For it to work) It would need to be specified probably more.
(What questions to ask and how to dialogue for example).

Initially, TawaP1’s questions on the ‘wolf story’ (IPV) were closed questions: (‘Where was the game?’ - ‘On the grass’). Her child started to share more information when this parent asked: ‘Tell me more about the game.’

What made it hard for this parent was ‘not knowing’ this game. Another term the parent was confused about was ‘messy play’. In response to the ‘baby-play’ photo, TawaP1’s child said: “I am playing such a lot in there, I can’t stop”. Instead of asking more about this, TawaP1 asks what ‘jobs’ she does for the teacher in the babies’ room:

I was playing in the sandpit with the babies; F. was playing with the babies with me.

TawaP1: Where is it?

- By the sandpit. I play such a lot there that I can’t stop.

Tell me about the babies’ room – do you like helping in there?
Yes but we’re not allowed to go in when we don’t knock on the door in case someone is helping the babies.

Do they give you jobs to do in there?

- Yes.

What sort of jobs do they give you?

- All different ones and some jobs are playing with the babies.

Do you want to play with the babies?

- Yes.

What were you playing that day?

- I don’t remember what I’m playing.

Looks like it was a sunny day.

- Yes it was but not at the end of the day; it was sunny.

TawaP1.2

TawaP1’s questions seem to have steered the conversation in this case. There was no further dialogue between the child and the teacher as far as visible in the documentation. Despite my suggestion to do this, parents did not encourage their child to show the IPV to the teachers and teachers did not ask for it (in three out of five centres, the managers did not involve the other teachers in this research). Further response from the teachers to the child would provide another opportunity for the child to talk about their learning. TawaP1 indicated she was quite late returning the IPV. The photos chosen are a clear interest of the child however, which was sustained over a long period of time. TawaP1 indicated however, that this interest was still alive in her child after several months, so a three-way dialogue would still have been meaningful.

Marjolein: So having the Parent voice form… did that help you talk to the teachers more?
KauriP2: I think it gave me…idea I need to talk to them. Before I did not…talk not that much… but now I just really keen talking to them. KauriP2.2

It does bring more communication between me with the teacher, so that does mean we have more chance to sharing…not only the story in the photo … maybe linked to some similar story at home… so it’s just a way of open the conversation, and people will just talk… MataiP3.2

4.5.3 Timing and relevance of the photo to the interest of the child

As indicated above, the timing and relevance of the photo to the interest of the child was an important factor in the child sharing their story. In the Rimu centre the majority of the photos did not match a specific interest of the child (as identified by the parent, teachers or the child); in Kauri and Matai centres the IPV photo matched with an interest about half of the time; the Tawa centre had a majority of photos matching an interest and in Nikau centre all photos were relevant and meaningful to the children. The level of congruency between the photos on the IPV and the child’s interests matched the relative level of engagement of the child (parents reported on the difficulty their child had engaging with a photo that was unclear, out-dated or not meaningful to them for example). The comment below gives an indication as to why parents might not query things:

I did not get the picture often… I was wondering what happened…Probably the preschool is very busy and this is not part of their obligation… KauriP3.2

NikauP4 thought it was challenging choosing the right time for her child to talk about the IPV.
You have to have to pick and choose your time when you approach it because at the end of the day when they are tired and hungry... it is not the best time to... you know.

TawaP1.1

NikauP2. found this as well because of their child being only two years old:

The challenges were he was tired, quite tired sometimes; you have to pick that opportune moment. Because he is in crèche the whole day, so by the time you come home it is 5:30 pm and then it’s dinner... it might not be a good time... so I have achieved much of this on weekends, when there’s...you know, there’s no fatigue... NikauP1.2

It is better to do it that day, like the photo happened that day and they do it that night. Because when they started they don’t have exactly have the time frame... so if I leave it for two or three day... yeah...delay it a little bit... yeah they will... gone... his idea got totally gone. MataiP3.2

I would forget to do it... because your days are busy anyway... when at night it’s time for me and think ok what do I need to do... that’s when the children are in bed...and so...’ok, I can’t do it now...’ so.... I usually try to get it done during the day when the children are at home... TawaP1.2

This parent found it quite hard to create the opportunity to have a talk. Therefore it added pressure to her daily schedule:

The teachers ... they understand the learning you know, whereas... I’m just a mother... I need to get the kids home; I know they get hungry... so I have to cook dinner, clean up, get to bath, you know what I mean ... so my thinking is always ‘the next step ahead’ as opposed to being ‘present’ in that moment... so... ‘what comes next’... because I need to plan a lot of....I just can’t ... muck around till nine o’clock... I don’t. TawaP1.2
4.6  Summary of findings, answering the research question

In response to the research question: “How does the use of the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ form influence working parents’ perspectives on and involvement in their child’s learning?” I will now summarise the findings, before analysing the themes that emerged from the findings. Addressing parents’ perspectives and parent involvement separately is difficult because it is through their involvement that parents’ perspectives develop.

4.6.1 The use of the IPV form influenced parents’ perspectives on the value of communicating with their child about their child’s learning:

a. 90% of the parent participants are indicating a significant increase in communication with their child elaborating on their day (see 4.3.2) and specific learning experiences at the centre, including more detail (4.3.4) and the child’s communication becoming deeper and wider (4.3.3).

b. There is a positive change in parents’ perspectives and awareness of quality communication with their child about their learning. Parents are starting to value being in the ‘here-and-now’ (see 4.3.2), using ‘wait time’, asking the child what she is doing while she is doing it (RimuP1.1) and (after some experience) asking open-ended rather than closed questions (4.3.2).

c. Through documenting the Child’s Voice, parents are listening more closely to their child’s replies and are noticing their child’s specific interests (see 4.3.2) and richer response to open as opposed to closed questions and valuing the child’s perspective (4.3.3 and 4.3.5).

d. Factors that are challenging the communication and dialogue about the photo are time and relevance of the photo to the child and self-efficacy of the parent (see discussion 5.3.3).
4.6.2 The use of the IPV form provided parents with a specific focus and quality time:

a. Parents found that they were able to set aside a specific time (4.3.3), whereas many parents previously thought they had no time at all. This is a significant change as most of the parents are not accustomed to contributing a Parent Voice to learning stories and a Child Voice is also frequently absent in learning stories (see figure 5; discussion 5.4.1 and 4.6).

b. Having the IPV provides a focal point for communication, which makes the communication more purposeful and intentional (Duncan et al., 2012). This involvement cultivates an ‘identity of participation’ (Wenger, 1998) for parents, at least at home (see discussion 5.3.2 and 5.3.3).

c. Some parents are continuing ‘targeted communication’ in a variety of ways after their involvement with the research.

d. An identity of participation was not further fostered in the centre because of a lack of response from the teachers (three out of five of the managers did not share the returned IPVs with the teaching team).

e. Being ‘in the moment’ with their child (see 4.3.3).

4.6.3 The IPV form revealed links between learning at home and the centre:

a. Parents noticed their child revisiting learning from the centre at home, commenting on the child’s ability to recall (see 4.3.3 and 4.3.4).

b. Although parents noticed the child making links between the centre and home, parents were rarely initiating a follow-up conversation with the teacher (see 4.5.2 and 4.5.3).

c. Parents needed an understanding about the importance of making links to prior knowledge for learning (4.2 and 4.4.5).
d. Parents were continuing the concept of the IPV after finishing research (see 4.3.5). There was a mind-shift from ‘I pay the centre’ to: ‘I can help my child further at home by providing more opportunities for communication’ (see 4.4.4).

4.6.4 The research revealed issues around the involvement of parents and children in ‘planning and learning’:

a. In four out of five centres there was no further involvement of the child or the parent in planning for learning at the centre after contributing a Child-and-Parent Voice through the IPV. Nikau centre was the only centre with very few general learning stories and the only centre where teachers were responding to returned IPVs (at least verbally).

b. There was a general lack of understanding amongst parents what the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulation C13 of involvement of parents in planning for learning is about (MoE, 2011a).

c. An interview with each of the managers after the research as a response to the lack of dialogue between the teachers and the parents gave some further insight in the different perspectives of managers/teachers and parents on parent partnerships (Engeström, 2006).

4.7 Conclusion of the findings

By using the IPV, parents were able to become involved with their child’s learning. They developed their understanding of their child’s learning in terms of appreciating their child’s interest, communication and revisiting learning. Parents also identified more links between the home and the centre. Because of the lack of dialogue however, parents’ newfound understandings have not impacted on the planning and learning at the centre. Power-dynamics and the
implications of the findings for the parents and their children, including teachers’ views, are discussed next. Emerging themes such as parents’ perspectives on their child’s learning, the benefits and the challenges of ‘long day care and education’ and the dilemma for the parent and the child of changing perspectives, are also discussed. Subsequently some benefits and challenges of the use of the IPV with working parents are discussed including the possible role for dialogue. The role of documentation in the light of planning and assessment and Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations is also considered. Lastly, Activity Theory is used to explore power-dynamics, tensions and contradictions between the actions and views of parents and the teachers, including the possible impact on the child, using critical analysis.
Chapter Five

Discussion

5.0 Introduction

The Initiating Parent Voice (IPV) is completed by the parent together with the child before the Learning Story is written to ensure the Child Voice and the Parent Voice are heard first so that these can become part of the teaching-learning process (Whyte, 2010, 2015a, 2015b). This intention of the IPV was shared with the managers of each centre before the research. A copy of the article I wrote in 2010, that explains the concept of the IPV, was also shared with the managers. I asked the managers to respond to the IPV as they do to the Child and Parent Voice in their teaching practice. It was my assumption that the teachers would be involved and respond to the parents and children returning with the IPVs, however this only happened (to some extent) in two out of the five centres. A discussion around child and parent collaboration with the teachers, teacher engagement with the IPV and the role of the documentation in the teaching-learning process is therefore included below.

The summary of the findings of this research (see 4.6.1 to 4.6.4) highlights some aspects of parents’ perspectives and involvement before parents started to use the IPV. These consider aspects of parents’ beliefs about how their child learns and what their role may be versus the teacher’s role. Contrasting beliefs about parents’ role in planning, parent partnerships, links between learning at the centre and at home and the role of dialogue have been discussed under the headings below, using insights from post-structural perspectives and Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987). Taking Activity Theory and post-structural perspectives into account I have considered questions such as:

a. From whose point of view is something said? (Cannella, 1997; Engeström, 1987; Foucault, 2002; MacNaughton, 2005),
b. What is said and from whose authority? (Foucault, 2002),
c. Whose voice is heard and whose voice is not? (Foucault, 2002),
d. What knowledge/information stays hidden for whom?
e. What and whose language is ‘normalising’? (Foucault, 2002),
f. Who is affirmed and who is ‘othered’ by certain discourse? (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000),
g. Whose knowledge is favoured or disqualified? (Gordon & Foucault, 1980),
h. What tensions and contradictions show up in two interacting systems?
i. In what ways has the interaction between two systems expanded learning? (Engeström, 1987),
j. What has stopped learning from expanding?
k. How are discourses for example ‘parent partnerships’ understood differently by teachers and parents? (Cannella, 1997)

In this discussion, managers’ voices are added to show a different perspective. The managers are indicated with a T and the centre name, for example ‘TNikau’. TMatai declined for the data to be used in the analysis. After considering the collaborative activity between the child, parents and potentially, the teachers, and uncovering some tensions and contradictions between parents’ and teachers’ motives, I will look more closely at differing understandings of parent partnerships and the role of documentation in the teaching-learning process.

