2019

Children’s Knowledge, Identity and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

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Children’s Knowledge, Identity and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making.

This thesis is presented for the degree of

Master of Education

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Edith Cowan University
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Abstract

The research study investigated why and how educators make use of knowledge about children and their interests for the purpose of curriculum decision-making, and the subsequent influence on children’s involvement. The study took a Participatory Action Research approach and examined curriculum construction in childcare-based and school-based Kindergarten settings. Data were collected over a six-month period in 2018 from settings in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia. Initial interviews were conducted with four Kindergarten educators to find out how they gathered and used information about children and their interests for curriculum purposes. These interviews were followed by a curriculum intervention that took place in one of the settings. Prior to the intervention, four children were selected to be in a focus group. The children’s pre-intervention involvement levels were measured using the Involvement Scale (South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services, 2008) and through the analysis of video observations taken of the children during everyday classroom experiences. Then, two curriculum intervention activities were implemented with the children in the focus group in order to obtain information about their funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The Shoebox Activity required the children to place personally meaningful items inside of a shoebox and share these items with their teacher. The Photovoice Activity was where children took photographs of experiences in which they participated outside of Kindergarten and shared these photographs with their teacher. Following the curriculum intervention activities, the Kindergarten curriculum was constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Children’s involvement levels were again measured for the post-intervention ratings, which occurred during the period of time when the adjusted curriculum experiences were offered. Results from the study indicate that children’s level of involvement significantly increases when educators know more about and prioritise children’s knowledge and identity in the curriculum. The study provides an Australian perspective in the areas of research focusing on children’s interests, curriculum construction, and children’s right to participation. This research study can be used to
inform policy and build on early childhood educator practices to promote the provision of high-quality curriculum experiences for young children.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education,

ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis, or

iii. contain any defamatory material.

Candidate signature:

Date: 24 April 2019
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“It’s not about what it is, it’s about what it can become.” Dr. Seuss

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Acronyms

ACECQA: Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
DEEWR: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
E4Kids: Effectiveness Early Educational Experiences
EC: Early Childhood
EYLF: Early Years Learning Framework
KCG: Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines
LIS-YC: Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children
NQF: National Quality Framework
NQS: National Quality Standard
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR: Participatory Action Research
SADEC: South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services
SCSA: School Curriculum and Standards Authority
UN: United Nations
Definitions

**Childcare-based Kindergarten setting:** a long day care setting that caters for children aged three to five years.

**Curriculum:** “all the interactions, experiences, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development” (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 9).

**Early Childhood:** refers to the period of time from birth to age eight years.

**Early Childhood Educator:** a person working with young children, birth to age eight years, in an educational setting.

**Funds of Identity:** “the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person’s self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31).

**Funds of Knowledge:** the lived experiences of children at home and in their communities (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

**School-based Kindergarten setting:** a setting catering for children aged four to five years that is situated within a Primary school.

**Teacher:** a person working with children who has an initial teacher education tertiary degree and is registered with the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia.
1.1 Introduction

This study investigated why and how educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum and the subsequent influence on child involvement. This chapter is comprised of a background/rationale for the study and an overview of the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 Background/Rationale for the Study

Children’s life and academic outcomes rely on high-quality early childhood (EC) experiences (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). High-quality EC education is linked to the quality of educator practices and the everyday experiences children are involved in in their settings. Recently, educator practices and everyday experiences, aspects of process quality, have been prioritised in Australian EC settings. Torii, Fox, and Cloney (2017) reported that due to this prioritisation, research and national quality assessment rating processes have uncovered an alarming trend of underperforming EC settings. Specifically, the areas of educational program and practice were found to be of concern. In Australia, Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Standard (NQS) calls for educators to construct educational programs using children’s “individual knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests” (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2018, p. 93). Despite these expectations of EC programs and practices in policy, there is concern over what is occurring in practice. This concern is important to investigate due to the well-researched link between children’s early experiences and the influence on their life prospects and outcomes.

Several studies have shown that high-quality EC experiences are linked to children’s positive overall development and lifelong outcomes (Burchinal, Vandergift, Pianta, & Mashburn, 2010; Campbell et al., 2014; Pagani, Fitzpatrick, & Parent, 2012; Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal, & Thornburg, 2009; Center [sic] on the Developing Child at Harvard University,
In Australia, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians foregrounded high-quality education to promote positive futures for children, highlighting the positive social and economic impact that education has on the country (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008). The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians was instrumental in highlighting Australia’s commitment to the provision of high-quality EC experiences as evident through the establishment of the National Quality Framework (NQF) (ACECQA, 2018). The NQF is in place to raise quality and drive continuous improvement of EC services through implementation of national law, regulations, learning frameworks, assessment and quality rating processes and the NQS. Overall, high-quality EC experiences matter for young children, families, communities, and the country at large.

Affording children agency is an indicator of a high-quality EC program (ACECQA, 2018). Agency is the ability to “make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one’s world” (Department of Education Employment Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009, p. 45). In Australia, children’s sense of agency is prioritised in national education policy documents. For example, in the NQS, high-quality educational programs are recognised as those where children are viewed as competent and capable learners who have agency (ACECQA, 2018). Likewise, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) promotes children as active participants and decision makers in the construction of curriculum and development of their identity (DEEWR, 2009). Furthermore, Goal Two from the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians states that children must have an active role in their learning in order to become a successful learner (MCEETYA, 2008). The establishment of children’s participation as an expectation across policy documents has been influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations [UN], 1989). The UNCRC states that children have the right to be active participants in all matters affecting their lives (UN, 1989). As Australia is a signatory of the UNCRC (UN, 1989), it is important that children’s rights are considered and promoted by early childhood professionals.

Australian EC policy documents promote children’s right to participation. The NQS defines quality provision for EC settings and highlights opportunities for educators to promote children’s participation in the educational program in Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice, specifically Standard 1.1: Program (ACECQA, 2018, pp. 96-97).
Furthermore, Standard 1.2: Practice, illuminates ways that educators uphold children’s right to participation by:

- being responsive to children’s ideas and interests,
- supporting children to make decisions and have influence in the setting, and
- ensuring curriculum decisions promote their participation (ACECQA, 2018, pp. 110-111).

Children’s right to participation in EC settings is also positioned in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). For example, the EYLF explains that by recognising children as having the right and capability to participate in decisions that affect them, educators can move beyond pre-conceived expectations of what children can do and learn (DEEWR, 2009). Furthermore, the Western Australian Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines (KCG) highlight the importance of using children’s experiences, interests and capabilities to plan relevant programs to actively involve them in the setting (School Curriculum and Standards Authority [SCSA], 2014). In order for genuine participation to occur, it is critical to acknowledge the pivotal role that others play in the genuine participation of children in EC settings.

The UNCRC explains that for genuine participation to take place, adults must exhibit a willingness to listen to the child and provide support and guidance when appropriate (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2014). The NQS specifies that educators in high-quality EC settings promote and are responsive to children’s voices (ACECQA, 2018). Echoed in the pedagogical practices of the EYLF, “Responsiveness to children” (pp. 14-15), calls for educators to be responsive to, and utilise children’s interests, strengths, skills and knowledge to inform curriculum decisions (DEEWR, 2009). International researchers have found that despite children’s participation being expected across policy documents, it is not always enacted in practice (Bae, 2010; Kumpulainen, Lipponen, Hilppa, & Mikkola, 2014; Pramling Samuelsson & Sheridan, 2009). In Finland, Kumpulainen et al. (2014) expressed a concern over the impact of rigid primary school curriculum on the ability of educators to enact practices where children were able to participate in decision-making. This indicates that despite a position in policy to uphold children’s right to participation, implementation by educators is not guaranteed. This is a concern, as children who are actively involved are “more likely to be motivated, curious and feel supported in the learning process” (SCSA, 2014, p. 3). Therefore, a result of children participating in the
construction of curriculum is the provision of contextualised curriculum experiences that promote children’s involvement. Involvement, a term used throughout this thesis, is explained by Laevers (1993) as,

\begin{quote}
    a quality of human activity, characterised by concentration and persistence, a high level of motivation, intense perceptions and experience of meaning, a strong flow of energy, a high degree of satisfaction and based on the exploratory drive and basic developmental schemes (p. 61).
\end{quote}

The term involvement has been found to be used interchangeably with other terms and phrases throughout Australian EC policy documents.

The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and NQS (ACECQA, 2018) use a range of terms and phrases to describe a child’s implication with an activity or during an experience. Laevers’ term “involvement” is positioned in the EYLF as a desirable state for children to be in during learning experiences (DEEWR, 2008, p. 10). Related terms and phrases used throughout the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) include “engage actively” (p. 6, 9), “active participation” (p. 12), “engagement” (p. 12, 14), “engage” (p. 30, 34), “involved” (p. 32), “active involvement” (p. 33) and “attuned” (p. 39). The NQS (ACECQA, 2018) uses the terms and phrases “engaged learners” (p. 94), “involvement” (p. 104, 229), “engaged” (p. 178, 230), “actively engaged” (p. 192, 199, 200), “wholly engage” (p. 194), “actively involved” (p.197) and “active involvement” (p. 240). The inconsistency in Australian EC policy documents of the terminology associated with children’s implication with learning may be significant for young children. Ebbeck, Warrier, and Goh (2018) explain that high levels of involvement are required for children’s learning and development. Laevers (2000) stated that when children are highly involved, they are operating at the limit of their capacity, or within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Children’s involvement is reliant on educator practices and the quality of curriculum they provide for young children. There is concern about the quality of educational programs and educator practices being provided in the early years across Australia (Tayler, 2016; Torii et al., 2017).

An alarming statistic has highlighted that one in five rated Australian EC services is failing to meet the standard in Quality Area 1 of the NQS, which pertains to educational program and practice (Torii et al., 2017). Specifically, the E4Kids (Effectiveness Early Educational Experiences) longitudinal study found that EC educators in childcare and school-based settings were providing high levels of emotional support for children but low levels of
instructional support (Tayler, 2016). Additionally, childcare-based educators were found to provide medium support in the organisation of activities that promote children’s learning and engagement, while school-based educators were found to be doing so at a low level of support. Similar results are evident internationally, as reported by the OECD (2018), where educator-child interactions rates at a medium to medium-high for emotional support, medium for environment support, and low for instructional support. Curriculum content is suggested by Tayler (2016) as a means by which educators can provide activities that challenge children and engage their interests. However, Barblett, Knaus, and Barratt-Pugh (2016) have recently identified that Western Australian educators are increasingly feeling pedagogically powerless in response to a downward push of academic focused practices in the early years.

The NQS (ACECQA, 2018), EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and KCG (SCSA, 2014) all call for educators to utilise their in-depth knowledge of children as well as children’s knowledge, strengths and interests to construct curriculum. Despite this call, there is a gap in research that investigates how educators obtain knowledge about children and use this information in their teaching. These documents also highlight the importance of upholding and promoting children’s right to participate in EC settings. There is a need for research into educator practices regarding children’s participation in the construction of curriculum to improve interactions and child involvement as a focus towards the quality of EC education in Australia.

1.3 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis contains six chapters. Chapter One introduced the background and rationale to the research study and an overview of the thesis organisation. Chapter Two reviews the literature pertaining to quality curriculum in EC education, children’s right to participation, child involvement and EC transitions. It also reviews literature relating to funds of knowledge and funds of identity approaches and pedagogical practices that influence children’s participation and involvement. Finally, literature concerning family-setting partnerships is reviewed. Chapter Three outlines the methodology of the research project including the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, participants, methods used to
collect data, and how the data were analysed. In addition, research rigour and ethical considerations are addressed. Chapter Four presents the results of the study, across the four phases of data collection and ascertains themes that were identified upon analysis. Chapter Five discusses the results in relation to the four research questions and applicable literature. Chapter Six, the final chapter, gives a summary of the key findings from the research, highlights the limitations of the study, and presents recommendations for future research.

