SUPPORTING ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explores the beliefs and practices of New Zealand early childhood teachers in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs). The focus of the study is on the analysis of early childhood teachers' beliefs about how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and how these beliefs influence the teachers' practices in early childhood education (ECE) settings.

The theoretical framework of this research draws on a range of sociocultural perspectives, including (i) the sociocultural positions initially defined by Lev Vygostky (1978), (ii) the notion of guided participation articulated by Barbara Rogoff (2003), (iii) theories of second language acquisition discussed by Lantolf and Thorne (2000), and by Krashen (1982, 1985), and (iv) acculturation as addressed by Berry (2001).

The main participants of this study were seven early childhood teachers and six Asian immigrant ELLs from two ECE centres. Four Asian parents participated in interviews to ascertain the parents' perspectives about their children's learning of English and their maintenance of home language. Research methods for the teachers included observations and semi-structured pre- and post-observation interviews. For each centre, observations were carried out over a six week period which enabled a series of snapshots of how the teachers supported the ELLs as they acquired English.

The findings were analysed using thematic analysis, and presented three themes: English dominance, social cultural adaptation, and guided participation. These themes impacted the learning experiences of the Asian immigrant ELLs and other children attending the ECE as well as the teaching approaches of the early childhood teachers. The findings revealed that there were dissonances between the teachers' beliefs and their practices, as well as variation between individual teachers' beliefs and practices. Because of a significant increase in the number of ELLs in New Zealand ECE centres, it is important for early childhood teachers to understand the emphasis upon sociocultural theories in the ECE curriculum, so that they can effectively apply these theories to their practices. This study will provide a basis from which to consider how early childhood teachers in New Zealand can

draw upon sociocultural perspectives to better support ELLs as they acquire English, while valuing and supporting their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

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List of Abbreviations

ECE: Early childhood education

ELL: English language learners

L2: Second language

NESB: Non-English speaking backgrounds

SCT-L2: Sociocultural Theory on Second Language Learning

SLA: Second language acquisition

ZPD: Zone of proximal development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

New Zealand is increasingly becoming more diverse in language and culture as a result of immigration. This, in turn, increases the diversity in children's enrolment in early childhood education (ECE) settings. The increase in enrolments of immigrant children seems to have posed great challenges to early childhood education services when it comes to supporting children's second language acquisition. Young children's second language acquisition is not simply a static outcome, but an ongoing dynamic process in which each child develops along a unique continuum towards achieving English proficiency. During this process, the early childhood teachers' support is crucial to ensure successful English acquisition. However, there is complexity in providing support to English Language Learners (ELLs) as teachers may have their own beliefs with regard to English acquisition for immigrant ELLs and the teachers' beliefs may or may not be predictors of their practices.

Within early childhood research considerable emphasis has been placed on examining teachers' beliefs and practices about second language acquisition (SLA) among ELLs. More recently, researchers in SLA have started investigating teachers' beliefs and practices from various perspectives according to diverse theoretical frameworks, such as sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic. In addition, the researchers have collected a variety of types of data, and have used a range of data analysis (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002, 2010; Harvey, 2011; Haworth, Cullen, Simmons, Schimanski, McGarva, & Woodhead, 2006; Podmore & Samu, 2006; Schofield, 2007, 2011). Most of these studies have used interviews, observations or questionnaires. My study fills a gap in the research by drawing on data from pre- and post-observation interviews to examine New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices regarding supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs. In addition, the Asian immigrant parents' perspectives are examined to provide more comprehensive views on ELLs' English acquisition. Sociocultural perspectives frame the research.

1.2 Asian children

The Asians included in the fieldwork for this doctoral study are from East and South East Asia. The Asian population in New Zealand is very diverse, with settlers from all areas within Asia and from other countries with large Asian diasporas, together with a growing locally born population. There are two well-established groups with a long history of settlement: people of Indian ethnicities (23% born in New Zealand) and people of Chinese ethnicities (22% born in New Zealand). While it is often convenient to refer to these groups as 'Chinese ethnic group' and 'Indian ethnic group', this is quite misleading because, in both cases, these labels subsume a very diverse group of ethnicities. These include people born in New Zealand, as well as people born in a number of Asian, European and Pacific countries (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