5.1 Activity Theory: Investigating collaborative activity

Activity Theory originated from Vygotsky’s Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and has been further developed by Leont‘ev (1981, cited in Bozalek et al., 2015) and subsequently by Engeström (1987) to study how Activity Systems and different subjects’ motives interact and impact on each other and ultimately impact on the ‘object-oriented-activity’ (the objective of the subject) and the outcome. Figure 1 is showing how two activity systems work together with a shared goal (object) in mind.
Vygotsky’s theory, which is sometimes referred to as the ‘1st generation Activity Theory’, shows that purposeful, intentional actions that are mediated through one or more cultural tools (for example, art, language, music, machines and other artefacts) lead to higher cognitive functioning (Bozalek et al., 2015). In figure 1 these cultural tools are called ‘instruments’. The top triangle of each activity system in figure 1 shows the mediated interaction between the subject, instruments (cultural tools) and the object. Of specific interest for the discussion of this research project, is how the motives of the subjects in each Activity System impact on ‘object-oriented-activity’ (purposeful action impacting on the outcome), which in turn affects Activity Systems of other subjects they engage with (figure 2). While Vygotsky focuses on individual action, Leont’ev (1981, cited in Bozalek et al., 2015) elaborating on Vygotsky’s theory, looked at collective activity and considered how individual ‘Goal-oriented actions’ and motives impact on collective ‘object-oriented activity’ (outcome), mediated by the tools and conditions in which the activity is carried out. This development is seen as the ‘2nd generation Activity Theory’. Engeström (1987) then considered how (3rd generation Activity Theory) Activity Systems expand through two or more systems interacting together and how possible motives and personal subjectivities impact on a system and each other, showing different points of view (figure 2). The primary focus of an Activity System is the subject, which “acts on the object in order to transform it, using mediating artefacts in order to arrive at specific outcomes” (Bozalek et al., 2015, p. 15). Additional mediating
factors are the ‘rules’ of the ‘community’, the ‘people in the community’, each with their own Activity Systems, and the ‘division of labour’ between the subjects of the community (Engeström, 1987).

Activity Theory is relevant to this research as parents and teachers in this research project appear to have many different understandings and motives when it comes to parent partnerships, leading to contradictions and tensions between the objectives, rules and roles people play (see 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.4.4 and 5.3). The importance of parent partnerships is widely acknowledged in ECE (Duncan et al., 2012; MoE, 2011b, 2011c). Hence, it is warranted to take a closer look at the tensions between teacher and parent motives influencing their Goal-oriented actions in their collaborative object-oriented activity towards the child’s early childhood education.

5.1.1 Different teacher and parent motives for activity, leading to tension and contradiction

Studying two or more interacting Activity Systems can help a researcher identify how activity has expanded and what could help expand the activity and learning further by identifying contradictions and tensions, for example contradictions or tensions between the ‘rules’ and ‘object oriented activity’ and ‘division of labour’.
In the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (MoE, 2011a), the purpose of Parent Voice (subject), is to contribute to and inform the planning (outcome), in collaboration with the teachers (subject), both taking note of the Child’s Voice (object).

The motives and positions of power of the various participants (subjects) can influence the objective they have in mind and therefore cause tensions or even contradictions in the Activity Systems working together (Cannella, 1997; Foucault 2002; Yagamata-Lynch, 2010). The way in which different motives impact on object-oriented activity in each centre is shown through the examples below.

TNikau explains collaboration in the teaching-learning process is about everyone contributing to the story and making the documentation understandable for everyone.

TNikau: A child doing something… we have a discussion on it and we actually do it informally. So I say ‘Hey have you seen that child over there such and such?’ and the teacher will go: ‘Oh yes I saw her do that last Friday and I actually… this is the piece that she did’ or something like that. So that is building up your knowledge. We also go back and check in our portfolios because we have got quite a lot of anecdotal stuff in it. So while it begins as a snippet in time it is actually built up on a whole. So then formally we write it up in a learning story and it goes into their notebooks, which the children here value… they like books with their own pictures and their own story. And we are trying really hard to write the story as if it were a story reading it to the child, you know and we don’t put all the jargon in it, just plain… story.

Although the motive of TNikau is to collaborate with the team, children and parents, it is unclear if the parent (subject) has the same understanding of this process. Some parents in this research project did not understand the objective of the Parent Voice in the portfolio book and may have different motives to the
teachers when they are contributing an entry to the portfolio book (see findings 4.4.3).

In Kauri, Rimu and Matai centres the motive of the teacher writing a Learning Story is to inform the parent (MoE, 1996, 2004a), which causes a contradiction between the ‘division of labour’ (Learning Stories being done solely by the teacher) and the rules (Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations: parents should be involved in planning) with the result that parents are often only contributing summative feedback (Stuart et al., 2008) or not contributing at all (see figure 5).

The portfolio …it already tells you what happened, you know, and he will ask you to tell him: “Mum can you read it for me, what the writing says.” The ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ is only the photo…I ask him: What happened, can you tell me? KauriP2

Parents are seeing the Learning Story as the ‘Teacher’s Voice’ and not as an opportunity to contribute to planning and learning; for example, RimuP4, who said that the portfolios are “more for the teachers”, and KauriP2, who liked the openness of the IPV empowering her child to share their voice. TTawa’s voice, at the end of the research reveals her motive for having the Teacher’s Voice come forward strongly in the Learning Stories, explaining that most Learning Stories that are going in the portfolio are about significant activities that showcase the specific approach of the centre, a motive which is similar to Matai centre. TTawa explains:

These are underlying philosophical things that the parents are very aware of and this is why they have chosen us. So … then there are the individual children’s goals and groups of children … so those are generally things we may not always document, but we talk about them; because we read each other’s stories, we are already aware of those things… so we may talk about those in passing… TTawa

In this example the motive behind the planning is the centre’s objective, more so than the child’s interest.
Another example from this research comes from Matai centre where the manager decided not to share an elaborate Child’s Voice that was documented at the centre because of the sharp contrast with the (limited) Child Voice on the IPV on the same activity (Whyte, 2015a). The ‘motive’ for this decision was to avoid discontent from the parent. In this example, the teacher’s motive results in a lack of dialogue, which decreases opportunities to learn (expansive transformation) for the parent.

5.1.2 A lack of dialogue stops learning from expanding

“Expansive transformation can be achieved when the ‘object’ and the ‘motive’ of the activity are re-conceptualized in response to [such] contradictions” (Engeström, 2001, cited in Bozalek et al., 2015, p. 36) for example as a result of a self-review in a centre. In this research ‘expansive transformation’ happened as a result of interactions between the child and the parent but there was a lack of ‘expansion’ of the learning beyond the child-parent interactions, due to a limited teacher-response to the parent (see: figure 5). A teacher-manager’s voice:

I think it [the Learning Story] tends to be a summative rather than formative form of assessment.

The formative assessment is happening in the teachers’ heads or practice. TKauri

In addition to the contradiction caused by the division of labour (the Learning Story being written solely by the teacher), there is a further tension, caused by the motives different subjects (teachers and parents) have for the ‘object-oriented-activity’ (Learning Stories): the teacher-manager’s motive for writing Learning Stories is to inform the parent about the activities that have been taking place in the centre, while the parents’ aspiration is to get specific and current information about their own child, which parents are not able to get from the child (see 4.2.1 to 4.2.4). Looking at the findings, one can see that the information parents are receiving is not current and specific enough (for example RimuP2 and 4 see 4.2.1; KauriP2, see 4.2.2). Informal conversations
between the teachers and parent do not provide this more specific information either as RimuP2 indicates:

*I do talk to the teachers about how we did this over the weekend and we quite enjoyed this… that sort of thing… yeah, in general rather than specific.* RimuP2

Findings section 4.4.4 indicates that parents would like more opportunities for dialogue. Harper and Pelletier (2010) similarly found that parents need opportunities to communicate about their child’s learning with the teacher, especially when English is the family’s second language, because of the key role parents play in their child’s education. The motive of the teacher for asking the parent for a Parent Voice is often unclear to the parent in this research, because the Learning Story is already telling the parent what the teachers have observed (see 2.4.5, 4.3.1 and 4.3.1).

The IPV on the other hand, increases the child’s and parents’ *agency* because this gives them an extra tool they can use in sharing their voice (Whyte, 2015a, 2015b; 2.2.1). By collaborating and focusing on the same goal-oriented activity/outcome, the child and the parent experience ‘expansive transformation’ provided the parent stays on the same page as the child. In the IPV examples where the parent changes the conversation to *their* focus (for example: TawaP1 in IPV number 2 and MataiP3 in IPV number 3) the child switches off and ends the conversation. While with Learning Stories the division of labour is mostly with the teacher, the IPV shifts the division of labour to the parent and child (see IPV number 4), who ‘initiate’ the dialogue about the learning when this is taking place before the Learning Story is written (Whyte, 2015a). Without further dialogue there is no further expansion of this ‘Activity’ taking place in the centre, where the child spends a large part of his/her day.
5.2 The Parent and the Child: Two activity systems working together: Learning by expanding

5.2.1 The parent as the person ‘on call' versus the teacher as the ‘expert'

In this research, parents saw themselves as a resource for the child: being readily available at any time their child needed their help (Halden, 1991). The child was seen by parents in terms of ‘being’ and learning through observing desired behaviour modelled by the parent (child as recipient). Parents also exposed their child to a range of different experiences. The teacher was seen by many parents as an ‘expert’ in their child’s development and education and ‘providing new learning experiences’ were seen as an important role of the centre by the parents (see Rimu, Matai and Kauri findings). Parents also looked at the teacher for cues of how to be with their child (KauriP2, 4.2.2 and 4.4.1).

Some parents wanted centre experiences to be different from home (RimuP3). This view led them to devalue their own observations and understanding of their child’s learning at home (TawaP1), and in doing so were diminishing their own potential to be a ‘resource’ for their child. Here the teacher is ‘affirmed’ by the parent and the parent is ‘othered’ by parents themselves. With the teacher in the position of ‘authority’, teachers’ discourse becomes ‘normalising’ language, which creates an unequal power relationship (Foucault, 2002; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; see 2.4.4, 2.4.5 and discussion 4.4.3). Rich learning experiences from home may become marginalized, for example one child (KauriC3) was being cautioned by teachers for climbing a meter up into a tree, while this child was encouraged to climb much higher by KauriP3 in the weekend. Another example was TawaP1 who is recognised that her child was making connections to the alphabet while she was observing a hair in the shower, but was not valuing her own role in her child’s learning (see finding 4.1.2). These parents did not share the learning experience from home with the teachers.
5.2.2 Reification and Participation

By working full-time, the main caregiver finds herself in a position of tension, unable to be ‘on call’ and ‘in the moment’ with her child at just any point of time during the day (Halden, 1991). This role has shifted to the teacher, at least for a large part of the child’s day. The parent is fulfilling the role of ‘care-provider’: feeding, bathing and putting the child to sleep, as TawaP1 clarifies:

*My thinking is always ‘the next step ahead’ as opposed to being ‘present’ in that moment…* (see 4.5.1) TawaP1.

Wenger (1998) explains that in order for the parent to be able to develop and maintain an ‘identity of participation’ (which is linked to a feeling of self-efficacy), parents need ‘reification’ to participate and the participation itself needs to have an actual impact for it to be real.

Figure 3 (below) shows how a lack of involvement of parents in their children’s learning and planning results in contradiction and tension (indicated by ‘Z’) between the rules (Early Childhood Regulations) and the division of labour between the teacher and the parent, because the rules indicate there is a role for the parent in the planning while in reality the planning is driven by the ‘Teacher’s Voice’ (see 4.2.1 for example).

![Figure 3: The position of the ‘Teacher as expert, showing tensions (‘Z’) between the learning story as a tool, the rules and ‘division of labour’.

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With the ‘child’s learning’ as the ‘object-oriented activity’ in this example, less involvement of the parent in their child’s learning and a subsequent drop in parent confidence are serious consequences of the position of the teacher as the ‘expert’ as it is the parent who stays with the child throughout their development, and is ultimately the person the child falls back on (Smith, 2013).