1.4 Summary

This chapter has provided a background and rationale for the research study that is presented in this thesis. Highlighted in the background was the growing concern over aspects of process quality in Australian EC settings. Specifically, educator practices and educational programs are areas of concern in relation to process quality. The fact that young children’s life outcomes are correlated to the quality of the EC settings they participate in, indicates a need for research into how to improve educator practices and educational programs. There are numerous indicators of the importance of using children’s knowledge and interests to construct curriculum as well as upholding children’s right to participate and promoting their agency through curriculum construction. Finally, the organisation of the thesis was explained in this chapter. The literature reviewed for this study is presented in the following chapter, Chapter Two: Review of the Literature.
Chapter 2 **Review of the Literature**

2.1 Introduction

The literature review will discuss curriculum in EC settings and concerns over the quality of curriculum provision in Australia. Children’s involvement in their learning is presented and discussed as an outcome of process quality. Additionally, literature pertaining to transitions and continuity of transitions in the early years is examined. This is followed by the examination of both a funds of knowledge and a funds of identity approach in relation to the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) calling for educators to have in-depth knowledge of children. Research relating to educator practices and participatory pedagogy is presented in conjunction with literature on children’s rights and agency. Finally, research in relation to the effectiveness of family-setting partnerships in Australian EC settings is reviewed.

2.2 Quality Curriculum in Early Childhood Education

Commonly there are two aspects used in the assessment of EC setting quality: structural and process. Ishimine and Tayler (2014) explain that structural aspects of quality include facilities, resources, ratios, and qualifications. Process quality relates to interactions between children and educators, among children, and among adults, and the nature of pedagogy and leadership. Curriculum, associated with process quality, is defined in the EYLF as encompassing all of “the interactions, experiences, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 9). The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) Principles, Practices, and Learning Outcomes inform Australian EC educators’ curriculum decision-making. The decisions that educators make about the curriculum contribute to children’s learning and development (ACECQA, 2018), which makes high-quality curriculum a priority across Australian EC settings, however, concerns have been raised nationally with the quality of curriculum being offered.

The final E4Kids longitudinal study report revealed educator-child interactions, and the everyday experiences offered for young children are not meeting the minimum quality
standard (Tayler, 2016). The E4Kids large-scale longitudinal study commenced in 2010 with the aim of evaluating the independent effects of EC programs on children's learning, cognitive and social development, and wellbeing (Tayler, Ishimine, Cloney, Cleveland, & Thorpe, 2013). Process quality is the direct interactional experience of children in EC settings, including educational experiences, educator-child and peer interactions, and routines (Mathers, Singler, & Karemaker, 2012) and is the primary driver of children’s development in EC (Siraj et al., 2017). Tayler (2016) has suggested curriculum content and professional training and mentoring on effective instructional support and educator-child interactions, as a means to improve process quality and the subsequent influence on child outcomes. Recently, research has looked more closely at curriculum and the quality of educator-child interactions.

An Australian study by Howard et al. (2018), aimed to identify the impact of curricula and educator-child interactions on child development. The researchers used a new, more specific interaction quality measurement tool, the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEW) scale (Howard et al., 2018). The SSTEW scale was used to measure the language, numeracy and socio-behavioural development of 669 children at the beginning and end of their preschool year (Howard et al., 2018). Specifically, the SSTEW scale is claimed to identify a range of relational and intentional pedagogical practices such as:

- how well staff know individual children (interests, beliefs, cultures, and achievements);
- support for children’s curiosity, thinking, and questioning;
- the provision of appropriate, cognitively challenging activities and discussions with the educators and between children;
- support confidence, risk taking, and autonomy in the children’s learning;
- supporting each child according to their needs;
- evidence of a range of different teaching and learning strategies and content knowledge; and
- home-setting relationship (Kingston & Siraj, 2017 as cited in Howard et al., 2018, p. 3).

Results from Howard et al.’s study show that the SSTEW scale is valid against other process quality scales and that children’s language, numeracy and socio-behavioural development is
correlated with high-quality educator-child and child-child interactions. Interactional aspects of process quality were therefore positioned as a potential area of focus for quality assessment authorities. Curriculum content and interactions as a focus towards high-quality EC settings is related to the research of Ferre Laevers.

Laevers, Director of the Centre for Experiential Education in Belgium, has devoted his career to exploring quality in education. Laevers (2005) identifies the implementation of the curriculum, part of process quality, as the main driver for positive outcomes for children. Specifically, Laevers (1994) identifies two key elements that are critical to effective learning environments: the degree of emotional wellbeing and the level of involvement of the children. Children’s involvement levels are an indication of how well the learning environment meets children’s intellectual and developmental needs (South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services [SADECS], 2008). Research on child involvement, and how it is measured, is presented in the next section.

2.3 Children’s Involvement in Educational Settings

Laevers (1994) describes the term involvement as a state of intense, whole-hearted mental activity. Involvement is a term used in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and the NQS (ACECQA, 2018) interchangeably with other terms and phrases to describe the investment children have in learning experiences. Laevers developed a tool to measure the level of young children’s involvement, called the Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children (LIS-YC).

The LIS-YC is one of the few quality measures that focus at the level of the child (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014). Australian EC educators can access the scale through the Assessing for Learning and Development in the Early Years Using Observation Scales: Reflect, Respect, Relate resource (SADECS, 2008). This resource was created and distributed to all settings in Australia catering for children from birth to eight years using the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009). The resource is intended as a professional development tool for EC educators working with young children (SADECS, 2008). Included in the resource, are four observations scales that promote self-reflection and inquiry into the quality of interactions.
between educators and children (SADECS, 2008). The four variables of quality in the resource are:

- educators’ relationships with children,
- an active learning environment,
- children’s wellbeing during their day in early learning and care settings, and
- children’s involvement in their curriculum (SADECS, 2008).

The Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) is designed for assessing setting quality through children’s level of involvement. To effectively use the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008), educators need to familiarise themselves with the involvement signals. Laevers (1994) describes nine signals for involvement as: concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, facial expression and posture (non-verbals), persistence, precision, reaction time, verbal utterances/language, and satisfaction. It is important to note that there are four essential signals that must be present for sustained, intense involvement; concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, and persistence. Educators assign a global rating of low, medium or high to these indicators and based on those ratings, assign an overall involvement score between one (no activity) and five (sustained intense activity). Recognising children’s level of involvement can assist educators in making equitable and robust curriculum decisions (Harcourt & Keen, 2012). The influence of curriculum on children’s involvement levels has been researched internationally.

A recent research study conducted in Vietnam that utilised the LIS-YC with 519 children, found that by using the scale, educators were able to better understand the children’s learning needs and make necessary adjustments to the curriculum (Lenaerts, Braeye, Nguyen, Dang, & Vromant, 2017). Intriguingly, this study found that boys appeared more often to be at risk than girls of not being rated as highly involved in the curriculum (Lenaerts et al., 2017). It was positioned by the researchers that through using the LIS-YC as a monitoring approach, equity across diverse learners could be mediated by educators through the curriculum decisions educators made. Use of the LIS-YC is therefore an opportunity for educators to examine and reflect upon their pedagogical practices and decision-making, as a way of improving curriculum quality. The EYLF explains that children’s active involvement in learning supports their understandings, thinking and inquiry processes, and explicitly asks educators to recognise, value and provide opportunities for
children to be actively involved in their learning (DEEWR, 2009). Children are often identified as highly-involved during play (Laevers, 2005) and the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) positions “Learning through play” (p. 15) as an apposite pedagogical practice. Despite the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) positioning effective EC Practices, educators may draw upon a range of theories and perspectives to guide their work with young children. Some EC research has specifically focused on what influence the approach educators employ has on children’s levels of involvement (Ebbeck et al., 2012; Ebbeck et al., 2018).

Research by Ebbeck et al. (2012) has shown that a socio-constructivist approach in EC settings positively influences child involvement levels. They found that this approach engages children actively to make their own learning discoveries. The research study was conducted with 81 children in a Singapore child study centre and used a pre-post-test method to ascertain if an intervention using a socio-constructivist approach to curriculum was effective. The result of the six-month intervention indicated positively that children’s active involvement in the curriculum was influenced by the enactment of socio-constructivist practices among educators. More recently, an additional study was conducted by Ebbeck et al. (2018), again in Singapore, where a relationships-based curriculum was implemented and child involvement levels were measured pre-and post-implementation. The researchers found that children’s active involvement levels increased upon the enactment of a specific curriculum, in this case a relationships-based curriculum. Characteristics of a relationships-based curriculum emphasise attachment, children’s wellbeing, contextualised learning experiences, and children’s sense of agency. These two studies have shown that a curriculum which prioritises children’s agency and delivers personally meaningful learning experiences, coupled with high-quality educator-child interactions results in increased involvement levels for children. These findings are significant as high levels of child involvement are important to children’s learning and development (Ebbeck et al., 2018). In addition to involvement, transitions in EC are important to positive outcomes for children.
2.4 Transitions and Continuity in Early Childhood

Transitions are recognised as having a significant impact on children’s life outcomes, although contrasting approaches are a concern for the continuity of transitions internationally (OECD, 2017). Readiness and transition are two foci in research pertaining to children starting school. In the review of 356 international research articles, Dockett and Perry (2013) found that over seventy percent focused on some aspect of readiness, where children are prepared and ready for formal schooling during the early years. In contrast, research with a focus on transition was identified in just under thirty percent of the reviewed articles. Research in relation to transitions explored the programs and practices employed during children’s transition to and within EC settings. From their review, Dockett and Perry (2013) highlight a positive start to school is at risk if transitions focus on “the readiness attributes of children” (p. 172), rather than recognising the contextual and cultural factors of transitions, where relationships among all stakeholders are critical. This concern is echoed in the OECD Starting Strong Transitions report (2017) where a focus on settings being ready for the child, rather than the children being ready for school has been posited. The motivation for this directive is to contest the schoolification of the early years, where children are exposed to the culture of primary school in order to prepare them for school (OECD, 2017). Furthermore, the report suggests that by settings being ready for the child, the amount of change that children and parents experience in the recipient culture is minimised, which could further enhance transitions. The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) outlines in the Practice of “Continuity of learning and transitions” (p. 16) that educators should consider children’s family and community ways of “being, belonging and becoming” (p. 16) and build on such knowledge for successful transitions. There are various types of transitions that children, families and settings experience in the early years.

Transitions in the early years can be both vertical, between educational settings, and horizontal, between settings in children’s everyday lives (Kagan, 1991). Horizontal transitions include the transition from home to school, where children “cross a cultural boundary from home to kindergarten and, in fact, they commute between the two cultural settings” (Lam & Pollard, 2006, p. 123). The transition from home to school can be related to Campbell Clark’s (2000) research on border theory. Using this theory, children can be seen
as “border-crossers” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 759) between their home domain and EC setting domain. These domains consist of context specific cultures that children must navigate and adjust to during the transition among settings. Importantly, in these domains are what Campbell Clark (2000) calls “border-keepers” (p. 761), who play a role in balancing the transition from being slight to extreme for the “border-crosser” (p. 759). In the context of EC, the “border-keepers” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 761) can be seen as the educators (setting domain) and parents (home domain). Using border theory, a slight transition is where children would find balance among the domains and little role conflict between their home-identity and setting-identity would occur. In opposition, an extreme transition is one where the cultures of the domains are vastly different and significant adjustments must be made to the child’s identity to ‘fit’ into the culture of the domain. Thomson and Hall (2008) highlight that the recognition and inclusion of children’s home and community practices assists in building positive social identities and surfaces the “myriad ways in which the mandated curriculum excludes some and privileges others” (p. 88). The notion of funds of knowledge has been positioned to recognise the value and contribution that family and community make to educational settings.

2.5 A Funds of Knowledge Approach

Funds of knowledge refers to the lived experiences of children at home and in their communities (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Research using a funds of knowledge approach began in the late 1980’s in the United States of America (USA). The premise for this work, which took an educational and anthropological view, was an assumption that the “educational process could be greatly enhanced when teachers learn about their students’ everyday lives” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, p. 6). The researchers conducted ethnographic home visits to learn about the knowledge that children bring from their home and community, with an intention to go beyond stereotypical ideas of certain cultures. The viewpoint this study had on culture is important to highlight. The research focused on the practices of the household; what they actually do and what they think about what they do (González et al., 2005). The researchers took this view of culture instead of group norms and the expectations that are associated with certain groups, as often norms are not shared
among everyone in the group. Furthermore, their interviews were focused around three key areas: family history and labour history, household routine practices, and how parents’ view and construct their roles as parents. Research in the area of funds of knowledge has since been implemented across many countries, and across varying levels of schooling, reporting positive impacts resulting from the implementation of the approach. One example is a New Zealand (NZ) based study that employed a funds of knowledge approach in an EC setting.