The change of immigration policy in the 1990s created an unprecedented influx of Asian immigrants and refugees into New Zealand (Guo, 2002). The Asian population is projected to increase in all territorial authority areas (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The projected increase is mainly driven by the assumed levels of net migration, with natural increase (births minus deaths) playing a secondary role overall. As a result, the Asian population makes up the fourth largest population category in New Zealand and it is projected that the Asian population in New Zealand, which has for the first time overtaken the Pasifika population, will rise from its current numbers of approximately 240,000 to 370,000 by 2016; an estimated 9% of the total New Zealand population in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Consequently, it is becoming the norm for Asian children to enrol in mainstream education settings from early childhood education to tertiary level in New Zealand (Hashimoto, 2009). As at 1 July 2010, Asian enrolments (13,181) accounted for 7.0% of the total enrolments (188,924) in licensed early childhood services, only second to European/Pākehā (63.1%) and Māori (20.4%). During the period 2006 to 2010, Asian enrolments increased by 39.0%, compared to 24.9% for Pasifika, 16.8% for Māori, and 8.0% for European/Pākehā (Education Counts, 2013).

Due the fact that numbers of Asian immigrant ELLs vary across education and care centres, most early childhood practitioners in New Zealand have had experiences working with Asian parents and children. Asians as perceived by many teachers are Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Philippino, Singaporean, and Malaysian (Guo, 2010). As

an Asian, myself, I have background knowledge as well as firsthand experience which allow me to have a better understanding of Asian cultures and people. The common cultural heritage leads to similar childrearing and educational philosophies (Guo, 2010) as well as English being a second language or foreign language to many Asian children.

Researchers use a number of terms when referring to Asian children who are acquiring English, including English language learners (ELLs), English learners (ELs), limited English proficient (LEP) students, non-native English speakers, language-minority learners, and either bilingual learners or emerging bilingual learners. Nonetheless, all the terms refer to the same group of learners — those with limited proficiency in English mainly due to English being a second, third or foreign language to these learners. For the sake of simplicity, the term 'Asian immigrant ELLs' is replaced with English language learners (ELLs) in the subsequent chapters. However, the Asian children's background as immigrants in New Zealand is recognised to reflect their language and cultural diversity as they attend ECE centres.

In summary, I have described the background of the Asian children in the context of their origins and immigration into New Zealand. The terminology which refers to Asian children is also varied, however, I have chosen to use ELLs instead of Asian immigrant ELLs in the subsequent chapters for the sake of terminology simplification.

1.3 Research topic and aim

The objective of this study is to explore the beliefs and practices of New Zealand early childhood teachers in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs.

> The central question of this study is:
> What are New Zealand early child childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs?

The study, and especially the data gathering process, were guided by the following questions:

1. What do New Zealand early childhood teachers state as their beliefs about supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs?

2. Do New Zealand early childhood teachers vary in their beliefs about supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs? If so, how?

3. How do New Zealand early childhood teachers perceive that they support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs?

4. How can New Zealand early childhood teachers support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs by using sociocultural approaches?

The focus of the study is on analysing early childhood teachers' beliefs about how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and how these beliefs influence their practice in the early childhood education setting. In addition, the Asian immigrant ELLs parents' views were sought through interviews to get the parents' perspectives about the phenomenon. This study provides a basis from which to consider how early childhood teachers in New Zealand could support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs, while valuing and supporting children's language and cultural background.

1.4 Purpose of the research

This doctoral study is undertaken for two main reasons. The first reason is due to the scarcity of research that examines the area of English acquisition from sociocultural perspectives in New Zealand, and the second reason is on account as an Asian ELL parent who was concerned about my children's ability to adapt in English medium ECE centre and schools due to limited English competence and as an academic attached to ECE department and had been approached by Malaysian early childhood teachers and my students regarding concerns and issues in supporting English acquisition for ELLs.

1.4.1 Scarcity of research

The scarcity of research about New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant ELLs compared to research about Asian children in New Zealand has led to this study because there has been an increasing number of Asian children enrolled in ECE centres yet little is known about how early childhood

teachers' work with Asian children. Whilst there are empirical studies in bilingual education in the context of New Zealand early childhood education and development (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002, 2010; Harvey, 2011; Haworth et. al., 2006; Schofield, 2007, 2011), there are limited numbers of studies which explore early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to specifically supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs .

With regard to English acquisition studies among ELLs, several researchers have examined different aspects of this research area (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002; 2010; Hashimoto, 2009; Haworth et al., 2006; Schofield, 2011). Brierley (2003) undertook an action research project with ELLs at her own centre, where she investigated ways to increase opportunities for ELLs to have interactions with children and teachers. Using a sociocultural approach, Hashimoto (2009) examined how the environment and teaching influenced ELLs' learning. Guo's (2002) study provided an empirical basis on which to formulate an enquiry into whether ELL children have difficulties developing holistically in English-speaking childcare settings. Haworth et al. (2006) studied the provision of bilingual experiences at kindergarten, adding English without detracting from Samoan, and fostering positive inter-cultural relationships. Schofield (2011) investigated the English language learning experiences of 12 children who were sole speakers of home languages, other than English, and were attending three English medium ECE centres with different philosophies, programmes, and practices. These centres were a sessional kindergarten, and two education and care centres. The study findings suggest that differences in early childhood centres temporal environments influence the centres' interpersonal environments, and thus the English as a second language learners' English acquisition opportunities. Together, these studies (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002, 2010; Hashimoto, 2009; Haworth et al., 2006; Schofield, 2011) presented a variety of perceptions regarding migrant children's learning, including not only the gaining of a new language but also factors that help children to learn effectively.

An extensive search of literature found limited studies investigating teachers' beliefs and practices regarding English acquisition of Asian immigrant ELLs. However, in the context of New Zealand, three studies examining Asian ELLs' perspectives pertaining to English acquisition and learning experiences in the New Zealand ECE context selected Chinese young children and parents as participants (Guo, 2002, 2010; Zhang, 2012). Guo's (2002) case study explored the learning experiences within an English-speaking education

and care service of a four year-old Taiwanese boy, who had immigrated to New Zealand. The findings were that the Taiwanese boy could successfully complete his learning activity under two circumstances: firstly, there was little interaction required of him and the English-speaking children, and secondly, there was a teacher participating in his learning activity. Guo's (2002) findings highlighted the important role of teachers in ensuring successful learning experiences of ELLs. Another study by Guo (2010) investigated eight Chinese immigrant children's learning experiences, particularly regarding languages and interpersonal relationships in New Zealand early childhood centres. Guo's (2010) study found that Chinese immigrant children were active drivers of their own learning and capably negotiated and created relationships between their family culture and their ECE centres. Zhang's (2012) study compared the parental involvement of 120 Chinese immigrant parents and 127 English speaking non-Chinese parents in early childhood education (ECE), and investigated the role of parenting beliefs, parenting practices, and demographic variables in the level of parental involvement. Results showed that Chinese immigrant parents were less likely than non-Chinese parents to communicate with teachers, volunteer to help at the kindergarten, and participate in kindergarten decision making.

This present study aims to explore the teachers' beliefs and practices from sociocultural perspectives. It is very important to reflect current knowledge about how Asian immigrants ELLs acquire English in the early childhood education setting. It is worthwhile exploring teachers' beliefs and practices regarding supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs because of the increasing number of Asian immigrant children enrolled in ECE centres. If 92% of teachers in New Zealand ECE centres are of non-Asian ethnicity (Ministry of Education, 2008), then it is important to identify insights and reflect upon the beliefs and practices of teachers who work with Asian immigrant ELLs.

1.4.2 My background, perspectives, influences, positions

My background is as an Asian ELL's parent and as an ECE professional, attached to an ECE Department in my university as a lecturer who trained early childhood education pre-service teachers prior to my study leave in New Zealand. Upon arrival in New Zealand, I was concerned about my children's ability to adapt in English medium schools due to limited English proficiency. I was even more worried about my four year-old son, who had not been to any ECE centre before. As an Asian ELL, he initially faced challenging experiences, such

as difficulties of communication in an unfamiliar language and unfamiliar cultural knowledge and experience. Rogoff (2003) described how children who are raised to be members of their culture could face many difficulties when trying to function in another cultural system. Teachers in my son's ECE were all seen to adopt appropriate speaking strategies when talking to him. They spoke very slowly when talking to him and resorted to body language to make themselves understood. My son's self-esteem was seen to improve as a result of his interactions with his teachers. This brief scenario of my son's experience at an ECE centre triggered my interest in better understanding early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices as they support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs.