5.2.3 Expansive learning depending on real participation

The IPV can give parents a tool that promotes involvement in their child’s learning and can potentially include parents in planning, providing reification and participation as shown in figure 4 (Whyte, 2010), as long as teachers engage in dialogue about the learning with the parent. In a different research project carried out (independently from my research) by West End Kindergarten in Palmerston North during 2013-2015, parent involvement increased from 25% of parents contributing a Parent Voice in the Learning Stories to 80% of parents returning an IPV, which was called a ‘Learning Snapshot’ in the research project (Hunt, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). Teachers in this kindergarten found that opportunities for intentional learning grew for the children, and learning expanded for parents, children and teachers through collaborative working relationships (Hunt, 2015a, 2015b). When the teacher does not invite parent-and-child’s participation in the planning however, the Parent Voice contribution loses its potential. This was the case in four out of five centres in the current research project. Without the follow-up, the IPV, as a tool for parent involvement, loses its effect, at least in terms of the involvement in the planning cycle of the centre (Whyte, 2015a, 2015b). This impedes the development of a ‘learning community’ because a learning community requires mutual engagement and joint activity (Wenger, 1998).

A teacher-manager’s voice:

_The parents… I find that parents are not forthcoming, because they respect… or often feel that you are the teacher, so therefore you should be taking the lead. They don’t want to be taking the lead: they don’t…they are having… their perspective: I have not_
trained as a teacher: I don’t come in to... when the plumber comes to my house I don’t tell them how to fix the toilet, so when I come to the centre: I don’t tell you how to be a teacher. TKauri

This teacher-manager’s voice positions the parent as the ‘consumer’, a receiver of goods, and does not extend an opportunity to the parent to give suggestions and feedback on decisions for planning and learning. The parents’ and child’s voices are not heard (Cannella, 1997; Foucault, 2002). Teachers’ and parents’ differing perspectives on what is important for learning and development, for example the parents’ view of the child as ‘being’ and the teachers’ strong focus on ‘learning’ (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013), are not talked about, which diminishes parents’ ability to take part in planning and learning if this difference is not addressed (see figure 3). Hughes and MacNaughton (2000) consider the parent as marginalised if the Parent Voice is treated as ‘supplementing’ rather than being part of the planning (see literature review 2.0.2). With limited collective activity between the parents-and-child and the centre, possibilities for mutual engagement and new learning to evolve in the centre are reduced (Bozalek et al., 2015; Engeström, 1987; Wenger, 1998).

They [IPVs] were interesting but I don’t know if they added to what we already knew. TKauri

I think it was lovely; they sat down together, they talked about it... uhm... it was... that would have been a nice thing for them to do together... and we would... so... that’s a good thing, but in terms of the feedback of actually feeding back into planning it wasn’t that useful. TTawa

Barge and Loges (2011), who investigated parent participation in the child’s learning from a teacher, child’s and parents’ point of view in six middle schools, found in contrast to the managers’ perspectives above, that parents would like to have real involvement and provide feedback that feeds into the programme planning, whereas the teachers themselves would like the parents to take on the role of supporting the teachers. This perspective on active participation by the parents is comparable to the recommendations of the Taskforce report
(MoE, 2011b), which would prefer parents to assume a greater responsibility for their child’s education and the Māori view of ‘whānaungatanga’, where the child is part of the whānau and the whānau a part of the child; hence the parent is consulted before planning for learning (MoE, 2011c).

5.2.4 Expansive transformation increasing parents’ self-efficacy and agency

Despite the lack of collaborative activity between parents and teachers in four out of five centres, the on-going collective activity between parent and child has changed parents’ perspectives on how the child learns in this research study (4.3.3 for example). Lektorsky (2009) sees collective activity as ‘an active agent’, through which the learning expands. By engaging with their child in a purposeful conversation through the IPV, which involves listening to their child’s Voice, new learning emerges from the interactions between mother and child during the prolonged engagement with the IPV (figure 4). Parents gain new insights through the collaborative activity of listening to and communicating with their child about the photo on the IPV (Engeström, 2006; 4.3.2). As Yamagata-Lynch (2010) explains: “Activity emerges through a reciprocal process that transforms the subject, the object and the relationship between the two and their context” (p. 21).
Figure 4: Interacting Activity systems of the parent and the child showing the change through the interaction with child when the parent saw the child as a capable communicator; child’s interests seen as important (Collective activity as an active agent).

The IPV increases the parents’ and child’s agency and self-efficacy, as this gives them an extra tool they can use in sharing their voice (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins and Closson (2005) affirm that the parent needs a sense of self-efficacy to become part of their child’s learning. Teachers can promote this by creating a role (identity of participation) for the parent, and providing clarity on how they can be involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Wenger, 1998). Moreover, parent involvement will increase, when they are feeling the outcome will be positive (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

The importance of dialogue and collaboration is emphasized by Dewey (1916, cited in Biesta, 2013), who talked about the need to not only be knowledgeable about the common goal but also have a genuine interest and investment in the conjoint activity by all participants, for real participation to eventuate. Biesta (2013) however, also points out that Derrida reminds us to look at what has been ‘left out’ (see 2.4.3 and 2.4.4). A teacher who is aware of what has been excluded can bring in new perspectives to the child’s education, which expands learning. Biesta (2013) argues that ultimately each teacher has the
responsibility to bring something new to the education that was not already there. Parents (and children) in this research however, gained confidence and self-efficacy by trialling what kind of questions worked best themselves and by noticing their child’s ability to talk about their learning experiences in the centre, using wait time and listening to the Child Voice (see 4.3.2, 4.3.3 and 4.6.5).

While all parents shared that their child could not tell them much about their learning at the beginning of the research (for example 4.2.1 to 4.2.5) and four out of five centres are showing no Child Voice or Parent Voice in the Learning Stories in the timeframe of one year (see figure 5), all IPVs contained a Child Voice. Carr, et al. (2015) coin learner agency as the ability and willingness to take ownership of learning, something the parents in this research were certainly indicating about their child’s involvement with the IPV (see findings 4.3.5 and 4.6.1). McGuigan and Salmon (2004) also suggest that children are better able to recall the things they themselves have said in a discussion. This is because the child gets the chance to experience the event twice in a sense (called ‘two-spaced exposures’) in ‘real life’ and in conversation about the event (Bahrick, 2000; Dempster, 1996; MacFarland, Rodes & Frey, 1979, cited in McGuigan & Salmon, 2004). The parent is able to scaffold the child during the dialogue (MataiP3; Whyte 2015b; 4.3.2). A positive and affirming response from the teacher/manager expands and transforms the learning even further:

Yes parents are really excited to be asked to contribute to their children. And then they come back you read it and they say: “Oh… look at this!” yeah…and then they come back and you read it and you go: Oh! I did not realise that’s what they were doing… and the parents go…- They are really pleased that they can get us to understand their child far more than what we have. TNikau
5.3 Parent partnerships

5.3.1 Differences in parents’ and teachers’ views on partnerships

The Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (2011a) do not give a definition of ‘parent partnerships’ but advise teachers to involve parents when they are making decisions concerning the child’s learning (see 2.0.1: literature review). Similarly, Te Whāriki indicates that parents are “part of the assessment and evaluation of the curriculum as well as of children’s learning and development” (MoE, 1996, p. 30). Regular dialogue about the child’s learning could therefore be expected. Yet at the same time, Te Whāriki positions the purpose of assessment as providing information about children’s learning and development to families. Parents in this research found that this did not lead to inclusion of their views into the planning because the teacher has already communicated what learning was happening in the Learning Story (see discussion 5.2.1). In fact, parents from four out of five centres involved in this research did not experience any communication from the teacher in response to the IPV (see figure 5). These parents experienced a lack of dialogue prior to the research as well as when giving feedback to the teachers:

Nobody commented on my comments (see 4.4.4). KauriP3

If you want the teacher talk to you: you need to ask them. Otherwise, they are really busy. KauriP2 (see 5.4.1)

In this example, parents did not see it as a right that the teacher informs them of their child’s day away from home. An interview I held with the managers at the end of the research reveals that the teacher-managers on the contrary, think the parents are well informed. For example, TKauri relayed that the teachers are putting a special effort in to inform parents of their child’s learning during the day, giving suggestions on how the parent could follow up on a special interest of the child:

I think adding to learning is if we keep the parents informed… like: ‘KauriC has been in the sandpit’ and then they can have a
conversation or we say things like: ‘He has taken a real interest in… can you take him… here’. (TKauri - End interview)

This however, is keeping decision-making reserved for the teachers, which perpetuates the unequal power relationship between teachers and parents (see 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). Having the teacher make the decision where to take their child puts the authority with the teacher, ignoring the knowledge the parent has (Foucault, 2002; Gordon & Foucault, 1980). Also, while teachers believed that they were providing the parent and child with something specific to talk about after pick-up time, parents indicated this information was too general and not opening up any discussion with their child about their ‘learning in the moment’ (see 4.5.1 and 4.5.3). Parents and teachers in Rimu centre have a similar experience and contrasting views on the quality of the information being shared. In addition Rimu parents indicated that the Learning Stories did not provide them with recent information and/or an opportunity to contribute their ideas about planning:

*I like the book, yes, but sometimes it is not filled in for months.*

RimuP4.1

Rimu centre manager settles on:

*We get a certain amount (of Parent Voices)… it is not huge; we get a minimal response… so I suppose they are at least informed and they are invited to contribute for what it’s worth.*  TRimu

### 5.3.2 Child and Parent involvement in Learning Stories

In three out of five centres none of the children involved in the research had a Child Voice documented in any of their Learning Stories from the past year (verbal or non-verbal). In the other two centres most children contributed their voice to some of the Learning Stories. Nearly all the parents in this research
shared that their child was not able to tell them much about their day in the centre, which left them with very limited information about their Child’s perspectives on their day in the centre. Parents also did not get enough specific information out of informal conversations with the teachers. With the number of individualised Learning Stories below five stories for each child per year in three of the centres, this means that for many parents in full-time employment in this research there was not sufficient information coming through to them about their child’s learning and development (see figure 5). This matches ERO findings on parent involvement (ERO, 2013, 2015) following the research by Stuart et al. (2008), showing no evidence of family context at all in 73% of the 967 assessment items viewed. Only two of the parents in the first three centres provided a Parent Voice, which was mostly summative in nature.

![Learning stories per child](image)

**Figure 5:** Learning stories per child, written over the past year, showing number of Child Voices and Parent Voices, whether the photos on the IPV were relevant to the current interest of the child and Parent-Teacher dialogue as a response to the IPV.
In terms of parent partnerships, Rimu centre highlighted informal conversations and relationships, which was viewed as a strong point of the centre by parents and teachers alike. Despite this, parents shared in the ‘end-interview’ that they would like more specific information about their child (see 4.2.2).

You don’t want to uhm... teachers are... generally busy... when you come and you don’t want to have to take up their time when they... got other things to do... RimuP1.2

Dialogue with teachers (informal talk) is not specific enough. RimuP2.2

Although Learning Stories were appreciated as a record of their child at the centre, parents were viewing the Learning Stories as the ‘Teacher’s Voice’, which did not provide an opportunity to be involved in decision making or be part of the child’s learning at the centre. When asked about their role in planning, none of the fifteen parent-participants identified the Parent Voice as contributing to planning (see 4.4.2) and only parents of Nikau centre had a sense that the Learning Story notebook was more than just the ‘Teacher’s Voice’. Overall however, parents seem to have a lack of understanding of their role in planning, for example, NikauP1 said she ‘randomly contributed a Parent Voice to the portfolio book (see 4.4.2) and NikauP3 had a strong belief the teacher does the programme planning since they are the experts (see 4.4.1).