Hedges and Cooper (2016) in their case study conducted with 15 teachers and 80 children, found that a funds of knowledge approach can stimulate children’s interests and assist educators in deeply understanding these interests. The NZ study also found that there is a potential to minimise children’s interests if adults do not interpret children’s play choices within the setting using a funds of knowledge theoretical/methodological frame. The researchers highlighted the pivotal role that relationships with families has in being able to identify the significance of children’s interests. They purport that trust and deep dialogue with families opens up the possibility for educators to interpret children’s interests, in relation to their funds of knowledge. Chesworth (2016) also identified that educators can frequently misinterpret children’s interests as relating to their choice of play materials in the setting.

The English study with four and five-year-old children, found that parents’ contextualisation of children’s play choices, assists educators in understanding the cultural influences on children’s interests (Chesworth, 2016). Interestingly, Chesworth (2016) posits that children’s diverse funds of knowledge can impact the inclusion and exclusion of other children in their play, and that educators’ affordance of certain play materials can preference certain interests over others. Chesworth (2016) calls for further research that contributes to understanding how diverse funds of knowledge contributes to discussion about power and agency within educational settings. As seen in the work of Hedges and Cooper (2016) and Chesworth (2016), funds of knowledge can be used as a theoretical/methodological approach. It can also be used for the purpose of curriculum construction as an educational intervention.

Funds of knowledge, as an educational intervention, is “aimed at transforming teaching activities by connecting school curricula to the funds of knowledge of their students” (Llopart, Serra, & Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p. 572). Educators can use knowledge about children’s family and community resources for pedagogical purposes (Subero,
Vujasinovic, & Esteban-Guitart, 2017) to “disrupt the privileged and dominant discourses in early childhood classrooms” (Miller Marsh, Zhulamanova, & Porto, 2019, p. 228). A recent study conducted by Miller Marsh et al. (2019) explored funds of knowledge as an educational intervention. The research took place in a child study centre situated in the USA, with 21 children, aged three to five years, two lead teachers and one associate teacher. The researchers identified and selected a focus group of children who were observed to not be participating in the curriculum experiences offered. Photography was then used to make visible children’s funds of knowledge, and subsequent curriculum experiences were offered that related to children’s home and community practices. The research team then observed children’s interaction with these newly designed experiences. Their findings indicate there was a shift in children’s participation in the curriculum experiences offered, specifically that the children were better positioned to build connections with one another and express themselves in the way that they knew best. This research highlights the benefit of using children’s funds of knowledge to construct personally meaningful curriculum experiences that work towards an agenda of equity for all children. In addition to these study’s findings, there are other positive associations attributed to a funds of knowledge approach.

Llopart, Serra, and Esteban-Guitart (2018) recently conducted a study in Spain that assessed the strengths and weakness of a funds of knowledge approach, from teachers’ perspectives. They were, in part, motivated to conduct this study, as there was little to no research that identified weaknesses in the funds of knowledge approach. The teachers in the study had engaged in the entirety of the funds of knowledge approach which included training, conducting home visits, creating and implementing the educational activities based on the children’s funds of knowledge. The 12 teachers were situated in one school, teaching children in pre-school and the first two years of primary school. Overall, their findings indicate numerous benefits of the funds of knowledge approach. One of the benefits identified was improved family-school partnerships through establishing positive expectations about school and relationships based on mutual trust. A funds of knowledge approach was reported to improve educators’ understanding of children’s attitudes and behaviours by understanding the family context. Teachers also benefited from the employment of a funds of knowledge approach due to the collaborative nature of the approach bringing them closer to their colleagues and an inclusion of families into their
educational community. Furthermore, educators felt they were better equipped to teach due to understanding the culture of families which in turn modified the prejudices and stereotypes associated with families and children. Children benefited from a funds of knowledge approach because of their increased school attendance and their changes in attitude towards school. Llopart et al. (2018) also identified three negatively associated categories of using a funds of knowledge approach.

Three negatively associated categories found by Llopart et al. (2018) include that a funds of knowledge approach requires time, there may be difficulty in recognising implicit cultural codes, and the power relationship between home and school. The study also identified four areas that teachers recommended for improvement: feedback to families about resulting activities planned, more school staff involvement, further training for interviews, and facilitation of sharing the resulting experiences for children across staff/year levels for continuity. Despite the majority of positive outcomes identified by Llopart et al. (2018), Subero et al. (2017) argues that a funds of knowledge approach primarily focuses on adult social worlds, and in so doing children’s own constructed social worlds have been overlooked. The tendency to overlook a child’s social world highlights the importance of investing in children’s identities, possibly through a funds of identity approach, as a way to overcome the narrowness of a funds of knowledge approach.

2.6 A Funds of Identity Approach

Funds of identity is described as “the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person’s self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31). A person’s funds of knowledge becomes their funds of identity, when they use their funds of knowledge to define themselves (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Identity, from this approach, is perceived as a social construct, as identity connects a person’s sense of self with what they do. Furthermore, identity is viewed as something a person distributes among significant others, artefacts, activities, and settings. There are five types of funds of identity: geographical (symbols of places), practical (any meaningful activity), cultural (artefacts and social categories), social (significant others), and institutional (any social institution). These five
types of funds of identity are considered to be a “box of tools” (p. 252) that a person uses to define themselves and that educators can use to construct meaningful and contextualised learning experiences for children (Subero et al., 2017). Miller Marsh and Zhulamanova (2017) suggest that educators can use a funds of identity approach to facilitate connections between home, school, and community. This suggestion is based on their research study that employed a funds of identity approach as a curriculum intervention.

A study conducted in the USA, explored ways of identifying children’s funds of identity in order construct curriculum that would “engage” them in their classroom (Miller Marsh & Zhulamanova, 2017, p. 1013). The study, with 36 children, aged three to five years, gathered information about children’s funds of identity through asking the children to photograph things that were meaningful to them in their homes and communities. Upon analysis of the data, the researchers were able to categorise children’s funds of identity according to the five types, to then make adjustments to the curriculum that further “engaged” (p. 1013) the children in the setting (Miller Marsh & Zhulamanova). For example, two of the children’s photographs and interviews indicated that artefacts based on popular culture (i.e. Disney princesses) were significant to them, yet not visible in the educational setting. Though there was hesitation from the teacher to provide commercial items relating to Disney princesses, materials were offered so that children could construct their own princess attire and accessories. The curriculum adjustments resulted in a “stronger, more inclusive classroom environment in which children were engaged” (Miller Marsh & Zhulamanova, 2017, p. 1013). There is also literature that suggests strategies for obtaining knowledge of children’s funds of identity.

Educators can employ a variety of strategies to obtain knowledge of children’s funds of identity for the purpose of contextualising the curriculum (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2017). Contextualisation is where the curriculum content links with children’s lives. Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2017) selected 22 peer reviewed articles that showed how artefacts made by children could be used pedagogically to mobilise children’s knowledge and experiences in and out of school. These artefacts, labelled “identity artefacts” by Subero, Llopart, Siqués, and Esteban-Guitart (2018, p. 157), have a dual purpose. First, they are “extensions or augmentations of the conception people have about themselves and what is significant to them” (p. 163) and second, they can be “used as teaching and learning resources” (p. 163). The strategies identified by Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2017) that
have potential in obtaining information about children’s funds of identity included: texts, artistic productions, digital media, and photographs. Specifically, in photographs, Photovoice is hypothesised as an effective method to use.

Photovoice is “a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2017) suggest that by using Photovoice to obtain knowledge of children’s funds of identity, educators can create rich, identity-based curriculum. Furthermore, they purport the photographs to act as “identity investment” (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2017, p. 267). Identity investment is where an activity recognises and affirms “the learners’ identities and sociocultural legacies” which consequently cultivates their identity (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2017, p. 257). In another paper, Subero et al. (2017) also recommended strategies and resources to use children’s funds of identity pedagogically.

Subero et al. (2017) suggest utilising identity texts (dual language and collective books), arts-based methods (self-portrait, significant circle) and shoeboxes. The shoebox activity they suggest is where children bring important items from home to school in a shoebox, in order to elicit a child’s funds of identity. The idea came from reviewing the United Kingdom’s (UK) Home-School Knowledge Project, where high school students were provided with shoeboxes so that they could add personally meaningful objects to the box, as a way for educators to find out more about them (Hughes & Pollard, 2006). The items in the shoebox acted as a provocation for learning activities, such as literacy experiences that were focused around the items. Despite the UK project not relating their research specifically to funds of identity, Subero et al. (2017) suggest that the shoeboxes suit a funds of identity approach and can be adapted to the needs of younger children. The shoeboxes are proposed to support the development of an identity-based curriculum, which encompasses meaningful and contextualised learning experiences for children (Subero et al., 2017). Children’s funds of identity need to be “activated and used constructively” in order to promote learner-centred, and stimulating environments that promote children’s voice and instigate curriculum planning (Subero et al., 2017, p. 260). Therefore, educator practices must be considered as critical to the utilisation of this knowledge and promotion of children’s voices and participation in co-constructing the curriculum.
2.7 Educator Pedagogy and Practices

The NQS (ACECQA, 2018) situates educator practices that afford children agency, and children’s right to participation as characteristics of high-quality EC settings. Recent research, both in Australia and internationally has investigated the practices that promote children’s participation in EC settings. One area of research in particular, participatory pedagogy, provides insight into the provision of children’s participation by educators. Active listening, negotiation and interpretation are characteristics of participatory pedagogy (Kangas, Venninen, & Ojala, 2016). Participatory pedagogy encourages children’s involvement and participation in EC settings (Kangas et al., 2016). Participatory practices also position children as having control when genuine choice is offered and democratic processes are promoted (Theobald, Danby, & Ailwood, 2011). Findings from a Finnish study conducted by Kangas et al. (2016) resulted in a framework to develop participatory pedagogy in EC settings (Figure 2.1).

![Figure 2.1 Framework of developing participatory practices (Kangas et al., 2016, p. 92)]
The participatory practices study took place with 2745 educators, across 350 centres with 15,544 children aged one to seven years. Three categories of pedagogical practices were identified as pertinent to participatory pedagogy:

- facilitating participation through the learning environment and atmosphere,
- supporting children’s participation through professional skills, and
- facilitating ongoing participatory practices (Kangas et al., 2016, p. 91).

The researchers suggest the framework be used by educators as a tool to observe and reflect on their daily participatory practices. Another area of research is educator-child interactions that focus on specific strategies used by educators to promote children’s agency.

An Australian research study investigated practical strategies that educators use to promote children’s agency in nine pre-school classrooms with three-and-a-half to five-year-old children (Houen, Danby, Farrell, & Thorpe, 2016). The research analysed the influence that educators who use ‘I wonder...’ formulations in their interactions with children had on children’s agentic actions. The researchers found that ‘I wonder...’ requests result in a co-constructed exchange where children respond in three categories of ways. These three categories include: in agreement, moderated, and declined. Importantly, if the response is accepted, the action of the educator following the child’s response can further promote their agency. The researchers rationalise that in order to facilitate high-quality educator-child interactions, educators need to build and use a range of pedagogical practices that encourage child’s participation and agency. Democratic educator practices have been identified as a way to promote children’s participation and agency.

A New Zealand study by Brough (2012) focused on identifying and developing democratic educator practices to support the co-construction of curriculum. The study was conducted with three educators who collectively taught 75 children, aged five to 12 years. The study took a participatory action research approach and over the duration of the study, the educators “shifted from talking about democracy to thinking democratically and acting democratically” (Brough, 2012, p. 364). This shift was influenced by employing teaching strategies such as: asking empowering questions, shared decision-making with the children, and increasing levels of child contribution to the planning process. Brough (2012) purports that democratic learning environments rely on such educator strategies in order to give rise
to relevant, meaningful learning contexts, where children’s voices are central to the
construction of curriculum. These findings are similar to a study conducted in a Western
Australian school that focused on promoting children’s agency through their curriculum.

Giamminuti and See (2017) found that children’s agency and their needs were
upheld, in alignment with children’s rights, through the provision of and access to materials,
their educators, and the learning experiences offered. Additionally, the educators in the
setting challenged a needs-based perspective of the curriculum policy document by
interpreting what children needed to understand from the document and developed rich,
meaningful learning experiences that went beyond covering content descriptors. In order to
do so, children and families participated in the construction of learning experiences as a
means to establish what was meaningful for children to learn about. Brogaard Clausen
(2015) states that it is the shared responsibility of professionals, children, and parents, to
advocate for democratic practices in the early years. Genuine partnerships with families are
therefore important to promote children’s participation in the construction of curriculum
and their everyday experiences in EC settings.