Prior to my doctoral study in New Zealand, I started my bachelor programme in Teaching English as a second language (TESL) and I was always intrigued to find out how a second language is acquired. My first job at a secondary school in Malaysia, upon graduation, was challenging as many of my students still struggled to use English as a second language despite learning English since kindergarten level. I wondered what could be the cause of this situation and I hypothesised that it was probably useful to tackle the problem of low proficiency in English by understanding it from the context of early childhood education. I then pursued a Master of Early Childhood qualification to understand more about children's development including language development and language acquisition. I found that early childhood education provides insights to improve the educational system from many perspectives such as parents' and teacher education programmes' perspectives.

When I became an early childhood lecturer at a university of education in 2008, one of the courses that I taught was 'Teaching English to young learners' where I covered the pedagogical practices such as teaching English through songs and stories. However, I did not consider how these children acquired English to enable them to interact with the teacher and their peers, or indeed to learn the concepts being taught. I had also been approached by Malaysian early childhood teachers and my students regarding concerns and issues in supporting English acquisition for ELLs. As I attempted to understand this issue through reading related academic journals, I became aware of the lack of empirical research in teaching and learning English as a second language in early childhood education. As I reflected on my teaching, I also contemplated on related social theories which support English acquisition for these children. The experience of being an educator to ECE pre-

service teachers was valuable as it opened my mind to different views of teaching and learning. These views describe how children's construction of their understandings and their development of knowledge cannot be separated from their social context, as well as the key role language plays in mental development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Being in early childhood educational settings during the teaching practices of my students, especially when they were using English with the children, also allowed me to witness the influence of teachers' beliefs in their practices. This was evident during my observations of their teaching slots and during post observation's self-reflection sessions. Beliefs play a significant role in directing human behaviour. In the SLA field, almost two decades of research has revealed how teachers' and students' beliefs have the potential to shape their cognitive and affective processes in teaching and learning and impact on their actions (Bernat, 2008).

Malaysian children are not a homogeneous group. They come from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds as do children in New Zealand. Sociocultural perspectives are very relevant to addressing this diversity with regard to supporting successful English acquisition among Malaysian young children in ECE settings. The sociocultural perspectives consider aspects of culture that can influence an individual's interactions with others of different backgrounds and offer understanding of the development of mental processes as they are shaped, or 'mediated' by their social and contextual influences (Vygotsky, 1978). Although ECE teachers in Malaysia are not native speakers of English, the understanding of New Zealand ECE beliefs and their pedagogical practices may help to improve Asian ELLs' English acquisition. Upon completion of this doctoral study, I hope to share with my students and colleagues, as well Malaysian ECE teachers, useful insights, particularly on applying sociocultural approaches in the ECE context. As Rogoff (2003) stated, "[to] understand human development, it is essential to understand the development of cultural institutions and practices in which people participate" (p. 327). The cultural institutions and practices I have described were part of my development and provided the basis of my interest in undertaking my doctoral study.

Both reasons, the scarcity of the related research in New Zealand and internationally, and my personal, educational and career background impact on my interest to investigate the teachers' beliefs and practices as they support English acquisition for Asian immigrant ELLs.

1.5 Context of the Study

As this study is situated in the New Zealand early childhood education sector, this section describes both the historical and current context of ECE in New Zealand, different types of early childhood centres in New Zealand and demographics of ELLs' participation in early childhood services in New Zealand.

1.5.1 The early childhood education context in New Zealand

New Zealand early childhood institutions were first established in the late nineteenth century (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). These were charitable kindergartens for the colonial urban poor and the occasional charitable crèche (May, 2002), and were seen as an enlightened response to those less fortunate (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). Government interest was limited to kindergartens, whose programmes fitted with the rationales for emerging state investment and/or intervention in the lives of children such as moral reform, child rescue and child health (May, 2002). Early childhood care and education underwent a dramatic transformation during the second half of the twentieth century. By the 1950s, those children not attending preschool came to be regarded as unfortunate; by the 1960s, deprived or disadvantaged; by the 1970s-80s, disenfranchised; and by the end of the century, 'at risk' and a potential problem to society (May 2002). Such perceptions reflect shifts in political, educational and social opinion regarding the best place for the rearing and education of young children and the changing role of the state in its support of ECE (May, 2002).

By the 1970s and 1980s, new social movements such as feminism and biculturalism began to gain ground in New Zealand (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). The government commissioned a report on early childhood education, under the direction of Anne Meade. This report, *Education To Be More* recommended a funding and administrative infrastructure, policies for quality assurance and quality curriculum for all early childhood services (May, 2002). However, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a shift in the ideology of

government that began to undermine the concern for women and children (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007).