5.3.3 Parent involvement: whose responsibility is it?

Asking about parent-teacher dialogues, parents were not too sure if this was part of the teachers’ job or not (TawaP1, 4.2.4 and 4.4.3). They generally thought teachers were too busy (4.4.1, 4.4.4, 4.5.1) and that it was “probably not part of their obligation” (KauriP3, 4.5.2). It was surprising to find managers giving the same reason for a lack of Parent-Teacher dialogue: “Parents are too busy” (see end interviews with centre managers TTawa and TRima, p. 15 and TKauri p. 16 of managers’ interviews). Barge and Loges (2011) explain the role of parents in their child’s education lessened in the early 1900’s when qualified teachers became responsible for curriculum decisions and parents were viewed
as assisting teachers in their role. Barge and Loges (2011) found that although parents were assuming a 'supporting' role, at the same time parents signalled that they wanted to play a more constructive role in their child’s education.

From a New Zealand government’s perspective, parents should be encouraged to take more responsibility for their child’s education (MoE, 2011b). The ‘Directions for Assessment in New Zealand’ (DANZ) report that advises the government on policies around assessment in primary and secondary schools, indicates it wants to grow ‘assessment capability’ of teachers, children and parents (Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins & Reid, 2009). Teachers are told to invite parents to contribute to assessment by informing the parents about the learning goals. Whether this really empowers parents to contribute to their child’s assessment is unclear as at the same time the report warns: “the notion of ‘reporting to’ parents implies a power relationship that stands in the way of meaningful, effective partnership and dialogue” (Absolum et al., 2009, p. 29). A position paper on assessment, reflecting on the DANZ report, suggests that parents “should be able to contribute information” about the child’s learning through meaningful two-way conversations (MoE, 2011d). Parents in this research seem a long way off from being ‘assessment capable’. Parents are seeing teachers as experts (see 4.4.1 and Teachers’ Voice under 5.3.2), teachers do not have time to talk to the parents (TKauri’s newsletter under 4.4.4. for example) and parents are not aware of how their ideas could contribute to the planning. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, cited in Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) suggest, in order to promote parent involvement in assessment, teachers need to create a role for the parent that enables real participation and ensure that the parent feels invited to participate, considering what motivates parents to be involved and making it relevant for them. It is not clear in this research how teacher-managers see their responsibility in this.

TKauri: I think that sometimes there is so much focus put on this parent voice that I don’t think necessarily needs to be there…I think parents… I think if parents do have something to say, they bring it, but I sometimes think we work so hard to get something that we might not necessarily… need. I sometimes struggle to understand why there is such a focus on…
If parents have a lack of understanding of parent partnerships in ECE and are not invited to share their ideas, how can they gain a deep understanding of the participation process (Absolum et al., 2009) in the formal schooling years of their child? Curiously, many parents place the cause for the lack of dialogue and involvement in their child’s education with themselves, indicating they should be the ones to ‘step up’ (see 4.4.4 and 4.5.3). MacNaughton (2005) and Cannella (1997) remind us to consider different points of view and assumptions parents and teachers may have (see 2.4.3). If the creative use of knowledge is becoming more and more important in the 21st century as Bolstad et al. (2012) point out (see literature review 2.3.4), teachers need to encourage learning to continue past the school gates, which means teachers need to invite and support parents to be involved with their child’s learning and enable learning for parents as well.

5.3.4 Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system

I found in my research that parents and children enjoyed discovering links between learning at the centre and at home (4.2.1 and 4.4.1). The Ministry of Education (1996) urges teachers to make connections between the centre and the home-environment to enhance children’s learning experiences however, in reality the attention continues to be on learning at the centre (see Teacher’s Voices 5.3.3). Coming from a Māori world view Arapera Royal Tangaere (2000, cited in MoE, 2004b) reminds us that the family should be seen as one of the centre’s micro-systems; not as a separate micro-system that is linked, yet removed from the centre:
“If we visit Bronfenbrenner’s ecology model, he talked about the home and the centre as being two distinctive microsystems of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Both were separate. In ‘Kōhanga Reo’ the two microsystems must overlap” (p. 5).

Parents have a right to understand what the child does at the centre and how this connects to home (Tātaiako, MoE, 2011c). Current documentation and two-way communication is essential in this process (MoE, 1996), otherwise when this is not happening the child becomes the messenger between centre and home, which is obviously not an easy job:

Every time I ask him… back in the car I always ask him… ‘What did you learn from here?’ and ‘Who do you play with?’ and ‘What you are playing?’…He just said: “I’m happy here and I sing a song… I jumping on the box…” (laughs) KauriP2.1

Another issue that emerged from this research was how teachers responded when noticing a gap in parents’ understanding of what helps the child in their learning. In my article (Whyte, 2015a) I have provided an example where the teacher decided not to share her understanding of the child’s learning with the parent to avoid striking a discord with the parent. It is the manager of the centre who decided on what and how much information to share with the parent, which means there is an imbalance in the power relationship (Foucault, 2002; 2.4.2). When dialogue is avoided by the teachers, this could have an impact on the parent involvement with their child’s learning at home as well, because the ecosystems the child and parent are involved in are closely connected and the historical and cultural context of the centre can influence caregiving and education roles the parent traditionally has at home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rogoff, 2003). It is not until teachers are creating space for dialogue and real participation for parents that parents can rebuild their identity of teacher/guide and take on some of the responsibility for assessment and planning the Ministry of Education is advocating for (MoE, 2011a; Wenger, 1998). A ‘pedagogy of
listening’ is important as people can have different understandings and beliefs (Derrida, 1982 cited in Biesta, 2013; see 2.4.3).

5.3.5 Strengthening ‘primary dyads’

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that a ‘primary dyad’ is a strong relationship between two people, a mother and a child for example, that provides a powerful motivational force for learning and development, both in the presence and in the absence of the person with whom this dyad is formed. The ‘primary dyad’ is formed over time by ‘joint activity’. Teachers who are engaging in dialogue about the learning with the child and the parent are promoting the ‘joint activity’ between parent and child, and are helping ‘primary dyads’ to form and become stronger, which strengthens the learning both at the centre and at home. The ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ is an example of a ‘joint activity’ that reinforces the parent, child and teacher partnership. When parents are seeing learning experiences at home as separate from the centre, these experiences can become devalued and less important.

In Bronfenbrenner’s theory, what matters most is how the physical and interpersonal environment is perceived by a person and if this person can change or influence these environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is more likely when there is active involvement. The child as well as the parent has separate and overlapping microsystems, but because teachers are concentrating on teaching and learning in the centre, I believe that the part of the micro-system that involves the parents’ own learning tends to be ignored in early childhood education. In terms of ‘parent-teacher’ interactions, which are part of the meso-system, teachers mainly focus on learning that is going on for the child at the centre and parent involvement at the centre, not parents’ perceptions on and involvement with learning at home (MoE, 2004a). In order to enhance the parents’ self-efficacy, teachers need to support the parent in initiating and continuing learning at home (Whyte, 2015a). The parents’ role needs to involve real participation, which means having the potential to have an impact on the planning and learning, which is more likely when the Parent Voice (Initiating Parent Voice) is obtained before the Learning Story and when the
Child Voice and the Parent Voice are followed up in programme planning. It is the purposeful, active engagement of the parent with their child that makes a long-lasting difference in the parent’s involvement in their child’s learning (Smith, 2013). I maintain that the meso-system should not only be about communication between the parent and teacher about the child, but a conscious and purposeful allocation of roles involving parent-child interactions that encompass more than just making resources, sharing information or a skill, or fundraising. The parent’s perception of their ability to support their child in their learning and an understanding of how this contributes to their child’s learning (see 4.4.3 and 4.4.4) is a crucial component of their role of being actively involved with their child’s learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

5.3.6 Making links between learning at the centre and at home

Although general Learning Stories are giving parents an overview of the activities at the centre, this does not provide parents with specific information about their child, something parents would like more of (see 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 4.4.4). It does not promote parents’ understanding of the importance of responding to the child’s interest for their learning nor does it promote ‘links to home’. Reporting on ‘one-off’ activities does not help the child to tell their parent more. Out of 78 IPVs, ten out of fifteen IPVs with a limited Child Voice showed a photo that was either unclear or not a specific interest of the child (for the number of IPVs showing a specific interest of the child compare the blue and red lines in figure 6). This weakens the meso-system as it is harder for the child to share what is happening at the centre and subsequently harder for the parent to help foster connections with experiences from home and share their excitement about the learning with their child. The danger is also that the parent may feel like an outsider when it comes to their child’s education and less sharing will take place (Felstiner et al., 2006; 4.4.4, 4.5.2). With less of the learning connecting to the family, the culture/context of the family can become marginalized (Gordon & Foucault, 1980; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; Rogoff, 2003). The established culture/context of the centre dominates, with the child having to fit in with the centre culture. It is the teachers who are making
the curriculum decisions rather than the child or parent, whose knowledge comes secondary (see 2.4.5; Cannella, 1997; Gordon & Foucault, 1980; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000).

Figure 6: The number of ‘links to home’ identified by the parent (green line) out of all the IPVs that showed a specific interest (red line). No ‘links to home’ were identified by the parents when the IPV did not show a specific interest. All IPVs contained a Child Voice. The number of ‘elaborate Child Voices’ on the IPV has been indicated by the light-blue line. The number of parents involved with the research: Rimu: four parents over six months; Matai: three parents over six months; Kauri: three parents over six months; Nikau: four parents over four months and Tawa: one parent over four months.

All IPVs showing a ‘link to home’ identified by the parent, were IPVs that were about a specific interest of the child. IPVs that were not about a special interest did not show any ‘link to home’. Therefore, the table illustrates that when the IPV photo represented a specific interest (red line), a ‘link to home’ was often identified by the parent (green line), except in Nikau centre where two out of four parent-participants thought they just needed to document the Child Voice and not the Parent Voice (despite the explanation of the IPV at the start of the research), and one other parent-participant who asked their child very closed
questions. The parent-participant in Tawa centre also asked closed questions, which led to a lack of Child Voice, despite the fact that there was a link to home and specific interest of the child showing in the photo. Further dialogue with the teachers could support the parent to ask more open-ended questions. Because Tawa and Nikau centres came on board later in the research, parents did not get the follow up call parents of other centres received during the research from the researcher. It is possible that the teachers/managers of the centres did not follow up because they did not want to interfere with the research.

An interesting finding is that when the photo on the IPV was identifying a specific interest of the child, the child’s story was more elaborate (for example in Nikau centre this was often the case, see example in appendix D). Nikau centre was the only centre where parents did not mention that they would like more specific information about their child from the teachers. As the table below shows, Nikau parents and children have significantly more Child and Parent Voices showing in current Learning Stories. TNikau explains that teachers and parents in this centre see the documentation as collaborative: children, parents and teachers are contributing to the portfolio/note-book collaboratively and teachers are making a conscious effort to pick up information from the parents they can add to the child’s note-book:

There could be 3 different staff members picking up three different things with the parent…and while we put them together, the parent might not know that that all becomes part of it. TNikau

There are many examples (see figure 6) where an IPV contains links to home, for example, the boat story NikauP3 (see 5.5.4), the cooking interest of child MataiP1, and the interest in rockets, NikauP4, see appendix D). There are many more examples, however none of these have a clear, documented planning for further learning by the teachers (see figure 5). Carr and Lee (2012) indicate making links is crucial for learning for the child (see 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). When this does not happen, the child misses out on incremental learning and the parent also misses out on witnessing the excitement of discovering new things at this amazing stage in the child’s life (see 4.2.3 for example).
5.4 The role of documentation in the teaching-learning process

5.4.1 The ‘transmission model’ of sharing information threatening formative assessment

In this research study four out of five centre managers saw the purpose of documenting Learning Stories as ‘informing the parent of activities the child had been involved in at the centre’. Only one centre manager saw documentation as a collaborative activity by teachers, children and parents. Although socio-cultural assessment in early childhood education is formative (MoE, 2004a), documentation in this research was showing mostly a ‘transmission’ model of sharing information about learning instead. In the discussion above (5.1.2 and 5.3.2) one manager explained that for her, documentation is more summative than formative:

*It is used more for teacher-to-parent, so the parent knows what the child is learning or what they are doing, what we have been doing and how that is of benefit to their child.* TKauri

Looking at the literature, Carr et al. (2015, p.18) state that “when teachers are making decisions about ‘what now’ and ‘what next’, an assessment is designed to ‘inform’ the teaching and for discussions with families and learners”. This could lead teachers to believe a ‘transmission model’ helps the parent to become involved. Barge and Loges (2011) explain that in the ‘transmission model’ of assessment the parent is informed of ‘the learning that has taken place’ by the teacher. Examples of assessment provided by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2004a) also lean towards a transmission model of information sharing (see 2.1.2 and 5.3.3) by advocating Learning Stories need to be detailed in order to help the parent to contribute a voice (MoE, 2004b). Parent participants in this research however, have indicated that the transmission model does not offer enough opportunity for real participation (see discussion 5.3.3).