2.8 Family-Setting Partnerships

Parental engagement in a child’s learning is strongly associated with children’s
academic success, school retention, socio-emotional development and adaptation to society
(OECD, 2012). The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and NQS (ACECQA, 2018) position partnerships with
families as central to the realisation of the learning outcomes and quality of a setting.
Despite the expectation of genuine partnerships with families, this is not always reflected in
practice. In an Australian case study, that took place in a preschool setting with children
aged three and four years, researchers investigated relationships with families (Rouse &
O’Brien, 2017). The research study focused on the needs and expectations for partnerships
from the perspective of families who were new to the setting and those who had attended
the year prior. Furthermore, the research investigated how the educator responded to the
families. Their findings indicate a disparity between the perceptions of partnerships and the
actual nature of the partnerships. Families in the study expressed a lack of partnership with
the educator, and instead found the relationship to be one-directional, where the educator
was positioned as the expert. The researchers suggest that a discrepancy in language across policy documents can influence the way that educators “interpret and enact their role in forming partnerships with families” (Rouse & O’Brien, 2017, p. 51). However, it is important to identify that since the article was published a new version of the NQS (ACECQA, 2018) has been released. Furthermore, Rouse and O’Brien (2017) propose that reciprocal relationships can be established when information is mutually shared between family and the setting. One way that information is mutually shared between the setting and families is pedagogical documentation.

Pedagogical documentation has been identified as a tool to strengthen family-setting relationships and mediate the exchange of information about children between family and setting (Reynolds & Duff, 2016). The researchers undertook a study in Australia with 37 families from a three-to-five-year-old EC setting. Their aim for the study was to identify family perceptions, beliefs, and expectations about their child’s learning being communicated through the use of pedagogical documentation. Analysis of the families’ responses indicated that the documentation strengthened the family-setting relationship and provided opportunities for conversation about children’s learning with the educators, further developing the relationship. Families also reported children benefiting from their learning being presented through documentation. Reynolds and Duff (2016) explain that families emphasised children’s sense of identity being positively developed through having an instrument to reflect and discuss their involvement in the curriculum with their family members. Additionally, the pedagogical documentation instigated a reciprocity of knowledge sharing between families and educators about children’s knowledge and their interests. Seeing the family/parents as experts, and the child’s first teacher, is positioned both in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12) and NQS (ACECQA, 2018, p. 248).

2.9 Summary

The literature review identified that in Australia, educator-child interactions and learning experiences offered in some EC settings are not meeting quality standards. Children’s involvement in their learning was also discussed as this is critical to their academic and life outcomes. Children’s involvement is an outcome of the process quality of
EC settings, specifically the curriculum. It is evident that there is a need for further investigation into curriculum construction and it is imperative to investigate influences on children’s involvement. A specific measurement tool, the LIS-YC has been developed by Ferre Laevers to measure children’s involvement levels. Research using the LIS-YC has indicated that children’s involvement is influenced by the pedagogical approach educators employ in their setting. Transitions in EC were also discussed, in relation to child readiness attributes versus transition practices and border theory, where educators and parents are the “border-keepers” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 761) and the children border-crossers (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 759). The importance of educators establishing a border and setting domain so that children are able to unite their home-identity and setting-identity was discussed. Additionally, literature relating to a funds of knowledge and a funds of identity approach were examined as a means to unite children’s home and setting identities. Employing a funds of knowledge approach has been shown to have many benefits for parents, children and educators. A funds of identity approach used to inform curriculum decisions has been identified as a way to promote inclusivity and deeply involve children in EC settings. Australian EC policy documents call for educators to construct curriculum based on their in-depth knowledge of children, however, there is concern over the superficial interpretation of children’s interests and how this impacts meaningful, authentic experiences from being offered. Children’s right to participate and partnerships with families may be evident in policy documents, but it appears that policy does not guarantee practice. It is necessary to enquire why and how EC educators promote both children’s and families’ participation in the construction of curriculum. The following chapter in this thesis will present details of how the research study was designed, Chapter Three: Research Design.
Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of how the research study was designed. The chapter includes the conceptual framework and presents the research aim and four research questions. The theoretical framework is introduced followed by the methodology and methods. The study was conducted in four phases, therefore, a description of the participants, methods used for data collection, and data analysis is provided for each phase. Finally, the rigour of the research study, ethical considerations, and the significance of the study are addressed.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework explains the central constructs to be studied in a research project and the presumed relationships between them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The conceptual framework for this research study is provided in Figure 3.1. At the top of the conceptual framework, there are two boxes, labelled: context and process. The context of learning and teaching includes the rich environment that educators plan for and implement, and that children experience. This is made up of the space, activities and materials (curriculum) in the environment and are presumed to be influenced by educator’s information about children’s knowledge, identity, strengths, ideas, cultures, abilities, and interests. The process is concerned with educator practices, specifically, the practices that promote children’s agency and genuine participation in learning. There is an assumed reciprocal relationship between the two, indicated by the double arrow. The arrow leading down from these two elements indicates that children’s involvement is a direct result of the context and process of teaching and learning. Children’s involvement is an indicator of high-quality curriculum and a high-quality curriculum promotes child involvement, thus justifying the dual arrow. Finally, the conceptual framework shows that high-quality curriculum is related to children’s overall positive outcomes.
Figure 3.1 Conceptual framework

Context
Rich environment based on children’s knowledge, identity, strengths, ideas, cultures, abilities, and interests

Process
Educator practices that promote children’s agency and genuine participation

Child Involvement

High-Quality Curriculum

Positive Outcomes for Children
3.3 Research Aim

The aim of this study was to investigate why and how educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum, and to identify the subsequent influence on child involvement.

3.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. How do educators gather information about children and their interests?

2. What knowledge do educators have about funds of knowledge and funds of identity?

3. How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?

4. How does a curriculum constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity influence child involvement?

3.5 Theoretical Framework

The research study discussed in this thesis took a socio-cultural perspective. Socio-cultural theory emphasises “learning as occurring through participation, between people in situated contexts” (Hedges & Cullen, 2012, p. 925). Participation is more than mere presence, it requires the careful attention to the relationships, content, change, context and cultures in which participation occurs. Knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) and identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) are constructed in socially mediated situations. Hedges and Cullen (2012) state that meaningful knowledge is constructed when children engage in self-motivated and authentic experiences. They argue that knowledge-
creation experiences and resulting dispositional understandings are important to learning.

Socio-cultural theory encourages researchers to focus on social interactions in cultural contexts (Rogoff, 2003). Using this lens, it is important for researchers to recognise the context of the research (Rogoff, 2003). Context is a diverse and complex construct, where thinking and being are influenced by culture (Vygotsky, 1978). Rogoff (2003) suggests that in order to acknowledge the complex and dynamic nature of individuals’ participation, researchers should report findings in past tense, and describe participants and their backgrounds using narrative. Rogoff (2003) also cautions against statements being made based on single observations. The socio-cultural framework foregrounds participation and the influence that relationships, families, communities, and culture have on authentic knowledge building experiences. Accordingly, the research study conceptualises curriculum as socially constructed.

3.6 Methodology

The research study employed a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research focuses on the social world and is flexible and fluid in nature (Liamputtong, 2013). In qualitative studies, researchers must try to understand the meaning and interpretations of people’s behaviour as a means of providing the narrative of their experience (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). The research study took a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach where the aim is to investigate reality in order to change it (Liamputtong, 2013). In PAR, a group of participants intend their work to result in action, change, or improvement in the area of research (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). Traditionally, action research has been regarded as a cyclical process, with self-reflective cycles as seen in Figure 3.2 (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Further conceptualisation of action research was presented by Schmuck (2006) with a series of seven problem-solving steps that moves the research from one situation to a desired goal. The goals include:

1. Specify the problem,
2. Assess the situation with force-field analysis,
3. Specify multiple solutions,
4. Plan for action,
5. Anticipate obstacles,
6. Take action, and
7. Evaluate (Schmuck, 2006, pp. 18-19).

In the context of EC research, Mukherji and Albon (2018) suggest viewing action research as messy and fluid. They suggest there are multiple perspectives within EC, thus universal answers to improve practice from action research is unlikely. Instead, they propose an alternate view to the action research cycle of Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) and Schmuck’s (2006) series of problem solving steps. They suggest that action
research is not cyclical, but instead has the potential to overlap and ideas changed or modified through the process (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

PAR suits those with a social constructivist view of reality as here, “researchers actively intervene in a context with a view to transforming it” (Byrne, 2017a, p. 2). PAR suited the research study as it investigated curriculum construction across a variety of Kindergarten settings, in schools and childcare services. Furthermore, this study took action in the construction of curriculum by making use of two curriculum intervention activities to obtain information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity in one setting.

PAR is implemented collaboratively with participants and assists in studying, reframing and reconstructing social practices (Byrne, 2017a). PAR was selected, in part, due to its emphasis on working with people, as opposed to on people (McIntyre, 2014). Moreover, PAR was selected due to its suitability for research with marginalised persons, such as children (Liamputtong, 2013). The researcher aligns with Robertson, Kinos, Barbour, Pukk, and Rosqvist (2015) who suggest that research should be conducted with children, rather than on children, seeking their thoughts, opinions, feelings and perceptions. PAR is an opportunity to conduct research with children, which positions the child as a valued social actor and research partner whose voice contributes to meaningful data (Mayne & Howitt, 2015).

3.7 Methods

The research study used a range of qualitative research methods to collect data, which is common in PAR (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). In particular, the study employed semi-structured interviews, participant observation, video observation, photographs, document review and field notes as methods. Data were collected in all four phases of the study. An overview of the methods employed in each phase is discussed in detail below and presented in Table 3.1 alongside the sampling and analysis details. The researcher recorded field notes throughout all phases of the study in a research-based field notebook.
Table 3.1 Overview of the design for the four phases of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase One- Interviews</th>
<th>Phase Two- Interview and Video Observations</th>
<th>Phase Three- Curriculum Intervention Activities</th>
<th>Phase Four- Video Observation and Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A convenience sample:</td>
<td>A purposeful sample:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 school-based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten educators</td>
<td>1 Kindergarten setting (from the initial four)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 child-care based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten educators</td>
<td>4 children for the focus group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio recorded semi-</td>
<td>Audio recorded semi-</td>
<td>Participant and video</td>
<td>Video observations of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structured interviews</td>
<td>structured interview</td>
<td>observation during the Shoebox activity and</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Video observations of children</td>
<td>Photovoice Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcribed interviews</td>
<td>Transcribed interview</td>
<td>Types of funds of knowledge and funds of</td>
<td>Transcribed interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>identity analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic analysis using NVivo software</td>
<td>Thematic analysis using NVivo software</td>
<td>Thematic analysis using NVivo software</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SADECS (2008) involvement scale ratings using video observations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SADECS (2008) involvement scale ratings using video observations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparative analysis of pre- and post-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intervention using SADECS (2008) rating sheets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taking field notes of conversations, observations, reflections, and interpretations of the data collected can act as a guide during critical reflection periods (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). The research participants, methods, and analysis for Phase One are presented in the next section.

### 3.7.1 Phase One participants, methods, and analysis

**Phase One participants**

The research study utilised a convenience sample in Phase One, which “allows researchers to access individuals who are conveniently available and willing to participate in a study” (Liamputtong, 2013, p. 15). In Phase One, two childcare-based Kindergarten settings and two school-based Kindergarten settings were invited, and agreed, to participate in the study. It was important to the study that a range of Kindergarten settings be explored, childcare and school-based, as the context of the setting is acknowledged to influence what occurs in the setting. The settings were selected according to the following criteria: the settings had to be located in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia, and have an established relationship with the University. Furthermore, the childcare-based Kindergarten settings were required to have obtained the rating of “Exceeding” in all seven Quality Areas of the NQS (ACECQA, 2018, p. 331). High-quality settings were important to work with in the study due to investigating young children’s involvement levels in their setting, and involvement being an outcome of process quality. The school-based Kindergarten settings were selected due to the declaration made on their public websites that they consider children’s interests as being important to making curriculum decisions, which pertained to the study’s focus of children’s participation in curriculum construction. The Kindergarten settings were invited to participate in the research study through an email invitation, with an information letter attached, sent to the Centre Director (childcare) (Appendix A) and Principal (school). All four agreed to participate in the study, and the Centre Director/Principal completed a consent to participate form to be a part of the study (Appendix B). Once the Centre Director/Principal agreed for the study to be conducted
on their site, they were asked to nominate a Kindergarten educator in their setting to be invited to participate in the semi-structured interview. The researcher provided the Centre Director/Principal with an information letter (Appendix C) to distribute to the Kindergarten educator of their choosing. The Kindergarten educators made contact with the researcher and returned the consent forms (Appendix D) via email. All of whom agreed to take part in the study.