Throughout the 1990s, early childhood education endured a number of setbacks, including an 11% cut in funding and decreasing quality requirements in terms of child and teacher ratios (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). While the period of retrenchment proved difficult for early childhood, it is notable for the development of the acclaimed early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, in 1996. In 1996, the Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, launched the final draft of *Te Whāriki*, the national early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). This was the first time a Prime Minister so explicitly stamped government approval on what children might do on a daily basis in early childhood centres (May, 2002). The development and wide acceptance of *Te Whāriki*, as a curriculum within the early childhood sector, was a surprising story of careful collaboration between a National government and the sector (May, 2002). Since 1999, with the election of a Labour-led coalition, education policy for early childhood was strengthened (May, 2002; Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007).

An Early Childhood Education Strategic Plan Working Group, that was set up in 2000 and again led by Anne Meade, identified a number of concerns about funding, quality and access and participation in early childhood education (May, 2002; Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). The implementation of the strategic plan resulted in a period of professionalisation in the sector, including a move towards the registration of all early childhood teachers, the development of sociocultural assessment exemplars 'Kei Tua o te Pae' (Ministry of Education, 2004), pay parity for kindergarten teachers, a requirement for all early childhood centres to have fully qualified teachers by 2012 and the funding by a wide range of professional development and innovative practice schemes (May, 2002). The plan also set out stronger links with family, community, social services, health services and schools, as part of a seamless educational paradigm in the wider context of New Zealand's family-friendly social policy (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). The strategic plan was in operation from 2002-2008 but was no longer being followed till Budget 2009 when funding was cut to many of the initiatives put in place by the plan.

While there have been a number of ECE reports in New Zealand which emphasised the influential impact of ECE (Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011; Dalli, Rockel, Duhn, Craw & Doyle, 2011; ECE Taskforce, 2011; Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008), there was one report which had a significant impact on my study. Mitchell, Tangaere, Mara, and Wylie (2006) evaluated initial use and impact of 'Equity Funding'. 'Equity Funding' is a targeted funding mechanism for all licensed early childhood (ECE) services Equity Funding is paid to eligible services in addition to the ECE Funding Subsidy and 20 Hours ECE (Ministry of Education, 2015). The funding aimed to decrease educational discrepancy between different groups, reduce barriers to participation for groups underrepresented in ECE which include the Asian immigrant ELLs, and support ECE services to raise their level of educational achievement (Ministry of Education, 2015).

In this section, I have briefly presented the historical context of New Zealand ECE and the relevant policies that have impacted the Asian culture and other minority cultures living in New Zealand. In addressing the needs of children from diverse backgrounds, including the Asian immigrant ELLs, the government has taken the most identifiable initiatives through 'equity funding' for ECE services to support children to learn English as a second language, or to provide learning programmes in a language other than English. This support was planned to facilitate diversity, as well as to minimise inconsistencies in children's learning due to children's diverse background (Cullen, 2003; Mitchell, Tangaere, Mara & Wylie, 2006).

1.5.2 Current early childhood educational practices in New Zealand

Early childhood education (ECE) in New Zealand occurs through a diverse range of services, including education and care services (private or community-organised, full day or sessional), playcentres (sessional, parent collectives), kindergartens (sessional), Te Kohanga Reo (Māori immersion language nests), Pasifika Island Language groups, and home-based services (a small group of children in a caregiver's home) (Ministry of Education, 2009). All licensed and chartered ECE services in New Zealand are required to operate their programmes in line with *Te Whāriki*, the national ECE curriculum despite the distinctive contexts across the early childhood provision services (Ministry of Education, 1996).

As noted, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was released in the 1990s. Its development was a contextual response to the educational, social, cultural, and political conditions in New Zealand (Nuttall, 2003). It was also a period in which early childhood education started to witness the emergence internationally of a teaching perspective that embraced sociocultural aspects and contextual issues (Carr & May, 1999; Penn, 2000). Consistent with the developmental and sociocultural perpectives, *Te Whāriki* supports the idea that children's learning experiences should be built on their major interests (Carr & May, 1999) and shared by teachers, parents and children in a collaborative participation process (Hedges, 2003).