While Absolum et al. (2009, p. 29) point out that ‘one-way’ information hinders
parent involvement, at the same time they report that teachers are required to tell parents what the “priorities for learning” are, putting the ownership of assessment for and of learning back onto the teacher. Absolum et al. (2009) explain: “For parents to support their children’s learning they need quality information about where their children are at, what progress they have made and what the priorities for learning are” (p. 29). In contrast, Harris and Goodall (2008) have found that “parental engagement in children’s learning in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement” (p. 277). It is unclear how parents can grow a sense of self-efficacy and ownership when the focus of information sharing about the learning is not on the child at home and the parent’s learning in general.

5.4.2 Documentation as an ‘active agent’

In the literature review I have discussed how documentation can be seen as an ‘active agent’ (see 2.2.1). The photo on the IPV for example can generate a number of responses, leading to new directions of learning (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Some parent participants noted the responses of their child surprised them because of their level of recall and imagination, including stories that were not directly related to the photo or centre routines (see 4.3.3). While teachers saw this as ‘not useful’ (see 5.2.2) and not fitting in with the centre programme, parents shared that to them this was very informing and they enjoyed the information shared by their child (see 4.3.3). Also, while the teachers saw the IPV coming back late as problematic, many of the child’s and family’s interests can still be ‘on-going’ months later (for example: IPV on the baby interest (see 4.5.2); IPV number 3: interest in building, and number 4 on tractors (appendix D), to name a few). As discussed in the findings chapter, the most ‘intra-active’ value of a photo was noted where the photo is clear and showing a significant interest of the child (see 4.5.2).

When teacher dialogue follows a conversation between the child and the parent, which is the case in the Reggio Emilia approach, children and parents are more likely to form new understandings and become involved in decision-making concerning the curriculum (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006). The
purpose of documentation in Reggio Emilia is to invite open discussion and interpretation through which the child becomes a critical thinker. This involves a ‘pedagogy of listening’ where children, teachers and parents explore children’s meaning making in multiple ways (Lenz Taguchi, 2000 cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). However, in the current research project, instead of adopting ‘democratic practice’ and collaborating with children and parents on the teaching-learning process (see 2.2.1), many of the centres were choosing to mainly report on general centre activities (see discussion 5.1.1).

One manager’s view was that the teachers know the children really well and work closely together with the children and team to decide what to focus on next. The Parent Voice was not always invited in:

TKauri: I think that sometimes there is so much focus put on this Parent Voice that I don’t think necessarily needs to be there…I think parents... I think if parents do have something to say, they bring it, but I sometimes think we work so hard to get something that we might not necessarily… need.

Parents in this research however, have clearly indicated they want more ‘opportunities to talk’ with the teachers about their child’s learning (see 4.3.4). Documentation that reports on activities (assessment of learning) is less likely to function as an active agent because it is summative assessment. They do not invite parents to contribute their ideas to the ‘what next’. Hence parents are seeing the IPV as something that is just for them and the child, and not something that informs the planning (see 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). While the IPV as ‘an active agent’ could potentially open up many opportunities for dialogue, these were not taken up in this research.

5.4.3 The role of the teacher in encouraging 3-way partnerships:

Sharing the division of labour, ‘documenting’ the Child’s Voice

By not responding to the Child and Parent Voice in the IPV, Felstiner et al. (2006) would argue that centre managers in this research are acting as ‘gate-
keepers’, which means that managers are using their position of power to make a decision to not enter the 3-way partnership, thus devaluing the Child and Parent Voice contribution to assessment and planning. The ‘teacher-motive’ behind this can be a particular centre culture or approach (see 5.4.2), lack of time and perceiving parents as not having time (see 5.3.1 and 5.3.3), misunderstandings of parents’ aspirations and a lack of understanding of Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations. Research by Lynda Hunt (2015b), reporting on a separate 2-year research project on the use of the IPV (re-named ‘Learning Snapshots’ in Lynda’s research), shows that teachers do gain many new insights into the child’s understandings and prior knowledge, leading to more intentional teaching when they enter into the dialogue about the learning with the child and the parent. Parents in my research and also in Lynda’s research found that the child was able to give them detailed descriptions about their learning and were capable of self-reflection. Lynda indicated that the IPV/Learning Snapshots promoted a ‘3-way partnership’ and “encouraged all parties to share information on a deeper and more meaningful level” (Hunt, 2015b). Having a record of the Child Voice and indication of the parent about the connections to experiences from home also enables the child to revisit what they said about their learning and build on to beginning ‘working theories’ (see 4.3.3 and 4.3.4; Carr & Lee, 2012). The closest to a 3-way partnership in the current research project was TNikau who sees children and parents as equally contributing to the documentation:

TNikau: The really important thing is, is having one portfolio, one note-book, where all that stuff goes to, and that it can be re-visited is the key to the whole lot.

Witnessing the lack of parent understanding on 3-way partnerships (see 4.4.4) and their preference for some guidance by the teachers, there is some way to go in achieving a more equal distribution of the division of labour providing real opportunities for parents to be involved in their child’s education at the centre (Whyte, 2015a). Aside from parents taking on a part of the ‘labour’, the IPV provided many opportunities for the children to engage in self-assessment and initiate new learning. I was surprised by one 2 year old who approached me on my visit in the centre after the research, asking me if she could have another
photo to tell her parents about it (she recognised me as I had done the parent interviews at the centre). NikauT (teacher) promised to organise another photo for her.

5.4.4 The lack of Parent and Child Voice in centre documentation

Similar to the findings by Stuart et al. (2008) and the Education Review Office (2013), there was a lack of Child and Parent Voice in the Learning Stories in four out of five centres in this research project. A high number of general Learning Stories, in comparison to Learning Stories that identify an individual interest, is also making it more difficult for the parents to contribute how learning is connecting to experiences from home, which is important as this gives teachers a deeper understanding of the Child Voice. Barblett and Maloney (2010) found that “including the voice of the child is largely overlooked as a point of reference” (p. 16). With all IPVs providing a Child Voice, the IPV can provide real participation, using the parent as a resource, which matches their view of themselves as a parent (see 4.1.2). Documenting the Child Voice on the IPV, reifies the parent’s participation, which leads to real participation if this is fed into the teaching-learning process by the teacher (Whyte, 2015a). Although many parents see the teacher as the expert, the Initiating Parent Voice shows the child and the parent are ‘experts’ in their own right and that they have unique knowledge and ability to contribute to the understanding of the child’s interest, which can have a positive impact on a centre’s effectiveness in responding to the individual child’s learning (Whyte, 2015b).

In contrast to parent-participants indicating they would love a more active role in planning and more specific information about their child (see 4.2.1), TRimu states in the end-interview of the research:

*The parents are busy and it’s hard to get their ‘buy in’.*

At odds with this, parents completed twenty IPVs altogether in this centre, none of which were responded to by the teachers. About the lack of documentation of individual interests, including a Child and Parent Voice TRimu says:
We focus on being there for the children...to the detriment of self-review and documentation and I'd like to be good at all of it but ... but that's a matter of prioritising and that's how it is. I believe in prioritising. TRimu

TKauri has a similar reason for the lack of Child Voice in the Learning Stories. She explains that while the Child Voice is taken into account into the planning by asking the children what questions they have about the Dinosaurs for example, this is not often being documented as this does not work very well for the teachers while they are busy with the children.

We don't write down the child's actual voice a... lot; sometimes some teachers do but ... it's so hard to... you know... so you don't tend to see: 'X said...' or 'Y said ...' uhm... the idea of writing them with the children on the floor... doesn't seem to work very well ... TKauri

TKauri's perspective on parents, positions the teachers as solely in charge of the teaching-learning process (see also 5.1.2):

They don't want to be taking the lead: they don't ... they are having... their perspective: 'I have not trained as a teacher'. TKauri

From a post-structural point of view, the teacher being in a position of authority effectively disqualifies parental knowledge by not responding to the Initiating Parent Voice and is, therefore, stopping learning from expanding (Engeström, 1987; Foucault, 1972; see 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.3.2; Figure 5).

TNikau is the only centre manager with a different perspective:

Uhm...It [the IPV] actually gives us a lot more information.

TNikau also used the IPV for other parents not involved in the research, for example a child who was settling in. TNikau and another teacher commented
that they see benefits for the use of the IPV for families who have children with special needs as well. Because of the high relevance of the photos to the child’s interest, many links to home-experiences are evident in Nikau parents’ IPVs, as the following excerpt shows:

‘I’m holding a boat mummy! I went in a boat and you did not want to come. The boat was sinking.

Mum: [Child’s name] went out fishing in April and a big boat went past and made the boat rock hard and the child was really scared and still remembers.

(Shared at ECC- Rotorua 2015, Whyte, 2015b).

Although this did further inform teachers of the Nikau centre, it was not entirely clear to the parent how this information benefitted the teachers and informed their teaching. Parents are confused about what the Parent Voice is for as the Parent Voice is added to the portfolio notebook without any indication how this information is used in the teaching-learning process (see findings 4.4.2).

5.4.5 Normalising judgments embedded in the culture of the centre

Normalising judgments occur when teachers/managers in positions of power are setting the tone, consciously or subconsciously, by creating a network of guidelines for social behaviour and accepted discourse that becomes part of the culture of the centre (see 2.4.5). This structure is consolidated through daily interactions involving subtle behaviours and responses that happen at micro-level through what has been said but also through what is left un-said (Foucault, 2002, 1977; Gilbert & Powell, 2010). For example, by not responding to the IPV, teachers are giving the message that it is not fitting in with the ‘norm’ or ‘culture’ of the centre. It is left out. Of course, this is at odds with the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations talking about including Parent Voice in assessment and planning (MoE, 2011a). Normalising judgments can be communicated verbally or non-verbally, face-to face or through written documentation (Learning Stories, enrolment forms, newsletters).
Normalising judgments are clearly showing in the interviews with the Managers of the centres. Matai centre did not give permission for the end-interview to be used, however normalizing judgement does not only show through what is being said but also what is being done. Matai centre was the centre with the largest number of general Learning Stories for example, showcasing group activities and special events in the centre, with photos of all the children rather than the individual child specifically. Cannella (1997) has demonstrated that what has been left out (in this case the child’s own ‘working theories’, learning dispositions and the Child Voice) is giving a normative message to parents about whose knowledge is valued and whose voice is heard (in this case the teacher’s voice). One parent comments that their child was not able to share much information about the events showing on the electronic website because she was not in many of the photos. Likewise, Rimu’s centre’s high number of photos that were either unclear or out-dated may also send a message that the child as an individual is not highly valued (see 4.3.1).