The participants in Phase One included four Kindergarten educators from each setting. Pseudonyms are used for all participants in the research study, as per the University Ethical Human Research protocol and ethics approval for this study. The Kindergarten educators from childcare-based settings who participated in Phase One of this study were Ava and Mary. Ava was a Curriculum Leader in a long day care setting that provided care for children aged six-weeks to school-age. In her role, she was responsible for supporting educators in the setting with programming and planning. Mary was a Room Leader in a long day care setting in a service that provided care for children from birth to aged six. Mary worked with children aged two-and-a-half to six years and was responsible for programming, planning, and managing a team of staff who worked across two of the rooms in the centre. Jane and Sofie were Kindergarten teachers from the school-based settings. Jane worked full time at a school as both a Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teacher. In Western Australia, children in Pre-Kindergarten are aged between three and four years and children in Kindergarten are aged between four and five years. Sofie also worked full time in a school as both a Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teacher. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the Phase One research participants.

Table 3.2 Phase One participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator name (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Setting type</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Curriculum leader</td>
<td>• Currently pursuing Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>• Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Phase One data collection methods**

The intention of Phase One in the study, in relation to PAR, was to reflect on the nature of curriculum construction in Kindergarten settings and to identify how and why educators gather information about children. Data were collected in Phase One using semi-structured interviews and field notes over a period of two months. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher at a convenient time and location for each Kindergarten educator. The researcher sought permission, both in the consent form and verbally on the day of the interview, to audio-record the interview and this consent was given. Audio recorded interviews were preferred as Olsen (2012) explains that this allows the researcher to revisit the conversations, thus reducing the need for detailed written notes to be taken during the interview. It was important to the researcher that during the interview she could attend to the participants body language, facial expressions, and interact with the participant instead of taking copious amounts of notes. Furthermore, Mukherji and Albon (2018) explain that an effective semi-structured interview requires an interpersonal rapport in order to probe for further details and adapt questions to meet the needs of the interviewee.
Semi-structured interviews have a schedule that is centred around the concept of a prompt (Olsen, 2012). The Phase One semi-structured interview schedule consisted of five questions (Appendix E), which were developed from three of the four research questions:

1. How do educators gather information about children and their interests?
2. What knowledge do educators have about funds of knowledge and funds of identity?
3. How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?

Question one pertained to educators’ knowledge about funds of identity and funds of knowledge. Question two elicited information about how educators gather information about children and their interests. Finally, questions three, four and five related to using children’s knowledge and interests in constructing curriculum. The interviews took approximately 30 minutes to complete, including time spent getting to know each other and a brief explanation of the study.

After the interviews were conducted, as suggested by Saldaña (2018), the transcription process began by the researcher listening to the interviews multiple times in order to gain a holistic view of each interview and to familiarise herself with the content. Then, manual transcription of the interviews was completed by the researcher. The interviews were transcribed using a word-processing program and during the process, identifying information was removed as part of the ethical considerations for this study.

**Phase One analysis**

The analysis process is an important part of any research study as this process enables the data to be organised in a meaningful way in order to construct answers to the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers must organise the data they
collect by immersing themselves in their fieldwork in an attempt to understand what it is that they have acquired (Liamputtong, 2013). Data analysis of the Phase One data occurred after the interviews were transcribed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves examining the data to identify themes (Byrne, 2017b). The researcher first conducted a preliminary scan of the data collected and began to develop thematic categories and emergent themes. Following this, the researcher was able to assign codes to represent the themes identified from the interview data. As suggested by Byrne (2017b), the researcher utilised software to assist with coding. Coding is when researcher’s “attach conceptual labels to data” (Urquhart, 2013, p. 35). The researcher utilised QSR International’s (2019) NVivo 12 software to facilitate the coding process. Upon the completion of the interview analysis, the researcher was able to select one of the four settings to participate in the remaining phases of the study. Phase Two participants, methods, and analysis are presented in the following section.

3.7.2 Phase Two participants, methods, and analysis

Phase Two participants

In Phase Two, a purposeful sample was employed. One of the four settings interviewed in Phase One was invited, and agreed, to participate in the curriculum intervention. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of a setting where the researcher can learn extensively about the issues being investigated (Liamputtong, 2013). The researcher considered which of the Phase One educators, and their setting, would be best suited for the curriculum intervention. Factors were considered such as availability for the researcher to access the setting, educator experience with and willingness to utilise children’s interests for the purpose of curriculum construction, and opportunity to extend and build on the educator’s understanding of children’s knowledge and interests. As a result, Sofie and her Kindergarten setting were selected to participate in the curriculum intervention. Prior to contacting Sofie, an information letter and a consent to participate form (Appendix F and G) outlining Phase Two, Three, and Four was sent to the school Principal by email. Upon the Principal’s consent for the
Kindergarten to participate in the next three phases of the study, an invitation to participate was sent to Sofie via email. An information letter and consent form (Appendix H and I) were attached for Sofie to learn more about the remainder of the study. Sofie consented to being a part of the remaining phases of the study with enthusiasm. Throughout Phase One, Two, and Three of the study, the researcher and Sofie developed a strong research partnership. This was important to PAR, as this approach is collaborative in nature and requires all participants to be active co-researchers (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). Sofie taught in a Kindergarten classroom with 22 children, two full-time Education Assistants and one part-time Education Assistant. Sofie, an experienced educator, had taught previously in a diverse range of settings across Western Australia and EC year levels.

Additionally, Phase Two required a purposive sample of four children with whom to undertake the intervention. In consultation with the educator, four children were selected as the focus group for the research study. The focus group consisted of two females and two males, the children attended the Kindergarten full time, and had been enrolled since the start of the school year, as suggested by the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale guidelines. The children’s parents were contacted, by Sofie, to invite the child to be a part of the study. An information letter and consent form (Appendix J and K) for the study was provided to Sofie for the school to distribute to the children’s parents. One of the four children initially chosen by Sofie for the focus group, did not participate in the study as the child’s parents could not make a decision about participation. Therefore, Sofie informed them that there was no obligation to participate and that she would select another child. Sofie suggested another child that she thought would be a suitable choice for the focus group and distributed the invitation to participate to the child’s parents, which they accepted. The children in the focus group were Anika, Cole, Maddy and Wes, all pseudonyms. Table 3.3 provides an overview of the children and Sofie’s key reasons for inviting them to be a part of the study.
Table 3.3 Overview of children in the focus group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Why they were invited to take part in the study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sofie selected Anika to be in the focus group as she was curious to see how Anika’s family culture would play a role in her interests. Sofie acknowledged that Anika was independent in the Kindergarten setting and thought that this may be an opportunity to make meaningful connections with her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sofie selected Cole to be in the focus group as she saw this as an opportunity to build a stronger relationship with him and his parents. She recognised this project as an opportunity to invite Cole to share his interests and for Sofie to celebrate these interests to show that he is valued in the Kindergarten setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sofie selected Maddy to be in the focus group as she hoped the project would provide her with an opportunity to get to know more about her interests. She explained that Maddy’s interests were not always visible in the Kindergarten setting and so she looked forward to getting to know what Maddy was interested in outside of school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sofie selected Wes to be in the focus group as she was curious to see how his culture would be represented through his interests. She also mentioned that previously, one-on-one time with Wes had been an effective strategy to get to know about Wes and his family and to develop their relationship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the consent forms were returned, Sofie formally introduced the researcher to the parents in the Kindergarten setting at morning drop off time. The researcher spoke to the parents about the study and asked if they had any questions. None of the parents had any questions at that time about the study, but asked questions about the researcher that were of a friendly manner. The researcher emphasised that she would be available throughout the study to answer any questions and provided her email address again to the parents and reminded them that her contact details were on the information letter, should they be required. Also during this time, the researcher spent time in the Kindergarten setting getting to know the children, staff, and families. The researcher visited the classroom and participated in everyday activities in order to create positive relationships with the members of the Kindergarten and to become familiar with one another, which is important to PAR.
Phase Two data collection methods

Phase Two methods of data collection included a semi-structured interview, video observation, and photographs. Phase Two took place over a six-week period and in relation to PAR, the intention of Phase Two was to observe and plan for action. The methods used to collect data in Phase Two intended to elicit information about curriculum construction in the setting, the children suited for the focus group and to identify what child involvement levels were in the Kindergarten setting. This information was important to research questions one, three and four:

1. How do educators gather information about children and their interests?

3. How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?

4. How does a curriculum constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity influence child involvement?

The Phase Two semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix L) was developed based on the responses from Sofie’s interview in Phase One. This was done so that member checking could occur and to add depth to the initial responses as Liamputtong (2013) advises. Sofie’s permission was sought to audio-record the interviews and she gave consent. Photographs of the Kindergarten classroom were taken following the interview, as evidence of Sofie’s discussion in the interview.

The video observations collected in Phase Two were used for the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings and provided the pre-intervention data pertaining to research question four. The Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) is designed for assessing a setting’s quality through children’s level of involvement and is explained in this section. To use the scale, educators first need to familiarise themselves with the involvement signals. There are nine signals to become familiar with which include: concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, facial expression and posture (non-
verbals), persistence, precision, reaction time, verbal utterances/language, and satisfaction. It is important to note that there are four essential signals that must be present for sustained, intense involvement: concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, and persistence. Each of these signals have indicators, that allows those who use the scale to make their assessment of a child’s overall involvement level. An overview of the signals and their indicators is presented in Table 3.4 (the essential signals are denoted using an asterisk).

Table 3.4 Involvement Scale signals and indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Involvement Signal</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Concentration*</td>
<td>• The attention of a child is directed towards the activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Only intense stimuli reaches/distracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Eye movements are fixed on the activity (do not wander around environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Energy*</td>
<td>• There is considered, controlled, and at times exuberant movement with a pace appropriate to the task (not to be confused with the release of pent up energy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• In motor activities physical energy is expended, transpiration increases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• In mental activities, zeal is displayed, often showing on faces, often manifested as redness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Complexity and creativity*</td>
<td>• Behaviour is more than routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Activities challenge their capabilities (but do not overwhelm them)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Individuality is applied to the task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Own elements are brought in, producing something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shows something not entirely predictable, something personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Facial expression and posture (non-verbals)</td>
<td>• An intense look, without dreaming in to space or eyes wandering around space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• When listening, feelings and mood are apparent from expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Posture directed towards activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Persistence*</td>
<td>• Full attention and energy focused on activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does not easily ‘let go’ of activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Willingly makes necessary effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Not easily distracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Activity is sustained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Precision
- Careful attention is applied to work
- Sensitive to detail
- Precision in actions
- Does not ‘race through’ work
- Not negligent
- In verbally oriented work they notice less obvious details (casual words, gestures, facial expression, nuances…)

7 Reaction time
- Alert and responds easily to interesting stimuli
- ‘Jumps’ into action after possibilities are introduced
- Reacts to new stimuli as a result of their action

8 Verbal utterances/language
- Explicitly indicates their involvement by spontaneous comments or sounds
- Gives enthusiastic descriptions of what they are/have been doing
- Cannot refrain from expressing what they are experiencing, discovering

9 Satisfaction
- Displays pride in their exploration, effort and outcomes, (may be demonstrated by displaying, presenting, handling or sharing of their work)

Note. Adapted from SADECS, 2008, p. 83

Once familiar with these signals, educators can conduct observations of children as per the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) guidelines. Educators are advised to randomly select 25%, or a minimum of four children, to make observations on and that there should be a balance of gender and preferably be children who attend the full day and have been attending the centre/classroom for more than five days (SADECS, 2008). The purpose of the scale is to focus on the child’s level of involvement, and by collating the individual ratings, a setting can calculate a mean score for the supportiveness of their setting. Preparation of the rating sheets (Appendix M), prior to making the observations, is recommended, so that the focus can remain on observing the child. Each child should be observed in a range of everyday setting experiences, for a total of six, two-minute observations taken over the day, at least 15 minutes apart. Educators make notes and ratings after each two-minute observation and use this information to assign a global quality of low, medium, or high for each of the nine signals (SADECS, 2008).
Using this information, the educator can then aggregate the low, medium, high qualities to assign a rating level between one and five, as the LIS-YC uses a five-point rating scale (SADECS, 2008). An overview of the five-point rating scale is presented in Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No activity</td>
<td>• The child shows little/no activity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- No concentration: staring, daydreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- An absent, passive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- No goal-oriented activity, aimless actions, not producing anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- No signs of exploration and interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Not taking anything in, very little mental activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frequently interrupted activity</td>
<td>• The child shows some degree of activity but is often disrupted:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Limited concentration: looks away during the activity, fiddles, dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Is easily distracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Action only leads to limited results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More or less maintained activity</td>
<td>• The child is busy, the whole time, but without maintaining concentration:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Routine actions, attention is superficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Is not really absorbed in the activity, activities are short lived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Limited motivation, no real dedication, is not challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Does not use his/her capabilities to full extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The activity does not address the child’s imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Activity with intense moments</td>
<td>• There are clear signs of involvement, but these are not always present to their full extent:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The child is engaged in the activity without interruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Most of the time there is real concentration, but during some brief moments the attention is more superficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The child feels challenged, there is a certain degree of motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The child’s capabilities and imagination to a certain extent are addressed in the activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children’s level of involvement in their learning indicates how well the educational environment succeeds in meeting children’s learning priorities (SADECS, 2008). Finally, the educator will need to calculate the setting mean score (SADECS, 2008). A setting mean score of 3.5 is the lowest acceptable score indicative of a supportive environment (SADECS, 2008). Settings where children are rated as highly involved using the involvement scale, indicate a high-quality curriculum (Laevers, 2005).