Within early childhood education, according to statistics, 83% of children enrolled in licensed early childhood services are European/ Pākehā and Māori, the rest are children of 'Asian, Pasifika and other' ethnicities (Education Counts, 2013). In acknowledging the multicultural heritage and the identities and cultural beliefs of diverse immigrants in New Zealand, *Te Whāriki* states that:

> The early childhood curriculum supports the cultural identity of all children, affirms and celebrates cultural differences, and aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures. Each early childhood education service should ensure that their programmes and resources are sensitive and responsive to the different culture and heritages among the families of the children attending that service. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.18)

This statement reflects the socio-cultural nature of the curriculum and upholds educational practices which acknowledge cultural diversity for children from diverse language and cultural background.

Nevertheless, *Te Whāriki* is not without critics. One of the few critics of *Te Whāriki* was Cullen (1996). Cullen (1996) was concerned that "*Te Whāriki* contains high ideals but there is currently an enormous gap between practice and the achievement of those ideals. In turn, bridging this gap poses considerable challenges to policy makers and early childhood educators alike" (p. 123). One of the areas of unease for Cullen (1996) was the lack of understanding early childhood teachers had of the two paradigms that underpinned *Te*

Whāriki: developmental and socio-cultural. She felt educators and professional developers were not conversant with the theoretical basis of *Te Whāriki* which was set out in the draft, but dropped, in the final version. Cullen (2003) emphasised that diversity is an essential theme in *Te Whāriki*, which is described metaphorically as a woven mat. This curriculum embraces diversity in terms of languages, cultures, and socio-economic conditions of all children in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Despite the effort from the government to provide quality services in early childhood education, there are inevitably discrepancies between practice and policy (Duncan, 2004; Nuttall, 2003). These occur due to the fact that ECE services are encouraged to implement programmes according to their particular sociocultural contexts and interests as illustrated in the following statement of *Te Whāriki*: "Each service will develop its own programme to meet the needs of its children, their families, the specific setting, and the local community" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 27). Teachers negotiate teaching practices in line with what they think appropriate (Nuttall, 2003) based on their different understandings of knowledge, their experiences, professional training, and their perceptions of children.

1.5.3 Different types of early childhood education centres in New Zealand

There are different types of ECE services to suit linguistically and culturally diverse family needs and educational preferences in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2009). Each type has its own way of working with children and their parents (Ministry of Education, 2009). The first type of early childhood service is led by registered teachers. Teacher led services include education and care services, government run and privately owned kindergartens, community crèches, private day centres, New Zealand (Free) kindergartens, The Correspondence School and family-based or home based services (Ministry of Education, 2009). Education and care services provide both sessional and all-day programmes for infants and toddlers and some three, four and five year-olds. These services are privately-owned or not-for-profit community-based services (Ministry of Education, 2014). Some are operated as an adjunct to the main purpose of a business or organisation such as an ECE centre at a university. New Zealand (Free) Kindergarten offers sessional and all-day early childhood education for children from two until school age. The Correspondence School provides a distance programme for early childhood education for young children who are unable to attend a service due to isolation, illness, special learning needs or other special circumstances.

(Ministry of Education, 2014). Both the New Zealand (Free) Kindergarten and The Correspondence School employ only qualified and registered teachers. Finally, the family-based or home-based services are comprised of a group of home-based educators operating under the supervision of a qualified and registered early childhood coordinator who places children with educators in approved homes for an agreed number of hours per week (Ministry of Education, 2014). Some early childhood services may be based around certain philosophies or methods of education, such as Montessori or Rudolph Steiner centres (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The second group of early childhood services are administered by parents, whānau or caregivers who may have some degree of training or qualifications in ECE. These services include home based organisations. Parents may also be involved in parent run play centres, play groups, Pasifika Language nests and Te Kohanga Reo (Ministry of Education, 2009; Schofield, 2011).

There is some provision for children to maintain home languages or acquire cultural languages through services such as Te Kohanga Reo, Puna Reo, Māori Immersion programmes; Pasifika Island language nests; and first language, (for example, Chinese or Korean) preschools (Ministry of Education, 2014). Special education services are also offered to children who need them. All ECE services are regulated by the Ministry of Education which means that the services must meet a minimum standard of education and care in order to operate and receive funding from the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Although all centres in New Zealand are expected to base their programmes on the curriculum statement *Te Whāriki*, their environments vary considerably (Schofield, 2011). The unique nature of a centre's environment is dependent on the theories that underpin the centre's philosophy. In turn, a centre's philosophy has a direct effect on the children's experiences in terms of how it influences teaching practices. For example, a centre that is influenced by social interactionist theories such as those of Vygotsky (1978, 1986) may provide extended play sessions or shared play opportunities.