Although many photos were showing a significant interest of the child, teachers’ own motives influenced their choice at times. TNikau selected the same photo for three of the children involved in the same group activity because she was interested to hear their different perspectives. TTawa’s motives also played a big part in the choice of the photo:

TTawa: *Well we choose something that…uhm seems meaningful to me. This one was because she did not usually run around in wild games and this was a wild game she took part in. I was trying to find something that would be of interest to talk about but also something that was relevant to us really, so in that instance (looking at IPV) it was about confidence in the bigger group.*

TTawa’s motive for the choice of photo was clearly not just guided by the interest of the child, even if the child was able to choose between two photos. With a limited choice, the normative action is hidden behind the ‘choice’ presented by the teacher (Foucault, 2002).

Normalising judgement is also visible in TKauri’s perspective who thought the photos needed a little explanation of what was going on in the photo:
We had a beach scene set up outside; we were talking about how the water flows to the sea. If you just show a photo of the child there... they can't ... the photo doesn't tell them that.

TKauri

This explanation is showing normative thinking about what is interesting and meaningful for the child and the child’s ability to recall things about a specific interest. By positioning themselves as ‘professionals’, teachers are assuming responsibility for much of the decision-making (which causes disparities in the division of labour). Much of this disparity is created by early childhood education discourse used by teachers, which is not well understood by parents. TawaP1 for example, felt out of her depth by the terms ‘messy play’, fine-motor skills and Wolf game (see: 4.5.4). This causes TawaP1 to position herself as someone not capable of teaching her child, which is very concerning in the light of the important place of parents in their child’s life (see 4.4.2). The difficulties parents have with ECE jargon, is also visible in their understanding of parent partnerships and their perspective on their role in assessment and planning (see 4.4.1 to 4.4.4).

5.4.6 Aspirations for learning: who decides on the teaching?

‘Parent involvement in planning’ is a vague concept for many parents. None of the parents felt they had any involvement in the planning (see 4.4.1). Parent involvement can mean different things for the parent and the teacher. It is not clearly written down what this means and it is often governed by unwritten rules, decided on by the teacher-manager. In many cases there are tensions between the rules, the object and the division of labour (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Rules can be written rules, such as the centre philosophy, Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations or ERO report, or unwritten rules such as “teachers do their planning on the floor” (TKauri) or “we only need one learning story per month” (TRimu). The discourse about ‘parent’s aspirations’ in the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (2011a) is also unclear to parents and does not sit well with the parents’ perspective of their child as ‘being’:
I just expect them to have fun … at this stage of their learning.

KauriP3

What is discussed informally with the parent and what is discussed in the 6-monthly formal parent meeting about parents’ aspirations for their child’s learning is governed by unwritten rules. The parents do not seem to be very aware of either the written or the unwritten rules (see findings 4.4.3).

TNikau: Parents’ aspirations needs to be incorporated…well… some parents seem to think that they need a formal meeting to say that, whereas little two-second conversations as we dive between here and the playground and… hmm…

The word ‘aspiration’ seems like a foreign discourse, used by the government and teachers, not by parents, yet this is supposed to be about parents’ perspectives on what they want their child to learn. This is contradictory to parents’ view on their child in terms of ‘being’ and characteristics. The reports on parents’ aspirations (once per six months for each of the centres) are kept separately from the rest of the documentation. In one centre where they have been put on the website (Matai), it appears that the aspirations are more about academic skills, which becomes part of the normalizing discourse about ‘aspirations for learning’ which is associated with academic achievement. Given the fact that there is no visible link between parents’ aspirations and forward planning in Learning Stories means that the power to do something with these aspirations remains in teachers’ hands.

Parents’ comments about the ‘aspirations’ have connotations with Learning Objectives parents are used to having at Primary school. When I asked about the 6-monthly meeting teacher-parent meeting, parents replied (see also 4.4.4):

It is a what-she-is-achieving-meeting… you know, how does it work for their objectives. RimuP4.2
Like teacher-parent days here… probably that’s the only time we got to talk with the teachers … we always get to talk… but it is more focused then. RimuP4.2

I don’t think I will make any suggestions… because we are never asked. Honestly it is my fault, because we… I have not really taken the initiative to comment her [the teacher]… on anything. KauriP3.2

No, like I said before I don’t think we are really working as a team. RimuP2.2

Personally I have taken the lead from the centre […] as opposed to being the ‘lead’ and suggesting things… but I don’t see why it can’t be the other way around as well…where parents are making suggestions into the curriculum; (for it to work) I think it would need to be specified probably more.” TawaP1.2

One aspiration has come through in this project for many of the parents. Parents want to be, and are excited about being involved in their child’s learning journey. Many parents were surprised about their child’s ability to communicate about their learning (see summary of findings). It has become clear though that with some open dialogue about the learning, including the learning going on for the parent, parent involvement can grow.

This project brings an opportunity to us. It helped me a lot!
Yes it will carry on, I think that’s a good… it’s a good way.
MataiP3.2
5.5 Concluding comments: The benefits and potential of the Initiating Parent Voice

The Initiating Parent Voice (IPV) enriched parents’ involvement in their child’s learning in many ways. Firstly, it provided a clear opportunity for involvement and a specific focus time for the parent and child, which was important for the parent in terms of finding time for involvement in their busy schedule as parents in full-time employment (4.3.3). The IPV also enabled the child to communicate about their interests and day-to-day routines at the centre, which promoted their language skills and provided them with opportunities for reflection and revisiting some of their learning. The engagement with their child, listening to their child’s voice, being in the ‘here and now’, taught parents a lot about how their child learns, enabled parents to share in the joy of their child’s developing working theories and facilitated ‘learning by expanding’ to occur for the parent as well as the child.

5.5.1 Child’s and Parents’ sense of self-efficacy

Engagement with the IPV enhanced parent and children’s sense of self-efficacy and learning, however this did not lead to a greater contribution to assessment and planning in four out of five centres in this research, because of a lack of response from the managers/teachers. This ‘non-response’ can be seen as communication, for example that teachers are too busy or that the Parent Voice is something the teachers do not need, a view that was confirmed by the parents and by some of the managers at the end of the research (Cannella, 1997). By not responding to the Parent Voice important learning opportunities for the child and the parent were lost.

All through the research it is clear that parents are capable and willing to play an active role in their child’s education. This is also highly important because of the on-going involvement and investment of the parent in their child’s life (MoE, 2011b; Smith, 2013). Some parents think that it is not part of the teachers’ obligation to involve parents in the teaching-learning process. Parents appear to have many misconceptions about their role in assessment and planning for
learning at the centre. The IPV provided an opening to clear up some of these misconceptions. Although these opportunities were not taken up by four of the managers of the centres involved in the research, many parents in this research welcomed a new awareness of their child’s learning.

Teachers’ reasons for not making the Child and Parent voice more prominent in the documentation of the teaching-learning process range from believing parents lack time to knowing the children well already due to their long-term attendance at the centre and not needing a Parent Voice. This research however, shows that both the child and the parents really benefit from a higher involvement and the learning involved for the parent and the child was significant. Without this opportunity for involvement parents are running the risk to lose confidence in terms of parent participation well before their child goes to primary school. Although the Ministry has an aspiration to share more responsibility with parents by promoting their ‘assessment capability’ (Absolum et al., 2009; MoE, 2011b), the model for sharing information with the parent is still based on a ‘transmission model’, which positions the teacher as the expert and the parent as the receiver of information (Carr et al., 2015; MoE, 2004a). This does not invite the parent to share any knowledge beyond the parameters set by the teacher, hence the parent is pushed into a role of supporter of the teacher which, because of its ‘one-way’ nature, has a negative effect on the parents’ ability to support and advocate for their child in the long term. The traditional image parents have of themselves as ‘model’ for their child becomes weaker instead of stronger, which is contrary to priorities set by the Ministry of Education.

Seeing documentation as an ‘active agent’, accessible and ‘in progress’ with active contribution of the parent and the child, is essential for real participation to occur. In this research, managers/teachers do not seem to have the incentive and motivation to promote this collaborative practice. Teachers and managers seem to be wary that this will be too time consuming and uncertain in terms of potential disagreement with the parent, which could put the equilibrium of the centre culture and, therefore, the placement of the child in the centre at risk. In four out of five centres documentation is used in a summative way to report on special activities done at the centre rather than the individual child’s interest and
development of their learning dispositions and working theories. In these centres not one of the children or parents contributed any suggestions towards future planning. There is therefore, tension between Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations and *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2011a), which see children and parents as having a part in formative assessment and planning and the reality of parents not being sure of their role, parental aspirations and Parent Voice not being visible in the documentation, and parents seeing the teachers as the ‘expert’ instead of having the expectation that their own voice will be heard. The IPV taking place before the Learning Story is written by the teacher, positions the child and the parent so that their voice is valued and ready for real participation in the teaching-learning process.
Chapter Six

Concluding comments and recommendations

6.0 Introduction

This research involved fifteen parents and their children from five long day early childhood education and care centres. The managers from the first three centres that took part in the research did not involve teachers to the extend that was anticipated by the researcher as being part of the research. The first three centres appeared to focus more on the planning of activities, rather than starting from the individual child’s interest and Child/Parent Voice (MoE, 1996). Two more centres were added to the research in the hope that at least one or two centres would respond to the parent and the child and take the IPV into account in their centre planning. A core idea of the IPV is its potential to contribute to centre planning. For this reason the last two centres were selectively chosen for their focus on child initiated learning. However, contrary to what I expected, four out of five centre managers did not involve the teachers at their centre in the research and did not include the information obtained through the IPV in the centre planning.

Including a Child and Parent Voice was assumed to be standard teaching practice by the researcher (MoE, 1996, 2004, 2011a). With the IPV the parent is initiating the dialogue and providing a Child and Parent Voice about the child’s learning, before a Learning Story is written by the teachers. The response from the teacher is regarded as an important part of the IPV process as learning further expands through a 3-way dialogue (Engeström, 1987). Considering the Child and Parent Voice before the Learning Story is written makes the teaching-learning process more meaningful and authentic (Whyte, 2010, 2015a). The researcher was concerned at the lack of parent involvement in the centre documentation of their child’s learning. It is clear from the literature that connections between learning at home and the centre are critical and parents play a crucial role in their child’s life (2.1.2; Cowie & Carr, 2009; Smith, 2013;
6.1 Research question re-visited: Drawing all the arguments and findings together

Looking at the research question,

“How does the use of the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’ form influence working parents’ perspectives on and involvement in their child’s learning?”

some of the key findings are:

6.1.1 The teacher is seen as the expert while parents see themselves as a ‘resource’

In keeping with Halden (1991), it was found in this research that parents saw their child in terms of their ‘characteristics’ and ‘being’, as well as their learning and development. However, the teacher was classed as the expert on learning and development by many of the parents. The parents did not have an expectation to be involved neither did they have an understanding of the Education (Early Childhood) Regulations (MoE, 2011a), advising teachers that parents should be part of assessment and planning. It is the researcher’s belief that these parent views had consequences for the involvement of parents in their child’s education at the centre. While the managers were aware of the Education (Early Childhood) Regulations, the managers did not enlighten the parents nor did they engage the parents in dialogue about their child’s learning at the centre. Some confusing information in the examplars for assessment by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2004a) guides teachers to write a detailed Learning Story first before asking for a Parent Voice. Similar advice is given in the DANZ report for primary and secondary school teachers (Absolum et al., 2009).

Although the government advocates for parents to take on a greater role in their child’s education (MoE, 2011b), there are no clear Ministry of Education
guidelines on how to create opportunities for participation in the teaching-learning process (Wenger, 1998). Parents in the research indicated they would like more specific information about their child and more opportunities to dialogue with the teacher.