In Phase Two, the researcher collected 12 minutes of video observation of each child in the focus group in order to conduct the pre-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings. The videos were taken across the day, 15 minutes apart, as described in the method of application of the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008). The pre-intervention ratings were completed individually by both the researcher and Sofie. Prior to undertaking the ratings, Sofie was provided with the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale resource and an overview of how to use the rating scale. In addition, the researcher provided Sofie with a DVD training pack to become familiar with the involvement signals, indicators, and levels. The DVD provided Sofie with an opportunity to practice rating children’s involvement with guided analysis. These examples provided a breakdown of the child’s behaviours that aligned with a rating of low, medium, or high level at each indicator, and the rating of their overall level of involvement. In addition to this training pack, the researcher provided step-by-step instructions (verbally and written) on how to use the SADECS (2008) rating sheets. Sofie was receptive to the
information and engaged with the written and video training content provided and asked clarifying questions by email, where the researcher responded promptly. Upon completion of the ratings, the researcher and Sofie compared their rating sheets for each child. At this meeting, the researcher and Sofie discussed reasons for assigning children a certain level at the indicators and how this justified the overall rating provided. This process made visible any discrepancies between the researcher’s and Sofie’s understandings or interpretations of the signals, indicators, levels of involvement and/or rating process.

**Phase Two analysis**

The semi-structured interview and photographs were analysed using thematic analysis, where themes were identified, or further added to, and codes assigned using NVivo 12 software (QSR International, 2019). The video observations were analysed using the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale rating sheets. The researcher calculated the individual and overall mean scores for each child and also the setting mean score using both the researcher and Sofie’s rating sheets. These scores were then set aside to allow for the intervention to begin.

**3.7.3 Phase Three methods and analysis**

**Phase Three data collection methods**

The action in the PAR study took the form of an intervention on the curriculum. The children’s participation in two curriculum intervention activities, the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity, were implemented to initiate the intervention. These two curriculum intervention activities were designed to obtain information about the four children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Both of these curriculum intervention activities are detailed below, under their own subheading. Data were collected from these two curriculum intervention activities through the use of participant and video observation were important to research question number three:
3. How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?

During both the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity sharing sessions, the researcher employed participant and video observation methods to collect data. Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013) describe participant observation as having the ability to produce powerful insights and highly contextualised understandings of contexts in which it is conducted. Within participant observation, it is important for researchers to conduct observation in situ and build rapport with the participants so that the participants behave naturally, as if you were not present (Guest et al., 2013). Due to the time spent by the researcher in the Kindergarten during observation periods, the educator and children were familiar with her and a positive relationship had been developed by the time that the sharing sessions took place. Video was used to capture these sessions, so that the videos could be reviewed for further analysis of the children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity.

Prior to both of the curriculum intervention activities being implemented, the researcher provided information about the concepts of funds of knowledge and funds of identity to Sofie. The researcher explained both of the concepts and their underpinnings from the literature. Furthermore, the researcher offered to provide Sofie with articles that related to research projects that pertained to funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Sofie was enthusiastic and proactive in learning more about these two concepts. The researcher and Sofie informally discussed, often after school or via email, aspects of the study, including about funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The researcher made herself and information available to Sofie to successfully introduce these concepts into the study and into Sofie’s practice. This was important to the PAR study as the “building of alliances” between researchers and participants in the planning and implementation phases of the study will promote its success (McIntyre, 2014, p. 2). Knowledge about funds of knowledge and funds of identity were important to be able to recognise and identify children’s funds of knowledge and identity in both the Shoebox Activity and Photovoice Activity.
The Shoebox Activity

The Shoebox Activity was implemented individually with all four of the children in the focus group. The Shoebox Activity was comprised of a number steps:

1. Introduced the activity and its purpose to the educator;
2. Provided children in the focus group with an empty shoebox, called an ‘All About Me’ box, to take home and fill with personally meaningful items, accompanied by a face-to-face conversation and letter (Appendix N) explaining the activity to both the child and the parent;
3. Conducted a video recorded session where the shoebox and its contents were shared by the child with the educator and the researcher;
4. The educator and researcher reflected on the shoebox sharing session to identify the child’s funds of knowledge and/or funds of identity revealed; and
5. The educator and researcher discussed the potential curriculum influences the knowledge gained about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity could have.

The Photovoice Activity

The Photovoice Activity was implemented individually with each of the children in the focus group. Photovoice is an innovative PAR method that “rejects traditional paradigms of power and the production of knowledge within the research relationship” (Liamputtong, 2013, p. 389). This method was selected as the researcher wished to move out of the traditional dominant power role, both as adult and researcher, to promote children’s agency and voice in research. Photovoice gives participants a voice to communicate with those in a position of knowledge (Wang & Burris, 1997). For the Photovoice Activity, the children were asked to record, using photography, things that they do outside of Kindergarten.

Initially, the children were going to be provided with an iPad to take home to complete the activity, but due to deciding to distribute the activity during the two-week break from school for the holidays, Sofie suggested asking the families to use a device
from home. The families of the children in the focus group were asked by Sofie if they had a device that their child was able to use to take photographs for the activity. All of the families informed Sofie that they had a device their child could use to complete the activity. The researcher provided the families with an information letter (Appendix O) and a USB device to transfer the photographs onto in order to bring them back to school after the holidays. The children were asked to take a minimum of one and maximum of ten photographs, to keep the activity manageable for the family, educator, and researcher.

Furthermore, in Phase Three of the study, data were collected through document review of Sofie’s curriculum planning documents. Following the sharing sessions of the Shoebox and Photovoice activities, Sofie provided her curriculum planning documents to the researcher. A two-week period was established as suitable between the researcher and Sofie for the curriculum implementation to take place.

Finally, data were collected in Phase Three through photographs of the Kindergarten setting. Photographs were taken of areas/objects/materials made mention of in the curriculum planning documents and of anything that was initiated based on the intervention using the two curriculum intervention activities.

**Phase Three analysis**

The data collected in Phase Three were analysed using thematic analysis. The researcher reviewed the video observations from the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity to analyse the types of funds of identity that the children revealed. The curriculum planning documents and photographs were analysed for themes, using NVivo 12 software (QSR International, 2019) to assist with the coding process. After the review of data from implementation, the final phase involved revisiting the involvement scale.
3.7.4 Phase Four methods and analysis

**Phase Four data collection methods**

Phase Four occurred during and after the period of time that the Kindergarten implemented the curriculum constructed from information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Data from Phase Four were collected through multiple methods, such as video observations, photographs, document review, and a semi-structured interview. The purpose of Phase Four in relation to PAR, was to reflect on the action taken and data collected in this phase and was important to all four of the research questions:

1. How do educators gather information about children and their interests?
2. What knowledge do educators have about funds of knowledge and funds of identity?
3. How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?
4. How does a curriculum constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity influence child involvement?

First, the researcher conducted video observations of the focus group children as the post-intervention SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale ratings. The researcher collected six, two-minute videos taken during everyday classroom activities, over a two-week period during the adjusted curriculum, for each child in the focus group. Once all of the videos had been completed, the post-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings were completed independently by both the researcher and Sofie. After the ratings were completed, the researcher and Sofie met to compare their rating sheets for each child. Photographs of the children and setting were also taken during the adjusted curriculum implementation period.

The Phase Four semi-structured interview was conducted after the Involvement Scale rating processes had been completed for the post-intervention. The researcher
conducted the interview with the educator, Sofie at a time and location convenient for her. Prior to the interview starting, the researcher sought permission to audio record the interview and Sofie consented. Sofie was encouraged to bring curriculum planning documents, class journals, pedagogical documentation or other similar items for review during and after the interview, as additional evidence of the influence of the intervention. The interview schedule for Phase Four (Appendix P) was provided to Sofie prior to the interview and was developed using all four of the research questions.

**Phase Four analysis**

The video observations were analysed using the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale rating sheets. The researcher calculated the individual and overall mean scores for each child and also the setting mean score using both the researcher and Sofie’s rating sheets. Comparative analysis was employed to compare the pre-intervention and post-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings for each child in the focus group. The photographs, semi-structured interview and documents provided were analysed using thematic analysis, where themes were identified, or further added to, and codes assigned using NVivo 12 software (QSR International, 2019).

### 3.8 Research Rigour

Based on the seminal work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) the trustworthiness of research includes a set of four criteria. These criteria assist in measuring the quality of the research. The criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These criteria can be used to measure the quality of the author’s abovementioned research design, methods and analysis.

Quality research should reflect the participants’ true experience, over a long period of time, increasing its credibility (Liampittong, 2013). The research study employed member checking, engaged in triangulation and used purposive sampling to increase its creditability. By using multiple methods (Bush, 2012) and many perspectives
to gather data and seek convergence in interpretation (Mukherji & Albon, 2018), the researcher engages in triangulation. By gathering data from multiple perspectives (multiple educators, children) through multiple methods (semi-structured interviews, participant observation, video observation, photographs, and document review) the researcher was able to triangulate the data.

The transferability of research relies on the rich description of the context and conditions of the study and a sample that presents the range of perspectives (Dimmock & Lam, 2012). To ensure transferability, the researcher has used thick description (Liamputtong, 2013) of the research setting, participants, methods and processes so that the research can be replicated in another setting or changes can be made to suit an alternate context.

Dependability is whether the research findings match the data from which they are derived (Liamputtong, 2013). The researcher used what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call an audit trail to support the research dependability. An audit trail displays the researcher’s reasons for the selected theoretical framework, methodology and analysis methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By engaging in triangulation of the methods, the dependability of the research study also increased (Liamputtong, 2013). Finally, the researcher has made constant acknowledgement of the context and the knowledge constructed by whom and in this context, called practise reflexivity, increasing the confirmability. By engaging in triangulation, the confirmability also increased (Liamputtong, 2013).

**3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are essential to any research study so as to ensure that participants are not harmed by the researcher or research process (Liamputtong, 2013). Throughout the study, the researcher endeavoured to maintain an exceptionally high ethical standard, upholding the University’s Code of Ethics for researchers and research studies. The researcher ensured that participants’ informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was preserved and that participants were protected from risk or harm.
Informed consent is where the people involved in the study are informed of the goals and methods of the research and invited to participate in the study (Liamputtong, 2013). The settings and Kindergarten educators involved in the study were offered an invitation to participate and had the option to discontinue at any time without consequence. Written consent was obtained from the settings and the Kindergarten educators before any research commenced. The researcher upheld the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics, as the research was conducted with children. The researcher sought consent from the children’s parents (written) as well as assent from the children themselves (verbal, written and embodied). The children had a choice to participate and also to discontinue at any time during the study with no consequence. The researcher sought consent from the children using an information letter (Appendix Q), which was read to them and asked the children to colour in an emoji to answer yes, or no to being videoed during their play. The children were invited to use a thumbs-up or thumbs-down sign, directed at the researcher, when she approached them to video as well. The children’s assent was also considered each time the researcher videoed the children. The researcher was cognisant of children’s negative responses (body language, verbal language), so the researcher would cease taking the video and remove herself from the area of their play.