6.1.2 Differing understandings of the concept of parent partnership

There was a lack of knowledge amongst parents about what parent partnerships are and how the parent can be involved in their child’s learning at the centre. Although Education (Early Childhood) Regulations indicate a role for the parent in the teaching-learning process (MoE, 2011a), it is not clearly specified what this role should look like. As a result it falls to the people holding the positions of power, such as the centre managers, to give substance to the parent partnership. Many parents in this research believed it was not part of the teacher’s job to promote parent participation in the teaching-learning process and that teachers do not have time for this (Wenger, 1998; 4.2.4, 4.4.3). On the other hand Teachers in this research held the belief that parents do not have the time.

In all centres involved in the research, a parent-teacher interview was held once every six months. This was the only point in time that parents were asked to share their ‘aspirations’. It is the researcher’s view that normalising language such as the term ‘aspirations’ positions the teacher in the role of ‘expert’, delivering learning outcomes without the participation of the parent. This places the parent in an unequal power relationship with the teacher (Foucault, 2002; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; see 2.4.4, 2.4.5, 4.4.3 and 2.5.1). Much of the terminology in early childhood education was unfamiliar to parents in the research, which further reinforces the position of power of the teacher, rather than providing opportunities for the parents to share in decision-making (Cannella, 1997; Foucault, 1992). It became clear in this research that parents enjoyed their role of initiating a ‘Parent Voice’ as part of their child’s learning. The parents indicated that they would enjoy further dialogue with the teachers about their child’s interest. Activity Theory indicates that learning expands
exponentially when a third party becomes involved in the dialogue. This has been confirmed in other research where teachers have taken up the dialogue (Hunt, 2015a; Whyte, 2010).

6.1.3 Learning opportunities for parents through the use of the IPV

The research showed the IPV opened up expansive learning for both the child and the parent (Engeström, 1987). It gave the parent and their child a specific focus, which enabled them to make time where they previously, had indicated that ‘not having enough time’ was an issue because of their employment status (Knopf & Swick, 2008). The photo on the IPV helped the child to talk about their interest (provided there was a relevant and recent interest showing in the photo). Over the course of the research the parents developed their skill in listening to the Child Voice as they were asked to write down the Child Voice on the form. This development of the parents’ skill in close listening led to parents asking more open-ended questions. Before the research parents stated that their children were only able to give them limited information about their day in the centre. Many of the Learning Stories in four of the centres in the research contained no Child Voice. In contrast, all IPVs contained a Child Voice. The involvement in the IPV occasioned parents’ ‘noticing’ their child’s thinking and ability to recall events. In the course of the research they also valued being in the ‘here and now’ with their child and used ‘wait time’ to encourage their child to contribute their ideas.

Parents communicated their interest to the researcher on being involved in their child’s learning and in some cases took the idea of the IPV in their own hands, continuing with this in their own home, in a variety of ways. This research shows that feedback from the teachers and further dialogue between the teacher, child and the parent will optimise the benefits that are to be gained from using the IPV in a long-day early childhood education and care centre. The current centre-based focus of the teaching-learning process must therefore be extended to include the home-environment as well (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This will require teachers to consider ways of sharing some of their power and
promoting self-efficacy in parents (Foucault, 2002; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; discussion 5.4.3). In doing this the differences between teachers’ and parents’ views on learning will need to be considered (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013).

6.2 Limitations of the research

6.2.1 The research database

The database for this research was large enough to triangulate the data (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2009). However the database is always limited in terms of the number of centres and parents, data collection methods and the number of questions taken into account for the interviews. Because of the small number of participants it is not possible to generalise the outcomes (Mutch, 2005; Punch, 2010). To check the internal validity it was important to make sure that all procedures decided on at the beginning of the research were followed consistently. This was done in this research through constant reflection, member checking and supervision. Rival theories were considered at the start of the research; however it proved to be difficult to follow through with these, which is another limitation of the research (Yin, 2009; 3.3.5, 3.5.3, 3.5.3).

6.2.2 Rival theories

The rival theories (Yin, 2009) that were considered included:

- Research proposition: the use of a photo helps the child to talk about their learning. A rival theory for this consideration is that the child finds it naturally easy to talk about their experience without the use of a photo. This rival theory was checked by the researcher by asking the parent about the child’s ability to talk about their learning before the research took place.

- Research proposition: the parent gains a better understanding of their child’s learning and how the child learns through the use of the IPV. A
rival theory is that the parent gained information about how children learn from other sources. The likelihood of this rival theory has been kept in mind during the second interview. The researcher’s ability to check this was limited by how much parents were able to share during one interview.

- Research proposition: parents will feel more involved in their child’s learning because of the IPV. A rival theory is that involvement may have increased because the parent thought it was expected of them. This was hard to check because this requires a level of parent reflection that exceeded the scope of the research.

- Research proposition: the IPV enhances the child’s language development. A rival theory is that even though most parents indicated that their child’s language development was enhanced, it was still difficult to check the child’s overall level of communication in an objective way.

- Research proposition: the IPV increases the child’s ability to reflect on their learning and set their own goals. A rival theory is that the child’s ability to discuss their learning may have grown through increased conversations with teachers and/or family through the course of the research. As there was very limited evidence of dialogue with teachers, this rival theory is weak in the context of this research. In this research there was strong evidence that the use of the IPV increased the ability of the child to reflect on their learning (see 4.3.2, 4.3.4, and 4.3.5) together with the parent. Wylie (2011) indicates that parent involvement in their child’s learning stays a factor of success throughout the child’s schooling up to the age of 20 years old.

- Research proposition: Parents are more likely to follow up on their child’s learning in the home as a result of engagement with the IPV. In this research it was found that parent-child involvement has increased. Although the two interviews were not sufficient enough to measure this, it does seem that changes occurred.

Other limitations occur when there are certain variables that have not been taken into account in this research. One such variable is the ethnic background of the parent and perhaps limited command of English. Another variable is the
parent’s level of education. Yet another variable is the possible effect on the parent-teacher relationship if the IPV is not submitted or submitted on time. This research showed that both the teacher-managers and parents thought that a lack of time was preventing them from engaging in any further dialogue about the learning (see 2.4.1, 5.3.3, 5.4.4).

6.3 Recommendations for early childhood education practice and research

6.3.1 Informing parents about their role in their child’s education and including multiple voices before an assessment is written

As a result of considering the limitations of the research, the recommendations for early childhood education and research, and implications for practice have emerged. During this research it was hard to check how parents are engaging with the child at home and how they could be involved in their child’s learning. This can make it difficult for the teacher to realise the benefits of parent involvement, benefits that are clearly indicated in research and the Education (Early Childhood) Regulations (Carr et al., 2015; Duncan et al., 2012; May, 2013; MoE, 1996, 2011a). Some managers in this research have questioned the value of the Parent Voice in the centre programming and planning. A Parent and a Child Voice is often not documented in the Learning Stories. Many parents indicated that the Learning Story felt it was solely the Teacher Voice and often Learning Stories did not tell them more about their child’s learning and development. Furthermore, the timing of the Learning Stories was often well after the event, giving parents the feeling that they are trying to ‘catch up’ with what is happening. Therefore, the first recommendation is to deepen teachers’ understanding of Learning Stories needing to include multiple voices. Multiple voices must contribute to collaborative decision-making around assessment and the next step in the child’s learning. The Learning Story is not valid as an assessment when it is written only from the teacher’s viewpoint (Carr & May, 2000; Hatherly & Sands, 2002). Documentation without a Child
and a Parent Voice is called an anecdotal record, not a ‘Learning Story’. Apart from professional development for the teachers on socio-cultural assessment practices, this recommendation must including informing the parents about their role in their child’s education.

### 6.3.2 Clear guidelines for teachers on the role of the parent and child in the teaching-learning process

The second recommendation is about making the rules and guidelines in the Education (Early Childhood) Regulations (2011a) much clearer for teachers. This gives rise to questions such as: what does being “involved in decision-making concerning their child’s learning” look like in practice? (p. 10). When do we know that real participation has taken place by the parent and the child? What does ‘empowering the child to take a lead in their learning’ look like in practice? (MoE, 1996). How can teachers give the child guidance without disrupting the flow of the learning and turning the child’s interest into a series of generic activities suiting the whole group?

### 6.3.3 Promoting understanding of the role of dialogue in effective participation for teacher, the parent and the child

The third recommendation is to build on literature and guidance provided to teachers over the last 20 years and insists that teachers work with parents in a context of real participation and partnership (Carr, 2001; Hatherly & Sands, 2002; MoE, 2004a; Wenger, 1997). The DANZ report recommends that parents carry some of the responsibility of their child’s education (Absolum et al., 2009). Teacher education and professional development must promote deep understanding of the role of dialogue in teacher-parent partnerships and how the parent is empowered in their own learning alongside the child and the teachers. A three-way relationship between the teacher, parent and child, promotes parents’ ‘identity of participation’ and confidence. A critical part of
participation has to be creating opportunities for parents to *initiate* the dialogue with teachers and add their thoughts and their Child’s Voice to centre planning, not just providing a ‘story from home’. The recommendation here is to promote dialogue as an accepted part of a 3-way child-parent-and-teacher alliance that sees learning (for all participants) as dynamic and taking place across as well as beyond the centre environment. In order to form a better understanding of how parent-teacher partnerships can contribute to the teaching-learning process in early childhood education, further research is required into the nature of parent-teacher dialogue and intersubjectivity.

I believe that these recommendations will help to promote 3-way relationships in learning communities in early childhood education.
Appendix A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

Dear parent/carer,

My name is Marjolein Whyte and I am undertaking a research project towards my thesis for my Masters in Education. My research project is focused on the involvement of parents in their child’s learning at home and their child’s learning at the long day education and care centre their child is attending. My intention is to help parents to become more involved in their child’s learning by asking them to complete a specific task they can do with their child at home.

The aim of the research is to identify the nature of and extent to which working parents in full-time employment are involved in the learning of their child who is attending a long-day education and care setting in the Auckland area. My intention is to invite you to participate in my research project, which runs over a period of 6 months. If you feel you would like to participate in the research, please notify the Manager of your centre.

The background of this research is a small scale research project carried out in 2010, carried out as part of my Post graduate course work. This research is documented in an academic journal on early childhood education, called ‘Early Childhood Folio’ (Whyte, 2010). During this research a method was developed to increase parent involvement in their child’s learning, called the Initiating Parent Voice.

The Initiating Parent Voice is a sheet showing a photo of the child involved in play at the centre. The objective is that the parent asks their child to tell them about the learning interest in the photo. The parent then writes the exact words of the child on the sheet. The parent will also record the non-verbal response of their child. Next, the parent writes on the sheet how this learning links to anything that the child has been involved in at home, together with a suggestion how this learning could be extended at home and at the centre.

Project Procedures:
During the research project the teachers will prepare two Initiating Parent Voice forms per month for the parent to fill out with their child over a period of 6 months. Two different centres in the Auckland area will be involved in the research with 4 participants in each centre.

The researcher will interview each of the participants in their own home at a time that is convenient for them at the beginning of the research and one interview at the end of the research. The estimated amount of time needed for participation in this research is 4 hours for the interviews and 6 hours for the Initiating Parent Voice over a period of 6 months.
The participating parent will be asked to consent to a voice recording of the interviews for the purpose of analysis of the research. Participants have a right to ask the voice recording to be turned off at any time during the interview. Data will be transcribed and be made available to the participants for verification.

To protect the identity of the participants, the data will be securely stored over a period of 6 years after completion of the research at the University of Auckland and only the non-identifiable written analysis of the data will be published in the Master’s Thesis and any subsequent research, publications and conference presentations. After this period of six years the data will be destroyed by shredding. The digital recordings will also be erased after this time.

Research data will be used for thesis submission, conference presentations, journal articles and further research.

Participation in the research is voluntary and research participants can withdraw their consent to participate in the research and their data at any time up to one month before closure of the research.

The name of the participant and their child will be kept confidential, by substituting these with pseudonyms.

Anonymity with respect to the parent-participant and their child’s identity cannot be guaranteed.

Contact Details:

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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 87830/83761. Email: humanethics@aukland.ac.nz.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 14/4/14 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 011/737
Project title: Working parents' involvement in their young children's learning: Parents' perspectives on using the Initiating Parent Voice.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
FOR TEACHERS and MANAGERS

Dear teacher,

My name is Marjolein Whyte and I am undertaking a research project towards my thesis for my Masters in Education. My research project is focused on the involvement of parents in their child's learning at home and their child's learning at the long day education and care centre their child is attending. My intention is to help parents to become more involved in their child’s learning by asking them to complete a specific task they can do with their child at home.

The aim of the research is to identify the nature of and extent to which working parents in full-time employment are involved in the learning of their child who is attending a long-day education and care setting in the Auckland area. The intention of this information sheet is to inform you of the research in which two different centres in the Auckland area will be involved with 4 participants in each centre, over a period of 6 months.

The background of this research is a small scale research project carried out in 2010, carried out as part of my Post graduate course work. This research is documented in an academic journal on early childhood education, called ‘Early Childhood Folio’ (Whyte, 2010). During this research a method was developed to increase parent involvement in their child’s learning, called the Initiating Parent Voice.

The Initiating Parent Voice is a sheet showing a photo of the child involved in play at the centre. The objective is that the parent asks their child to tell them about the learning interest in the photo. The parent then writes the exact words of the child on the sheet. The parent then writes the exact words of the child on the sheet. The parent will also record the non-verbal response of the child. Next, the parent writes on the sheet how this learning links to anything that the child has been involved in at home, together with a suggestion how this learning could be extended at home and at the centre.

Project Procedures:
During the research project the teachers will prepare two Initiating Parent Voice forms per month for the parent to fill out with their child over a period of 6 months. Two different centres in the Auckland area will be involved in the research with 4 participants in each centre.

The researcher will interview each of the parent-participants in their own home at a time that is convenient for them at the beginning of the research and one interview at the end of the research. The estimated amount of time needed for parent-participation in this research is 4 hours for the interviews and 6 hours for the Initiating Parent Voice over a period of 6 months.
The participating parent will be asked to consent to a voice recording of the interviews for the purpose of analysis of the research. Participants have a right to ask the voice recording to be turned off at any time during the interview. Data will be transcribed and be made available to the participants for verification.

The data will be kept confidential and stored over a period of 6 years after completion of the research in a secure place at the University of Auckland, after which they will be destroyed by shredding. The digital recordings will also be erased after this time.

Research data will be used for thesis submission, conference presentations, journal articles and further research.

Participation in the research is voluntary and research participants can withdraw their consent to participate in the research at any time up to one month before closure of the project.

Teachers have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Parent-participants have the right to withdraw their data from the research up to a one month before the closure of the research.

The name of the parent-participant and their child will be kept confidential, by substituting these with pseudonyms.

Anonymity with respect to the parent-participant and their child’s identity cannot be guaranteed.

Contact Details

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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 87830/83761. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 14/4/14 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 011/737
PARENT'S CONSENT FORM

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Working parents' involvement in their young children's learning: Parents' and teachers' perspectives on using the Initiating Parent Voice.

Name of Researcher: Marjolein Whyte-van Diessen

Supervisors: Adrienne Sansom and Diti Hill

To Mrs Whyte-van Diessen,

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research. I understand this involves filling out up to 2 x Initiating Parent Voice forms per month over a period of 6 months, plus two interviews (at the beginning and at the end of the 6 month period) with the researcher at a time/place that is convenient for me.

- I understand that I will be recorded.
- I understand that the researcher will transcribe the voice recordings and will be offered the opportunity to edit these recordings before they are used for research analysis.

- I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings of the research.

- I consent to the teachers taking photos of my child at play at the centre for the purposes of the Initiating Parent Voice and I consent to listen to and scribe my child’s voice in response to the photo and add a parent voice, in response to my child.

- I consent / do not consent the researcher to view and photo-copy documentation pertaining the learning of my child. This documentation will only be viewed by the researcher and only non-identifiable data will be used for the Masters thesis, articles, conference presentations and further research.

- I understand that the researcher will discuss data with her supervisors.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to me one month before completion of the research. I agree to notify the researcher immediately if this is the case.
• I understand that Research data will be used for thesis submission, conference presentations, journal articles and further research. I understand that my/ my child’s name will remain confidential. I understand that total anonymity cannot be guaranteed because of the use of photos in the research.

Name __________________________

Signature __________________________ Date _________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 14/4/14 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 011 737
MANAGER’S CONSENT FORM

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS


Name of Researcher: Marjolein Whyte-van Diessen

Supervisors: Adrienne Sansom and Diti Hill

To Mrs Whyte-van Diessen,

I have read the Manager’s Information Sheet. I have understood the nature of the research, why my centre has been selected and that participation in this research is voluntary. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

• I agree to 4 parents with children between 3-5 year old and in full time day care at my centre, taking part in this research over a period of 6 months. I understand this involves providing Initiating Parent Voice forms (including a photo of the child at play) by the teachers of these children, twice per month to each of the 4 parent participants in this research.

• I understand that the researcher will provide an explanation of the research to parents and teachers. The parents will be asked to express their willingness to participate to the Manager.

• I consent to make the first contact with the prospective parent-participants and introduce the participants to the researcher if they indicate they wish to participate in the research.

• I understand that the researcher will meet with the teachers of the participating children prior to the research at a time convenient to the team, to explain the research and expectations of the teacher in detail.

• Participation in this research will not affect the employment status of the teachers involved in giving out the Initiating Parent Voice forms to the parents (including photo), neither will it impinge unduly on teachers’ time as the main part of the research will be carried out in the participating parents’ homes. I understand that the participating parents will be interviewed at the start and at the end of the research, with their consent, and that these interviews will be recorded and transcribed.
• I understand that this research will solely focus on the parents’ understanding and involvement in their child's learning in the centre and at home.

• I consent / do not consent the researcher to view and photo-copy documentation pertaining the learning of the participating parents' children. This documentation will only be viewed by the researcher and only non-identifiable data will be used for the Masters thesis, articles, conference presentations and further research.

• I understand that I am free to withdraw involvement at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to the centre up to one month after the start of the research. I agree to notify the researcher immediately if this is the case.

• I understand that Research data will be used for thesis submission, conference presentations, journal articles and further research. I understand that the name of the centre and the names of any of the centre staff will remain confidential. I understand that total anonymity cannot be guaranteed because of the use of photos in the research.

Name ___________________________

Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 14/4/14 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 011737
Appendix B

Interview questions for the research on:

Working parents' perspectives and involvement in their young child's learning using the ‘Initiating Parent Voice’.

Pre research interview questions: (changes indicated in bold)

1. Introductions
2. Further explanation of the research and consent (i.e. questions about the consent form and consent to recording the interviews).
3. Can you please describe your family? your child?
4. Can you tell me about your child/ your child's learning?
   - At home? - At the centre? – What helps your child learn?
5. What do you find important in respect to your child’s learning / development? (parent aspirations and expectations)
6. How do you view your involvement in your child's learning?
7. How do you experience talking with your child about their learning/play at the centre?
8. How would you like your involvement in your child’s learning to proceed in the next half a year?
9. What can you tell me about what your child is learning at the centre?
10. What do you see as the role of the teacher?
11. Explain the IPV form

Post research interview questions: (changes indicated in bold)

1. What are the main benefits /disadvantages of using the IPV form?
   - Please tell me about your experience with the IPV form
2. What impact has this form had on conversations you have had with your child about their learning?
3. How have IPV forms impacted on your child’s learning?

4. How have IPV forms strengthened links between your child’s learning at home and the centre? - Have they?

5. Has this changed the way you contribute to your child's learning in the ECE centre? - i.e.: planning?

6. What changes have you noticed in your child's learning/ how your child learns as a result of their involvement in this study?

7. How did the teachers respond?

8. Have your expectations of the teachers changed?
   How could teachers improve the partnership you have with them in regards to your child's learning?
## Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositions / assumptions</th>
<th>Rival theories</th>
<th>What needs to be checked?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Use of the photo helps the child to talk about their learning</td>
<td>The child naturally finds it easy to talk about their learning</td>
<td>Child’s ability to communicate before and after the research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2 Parent will get a better understanding of their child’s learning and how the child learns by using the IPV | Any other information that enhanced the parents’ understanding | - Already part of interview  
- Check which other information they have accessed during the research  
(ask parents to take a note?) |
| 3 Parents will feel more involved in their child’s learning because of the IPV | Involvement has increased because they thought it was expected of them. | |
| 4 The IPV will enhance the child’s language development. | Some parents might have engaged in more conversation with the child than others. | Take note of the time spend.  
Ask the parent about time spend. |
| 5 It helps children to reflect on and set their own goals. | IPV has led to an increased dialogue with family and teachers | “What other factors have you noticed that have influenced your child’s |
Appendix D

Examples of Initiating Parent Voices:

The Parent’s Voice is indicated in italics; the Child’s Voice is indicated with speech marks. To guarantee confidentiality, the child’s initial has been changed and the photos have not been displayed.

IPV number 1: Cooking (MataiP1) – June 2014

The IPV photo is showing MataiC1 (L.) playing with another child (J.).

I pointed to this photo and asked L.: Baby, what were you playing?

“I was cooking”

Who were you cooking together with?

“J.”

Oh, cooking together with J.!

“Yes, because J. was the dad, and I was the mum”

So, what did you cook?
“Fish, chicken, vegetables, beans, tofu and lots of fruit”

Wow...you were very good, Angela, you could cook so many dishes.

I touched her head and gave her a kiss.

Upon receiving the compliment, she was very excited, and held onto my hand and said: “Mum, I want to be like you in future and cook lots of yummy dishes”

I looked at her cute and smiley face and thought, “No wonder, every time when I cook dinner, she is always around me to see if she could help me to get the dishes or the bowls, and she often said, it smells good, smells good mum, how did you cook it? It smells good!”

IPV number 2: Painting (MataiP3) – June 2014

The IPV photo is showing MataiC3 (N.) at the paint easel with another child (E.).

He told me that he was writing his name.

He is sharing the colour with his friend, name: E.

He said he is colouring. There were three colours on the paper: orange, blue and green.

IPV number 3: Building a house (MataiP3) - October 2014

The IPV photo is showing MataiC3 (N.) playing with another child (E.).

“Let’s build a house for ourselves!” I said to E.”

“Ok, we can use the rocks, E. said.”

“I used the digger and E. used the bulldozer.”

“We work together to build our house.”

“This house is for me and E. to live inside.”

“After a while I used the sand to pretend ‘like the water’ to clean up my car.”

N. has very strong logical thinking on the thing he is interested in.

He copied the story, which I read to him.
He has a strong sense on construction. I will keep showing him more information on this.

PS: He is very creative on building stuff. His work always surprises me!

IPV number 4: Playing with Mobilo (NikauP4) - October 2014

The IPV photo is showing NikauC4 (P.) playing with other children.

“Look! That's a tractor and that's a trailer.”

“I'm building a rocket and that's V.'s, he's got binoculars.”

“That's Y.”

“That's me.”

“It goes around really really fast.”

“It's a mincer; it got a tail.”

Then he pointed to all the photos, counting the children. He counted 14.

I asked him if he'd fun playing with the Mobilo and he said “yes.”

P. loves tractors since he was 18 months old.

We have a lot of tractors at home. He has space-ship pyjamas so he has recently developed an interest in space/ rockets etc.
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