Confidentiality was of utmost importance to the research study. Participants’ real names and identifiable details were not used. Instead, as suggested by Liamputtong (2013), the researcher used pseudonyms for the participants and settings and removed identifying details from the data as early as possible. The researcher has stored and will continue to store all forms of data securely, whether digital or hardcopy, according to University research storage guidelines. Provision was also made in the ethics approval for this study to utilise video data for research and/or teaching and learning purposes in the future, with additional permission from the parents. This additional permission was sought at the end of the study and parents of all four children in the focus group gave consent to use such material.

Finally, during the research study, no participant was subjected to risk or harm. The researcher acknowledges that she was responsible for the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of the participants, and therefore adhered to the principle of non-
maleficence during the study. At no time during the study were concerns raised by any of the participants.

3.10 Significance of the Study

This research study is significant to the academic and life outcomes of young children. The study aimed to contribute to literature about obtaining and making use of knowledge about children and their interests for the purpose of constructing curriculum. The implementation of two curriculum intervention activities to obtain information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity will contribute an Australian perspective to literature in the areas of funds of knowledge and funds of identity. It is expected that the Shoebox Activity (as suggested by Subero et al. 2017) and Photovoice Activity (as suggested by Llopart and Esteban-Guitart, 2017) may be identified as useful tools to gather in-depth information about children. Furthermore, the study endeavours to contribute to knowledge about educators’ curriculum decisions that influence children’s involvement in their EC setting, by using the Reflect, Respect, Relate Involvement Scale resource (SADECS, 2008).

3.11 Summary

This chapter began with the conceptual framework, research aim, research questions, and theoretical framework that guided this study. Data collected for the research study used a variety of methods, which is well-suited to research using a PAR approach. Data collected from the Phase One semi-structured interviews assisted in selecting a setting to participate in the curriculum intervention and informed the semi-structured interview schedule in Phase Two. Phase Two methods were useful to determining the children to be a part of the focus group and provided the pre-intervention involvement ratings. Methods used for data collection in Phase Three provided information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity and informed the action to be taken in the curriculum. The Phase Four methods of data collection were employed to learn about the influence of the curriculum intervention
and the impact this possibly had on children’s involvement levels. Finally, the rigour, ethics and significance of the study were addressed, highlighting children’s outcomes as a priority and the consideration of children’s knowledge and identities in curriculum construction. The results of the study are presented in the next chapter, Chapter 4: Results of the Study.
Chapter 4 Results of the Study

4.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate why and how educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum and the subsequent influence on child involvement. The results from the study are reported in this chapter, with each of the four phases of data collection presented. Data were analysed to answer the four research questions:

1. How do educators gather information about children and their interests?
2. What knowledge do educators have about funds of knowledge and funds of identity?
3. How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?
4. How does a curriculum constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity influence child involvement?

4.2 Phase One Results - Interviews

Data from Phase One were collected through semi-structured interviews with the four Kindergarten educators from four different settings: two childcare-based settings and two school-based settings. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information from early childhood educators pertaining to their understanding of the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The interviews also focused on how educators gathered information about children and their interests and used this for curriculum purposes. The Phase One interview data were analysed to interpret research question one, two, and three. This section of the chapter is organised under headings pertaining to the research question and subheadings of the themes identified during the
analysis of the data. An overview of the themes identified from the analysis of Phase One interview data and organisation for this section is presented in Figure 4.1.

4.2.1 Educator knowledge of funds of knowledge and funds of identity

During each of the interviews with the four educators, they were asked about their familiarity with the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity. None of the educators were familiar with either of the terms. Some of the educators made a guess of what the terms might mean. Jane, in relation to funds of knowledge, said “It sort of sounds like a fountain of knowledge. It sounds nice.” Mary guessed the term might mean “to just do whatever we can to create an environment and a place for our children
to give them as much as we can, for them to develop, learn, evolve.” Sofie thought the following:

I would think that it would be where you can access knowledge, it’s like, you’ve got a wallet full of funds and you can access this knowledge that’s, I guess it’s just knowledge that’s accessible that you can draw upon and it can lead to more things you can, you can invest in more things from that.

The educators were also asked about how they gather information about children’s knowledge and their interests.

4.2.2 Gathering information about children

Through the analysis of the Phase One interview data, it became evident that educators gather information about children from the children’s parents as well as the children themselves. It was identified that this occurred through conversations, the use of forms, observations, and questioning. Evidence from the data to support the identification of these two themes and their subthemes are presented.

Gathering information from parents

Conversation

All of the educators described gathering information about the children they work with from the children’s parents through a variety of means. Three out of the four educators reported that conversing with parents was an effective way to gather information about children and their interests. Ava stated, “parents are saying, ‘They’ve really been interested in this’ A lot of parents, a lot of the time, will share that…mainly through conversation on drop off and pick up.” Jane encourages conversations with families by inviting them to stay at the Kindergarten setting when bringing their child to school. She said, “I tell the parents that they don’t have to rush off, they can stay, so I have lots of opportunity to talk to them…we just have a yarn together in the morning and afternoon…. ” Mary specifically checks in with parents to see if their child’s
previously expressed interests are sustained or have started to shift. She described, “I will every so often chat to the parents and ask, ‘Oh, so are they still into music like how they were a few months ago? How’s that going? Are you still thinking about classes?’.” Aside from conversations with families, the researcher identified that there are more formal means that the educators employed to gather information from parents. All four of the educators reported utilising forms to collect information about children and their interests.

**Forms**

All four of the educators indicated in their interview that they made use of forms to gather information about children. Parents were asked to complete these forms upon enrolment in or transition to the Kindergarten settings and while these forms were named differently by the educators, they elicited similar information.

Ava, Jane, and Mary offered the researcher copies of the forms they referred to during the interview, assisting in the details presented in Table 4.1. Uniquely, Jane emphasised that the form she has developed seeks information from the child’s perspective in addition to information from the parents.

**Table 4.1 Information elicited from parents through forms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information asked on form</th>
<th>Ava’s Setting</th>
<th>Jane’s Setting</th>
<th>Mary’s Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank space for additional information</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child personality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child strengths</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s extracurricular participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s interests</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s perspective (favourite things, things they are good at, might need help with, curious about, blank space for additional information)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Gathering information from children**

**Listening to children**

For Jane, it was important to her that she learn from the children themselves about their knowledge and interests. Jane was able to do so through the “child’s perspective” section on the Kindergarten setting’s transition form (Table 4.1). Further to the form, Jane also sought information from children about their interests outside of Kindergarten through a “home-school book.” This book was constructed by Jane, the children, and the families by including images that are sent by the children and their families of things the children are doing at home. Once these images were received, Jane would print them and place them in the book. The children were invited to verbally share with the class (usually in the morning mat session) about the image(s) and what they have been doing at home. By employing the “home-school book,” Jane was able to listen to children share about their lives at home throughout the year. She explained:

We have the home-school book which is very important for, it came out of the idea wanting to find out what children do at home, but knowing that mat sessions don’t work the same as they end up being about toys. So, the home-school book is a vehicle for families and children to share what they do at home by sending me photos of what they do....So that book is one of the main vehicles
that I use for finding out from the parents and the child what they enjoy doing out of school.

Similarly, Sofie mentioned in the interview that listening to children during play experiences is very important to her when trying to learn more about children’s interests. She said,

...sit down and listen to them. They will show you their interests in their talk. Because that’s what they will talk about. They’ll run over and show you, and be so excited about it, and then other kids might come over and you can get other ideas from that and you really need to listen to them instead of posing your ideas.

In Mary’s setting, she too reported that she listens to children in order to find out more about their knowledge and interests. When asked about how she gathers information about children, Mary said,

I think I just, I just listen. I just listen. Especially in our age group at the moment they just have so much to say! They talk all the time! So, I think that my approach is probably just to listen. They do, they have so much to say, they say all the time, in many different ways, in their way.

Whilst Ava did not explicitly use the term ‘listening’ in her interview, it was implied that educators at the centre listened to children in order to gather information about them and their interests. This was evident when she was explaining that the main tool used by the educators at her centre is observation, “…a lot of the time just getting to know the children when they are coming in each day and telling you about the same thing over a few days.” The three other educators also emphasised observation as an effective way to gather information about children and their interests in the Phase One interviews.

**Observing children**

All four of the educators described observing children in order to gather information about the children’s knowledge and interests. Ava said that in order to gather information about children’s interests, educators will do so “mainly through observing them.” Mary described her use of observation for the purpose of seeing how
children use the materials and provocations the educators set up. She described this by saying,

"We, at the moment, we are focusing on observing them...I suppose observing their actions and what they will do...I just put some animals...next to the table just to sort of see what would happen and it’s become a big hit now...so now I will keep observing...to see if they’ll bring more things in from home or another room [that relates to the table]."

Like Mary, Sofie observes children to see how they use the materials in order to find out their interests. She said,

"We do a lot of capturing of things and how children are using materials through videos and photographs, and observation...So, you know, the children use them [loose part materials], so many different ways, and you’ve just got to observe how they’re using those materials...I think it’s the key, that allows you to see what they’re interested in..."

Jane explained that her observations revealed unique information about children’s knowledge and interests in comparison to gathering information from the children’s parents. She described this by saying,

"There’s the knowledge that the children bring into the classroom, which I find, obviously then in an early childhood setting, is really important. I guess it’s their cultural background, it’s their interests, it’s what they do with their families, it’s what they value, and then there’s also the gathering of information of what I see in the classroom...what they’re doing at school and me observing who they are in the school environment."

In addition to listening to and observing children, educators were found to talk with children and ask them questions in order to gather information.

**Talking with children and asking children questions**

Two of the educators, Sofie and Mary, described talking with children and asking children questions in order to gather information about their knowledge and interests. Sofie said, “...you don’t dominate the conversation. You might ask them open-ended questions...” and Mary explained, “I will ask the children, ‘When you were little, you really liked this, I remember, because I was there with you. Do you remember? Do you still like that?’ So, we’ll talk about that.” The discussion about gathering information
about children and their interests elicited information from the educators about how they used the information that they gather.

### 4.2.3 Using information gathered about children

There were three interview questions that were designed to obtain information from the educators about how they use the information they gather about children’s knowledge and interests (questions three, four and five in Appendix E). Three themes were identified upon analysis of the data and the following section is presented in alignment with the themes:

1. Planning learning experiences,
2. Planning for the physical environment, and
3. Relationship building.

#### Planning learning experiences

All four of the educators used what they learned about the children to plan for learning experiences that related to the knowledge and/or interests of the children. Ava said that the educators at her centre, consider the information they gather about children and analyse it in order to start their planning cycle. For example, the Kindergarten children showed an interest in sushi and therefore, the educators organised a visit for the children to the local sushi restaurant. The children remained interested, so the centre had engaged the services of the chef from the restaurant to teach children how to make sushi. Jane, Mary, and Sofie also used children’s interests to assist in developing ideas for learning experiences. Specifically, they mentioned developing projects from the children’s interests. The educators explained that the children investigated topics of interest to the group, in the form of a project, for sustained periods of time. Figure 4.2 overviews examples of how children’s interests resulted in projects in Jane, Mary, and Sofie’s settings.
In addition to planning learning experiences, it was also found that educators use information about children to plan for the physical environment.

**Planning for the physical environment**

Analysis of the data from this study highlighted that knowledge about children influenced how educators plan for the learning environment in their setting. Planning for the learning environment included the types of resources and play areas that educators selected and made available to children. Ava said that the educators at her centre have made decisions about what to provide based on how the children are responding to resources, which to her indicates their interest, or not. Ava described this by saying,

So, I suppose, we [the educators] all know that if a child isn’t engaged or isn’t interested in something, then what are they really getting from it? [We ask ourselves], how are we really going to make them feel that we’re supplying adequate resources that they want to be here playing with?

Similarly, Mary described the role that the educators and the children have in making decisions about the resources in the environment when she said,

If they [the children] like something, they will be there one hundred percent. And if they’re not into something they will go and find something else to do....and our children are very much involved in what’s there....I know they’re ready for a
challenge when they are not taking part, when it’s becoming too easy. Then, we’ll [the educators] get together as a team with the children and say, ‘can we add something to this to make it a bit trickier for them?’ or ‘should we take something away?’.

Jane reported that she has made adjustments to the areas she plans for based on the group of children and their collective interests. She said, “I guess I do have the bones of the room set up and I will add things each day, depending on the class I’ve got…” and “I’ve made a dark room in the corner, because the Kindy class is interested in shadow and light.” She also stated that children’s interests inform the books she puts in the classroom. Sofie also selected areas and resources to provide for children based on things in which they showed an interest. She described this by saying, “I’ve also put up pictures of houses from around the world so they can use the blocks to make, they haven’t really caught on to that one, even though they were showing interest in building houses.” Educators did not only use information about children for planning purposes but also to build relationships with children.

**Relationship building**

Findings from the interview show that using the information gathered about children was important in order for Jane to build relationships with children. She used insight into children’s personal lives to make meaningful connections with them during conversations. She explained,

It’s [the information gathered] useful to me in forming a relationship with the child, so that I can connect with them and that they feel safe at school. It’s pretty important for them to develop a sense of belonging at school. I think for me to be able to ask them about their dog...to bridge that home-school gap. So, that knowledge means I can have vocabulary with that child. I can talk to that child about their home life and what’s happening... and I think that’s really important for that.

Educator knowledge about children was also found to be important to facilitate positive peer relationships. Jane explained how knowing things about a child and their home life can help her to group children together to support the development of friendships. She explained,
I think it can be important for helping relationships grow between children because if I know what this child knows and there is a new person to the classroom and there is already someone in the classroom that I could set up an area in the corner to draw and group those children together and the development of friendships between kids.

In summary, the analysis of the data collected in Phase One of the study showed that the four educators were not aware of the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Furthermore, it was identified that educators gathered information about children from parents through conversation and forms. Educators also gathered information about children from the children themselves through listening, observation, and talking with children and asking questions. Finally, analysis of the interview data revealed how the educators used the information they gathered about children. Educators used this information to plan learning experiences and the physical environment and to build relationships with children. These ideas were explored further through the data collection in Phase Two of the study, of which the analysis is presented in the following section.

4.3 Phase Two Results- Interview and Video Observations

Phase Two of the study took place in Sofie’s Kindergarten, in a school, that was selected to participate in the curriculum intervention. Data from Phase Two were collected through multiple methods: a semi-structured interview with Sofie, photographs of the Kindergarten setting, field notes, and video observations used to complete the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings. The semi-structured interview was conducted for the purpose of member checking and to add depth to Sofie’s Phase One semi-structured interview responses. The Phase Two video observations were collected as the pre-intervention data in order to analyse and interpret research question four. This section is organised under two headings that pertain to the methods used to collect data and the themes and subthemes that were identified through the analysis. The involvement ratings of the children in the focus group are presented as sub headings, though they are not themes. An overview of how this section has been organised is presented in Figure 4.3.
4.3.1 Semi-structured interview and photographs

Listening to children

In the Phase One interview, Sofie revealed that she listened to young children as a strategy to discover and learn more about their interests. In the Phase Two interview, Sofie was asked when listening, what indicates a child’s interest and to provide an example. Sofie said that she listened out for teachable moments and to ascertain children’s knowledge. Evidence for these two subthemes is presented below.
Teachable moments

In the interview, Sofie explained that she listened out for teachable moments to address the content of the curriculum documents. She described this when she said,

I’m looking out for opportunities for the curriculum, you know- knowing the curriculum well, and looking for opportunities to be able to do it. Like, for example...this morning the kids were playing with the linking shapes and...they were trying to get it across the room, they were doing it really long. [Sofie asked] ‘I wonder if you can get it from that door to that door’. So, that set them on a challenge. There was a lot of estimation happening, like ‘I think it’s only going to be five more!’. So, I took that opportunity to extend that conversation and so on. So, what I’m listening out for is opportunities to go on with, for the curriculum, curriculum opportunities.

Sofie listened for instances in the children’s play that she could capitalise as a teachable moment. She also listened in order to ascertain children’s knowledge.

Ascertaining children’s knowledge

Another reason for listening to children was to find out what they already know and understand. Sofie said,

I was doing some Phonological Awareness activities, but one child was sitting over and she was building something and she, and she, just started talking about what she was building. And you can see the bee in the middle of it. And then she told me all about it. And it’s basically, she is building a cell in a hive. And she came out with all this stuff that we’ve been learning...So, I’ve actually recorded it, on the iPad, asked her questions and so on.

Sofie explained that she listened to children’s talk in order to discover their knowledge and understanding of certain subjects, in this case, the bee inquiry.

Talking with children and asking children questions

Sofie explained in the Phase One interview that she talked with children and asked them open ended questions when trying to find out information about them. In the Phase Two interview, she divulged specific questioning strategies that she used
when looking out for children’s interests, such as “predictions”, a “See Think Wonder” routine and “wonderings.” She described this when she said,

I’m starting to look at their interests now, because...they said that they’d found a dinosaur bone out in the garden....So, we’ve been talking about that. I did a whole mat session when they came in. We did predictions...I did, See Think Wonder....and then we went into wonderings, I modelled a couple and so on.

Sofie described using questioning strategies when talking with children as a means to gather information. In the interview, she also discussed what she does with this information, which included planning learning experiences.

**Planning learning experiences**

In the interview, Sofie gave numerous examples of learning experiences she was planning based on information about children’s knowledge and their interests. She listened to children and used questions the children asked to “see opportunities” of what direction their inquiry could go. Some of the experiences Sofie was planning for the class bee project were:

- Using a visible thinking routine while looking at a close-up photo of a bee wing to compare to an earlier bird wing investigation,
- Making a hive out of egg cartons to connect with talking about cells,
- Role play of laying eggs in cells as this was one of the children’s questions, and
- Comparing materials similar to the texture of pollen and nectar to identify the difference because of a shared misconception.

In addition to planning for experiences, Sofie gave more information in the Phase Two interview about making plans for the physical environment.
Planning for the physical environment

The findings from the Phase Two interview show that Sofie altered the physical environment as part of the curriculum planning to cater for children’s interests. In the Kindergarten setting, Sofie set up various provocations relating to children’s interests. Photographs of the provocations were taken by the researcher as evidence of how these interests had been catered for in the environment. Sofie noted that dinosaurs were an interest of the children when she said, “Last week, they came in really excitedly, and they said that they’d found a dinosaur bone out in the garden. They were digging and they hit something hard” (Figure 4.4 and 4.5). Sofie also said that animals were an interest of the children. The areas in the environment that reflected this interest were related to insects (Figure 4.6 and 4.7). Finally, Sofie explained that from talking about things out in the garden, the children were very interested in bees. She said, “[The education assistant has] been doing a book with [the children] outside, recording what they find. We take photographs of everything that we find. We put it in and talk about it, so I am drawing a lot of my interests from there. So, we’ve gone on to bees” (Figure 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10). One example of an area in transition from one interest to another was also captured (Figure 4.11). Sofie explained this shift when she said,

So, we’ve got pirate ships, the kids are trying to build pirate ships outside, or pretending they are on pirate ships, so I turned the block corner, I brought a pallet in, and the intention was for them to build pirate ships. So, I’ve got an overhead projector with pictures. But they haven’t really gone ahead with it. So, they’re not really that interested in it…. They’ve been more interested in the overhead projector….so light.

The interview with Sofie added depth to her responses from the initial interview. She explained that she listens for teachable moments and children’s knowledge as well as talking with children and using questioning strategies in order to gather information about children and their interests. Finally, she explained that she uses the information to plan both learning experiences and for the physical environment. Following the interview, the researcher conducted video observations for the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings.
Figure 4.4 Provocation: Dinosaur valley 1

Figure 4.5 Provocation: Dinosaur valley 2
Figure 4.6 Provocation: Silk worms

Figure 4.7 Provocation: Insect books
Figure 4.8 Provocation: Viewing a bee through a microscope

Figure 4.9 Provocation: Honeycomb and pollen taste testing
Figure 4.10 Provocation: Honey bee books, music and puppet

Figure 4.11 Provocation: Shift from pirate ship interest to an interest in light
4.3.2 Video observations and Involvement Scale ratings

For the video observations, the researcher collected 12 minutes of video for each child in the focus group. These videos were used to conduct the pre-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings. There was a total of six, two-minute videos taken across the day, approximately 15 minutes apart. The pre-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings were completed separately by the researcher and Sofie while viewing the videos for each child.

Analysis of the video observations, through the use of the Involvement Scale rating sheets (SADECS, 2008), showed that all four of the children scored at a Level three: More or less maintained activity, for their overall involvement rating (Table 4.2). Level three: More or less maintained activity, is described as where:

- children are more or less continuously engaged in activity. Even so, there are few real signs of involvement. The children appear to be indifferent to the activity, they hardly put in any effort. The actions are performed mechanically, without dedication or real involvement. They are ‘doing things’, this doesn’t ‘do anything’ to them. The actions are ceased whenever an interesting stimulus appears (SADECS, 2008, p. 85).

The overall mean score for each child is the average of the researcher and Sofie’s calculated mean score. The pre-intervention setting mean score was three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Pre-intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting Mean Score</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The context of each video, the assigned involvement rating, and the calculated overall mean score for each child in the focus group is presented in Table 4.3 for Anika, Table 4.4 Cole, Table 4.5 for Maddy, and Table 4.6 for Wes.
### Anika’s pre-intervention Involvement Scale rating

**Table 4.3 Anika’s pre-intervention Involvement Scale rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>Overall Involvement Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:19am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outdoors, sandpit, with friend moving, mixing sand &amp; water (cooking)</td>
<td>S  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:45am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outdoors, craft table</td>
<td>S  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 12:13pm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Outdoors, moving sticks to save for later in the garden (hiding them) - from cooking game in sandpit</td>
<td>S  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 9:02am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time, introduction of day</td>
<td>S  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 10:09am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outdoors, play with two friends in upper garden</td>
<td>S  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 11:35am</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indoors, tinkering table</td>
<td>S  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R  4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean Score S           | 3.5   |
| Mean Score R           | 3.16  |
| Overall Mean Score     | 3.30  |

73
**Cole’s pre-intervention Involvement Scale rating**

Table 4.4 Cole's pre-intervention Involvement Scale rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>Overall Involvement Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S-Sofie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R- Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:09am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outdoors, by log, group of boys playing/following.</td>
<td>S 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:26am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outdoors, gluing activity with branch (prior to the video, Cole received 1-1 support from an adult to join the activity)</td>
<td>S 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 9:04am</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time, looking at bee wing</td>
<td>S 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 10:16am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Outdoors, construction area-retrieving blocks for use in. Prior to video, asked researcher for permission to use blocks and move to area.</td>
<td>S 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 10:40am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outdoors, creating a worm farm. Cole had been playing here and constructing the play for a long period prior to video.</td>
<td>S 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 11:32am</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indoors, block play with peers. iPad left to sit on table for video.</td>
<td>S 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>R 2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Mean Score</td>
<td>2.92 = 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Maddy's pre-intervention Involvement Scale rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>S-Sofie</th>
<th>R- Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:01am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outdoors, grass area, bikes with friend</td>
<td>S 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:22am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outdoors, construction area with drawing materials brought over-with same friend</td>
<td>S 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 12:09pm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Outdoors, near swings, playing out a story told by friend- dancing and acting to the story</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 9:07am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time, looking at bee wing</td>
<td>S 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 10:06am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outdoors, upper garden with friends- Cooking? Potions?</td>
<td>S 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 11:07am</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indoors, activity of reflecting on the parts of a bee. Asked to join the table.</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean Score  S 3.33

Mean Score  R 2.83

Overall Mean Score 3.08 = 3
### Wes’s pre-intervention Involvement Scale rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>Wes</th>
<th>Overall Involvement Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S-Sofie</td>
<td>R-Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:29am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outdoors, with friend playing a game involving bikes, platform and balls. He had been repeating this game for quite some time prior to the video. The activity had a very specific sequence.</td>
<td>S 3</td>
<td>R 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 11:50am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outdoors, gluing activity with branch</td>
<td>S 2</td>
<td>R 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09 12:06pm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Outdoors, sandpit. Moving sand, waiting for friend to return.</td>
<td>S 4</td>
<td>R 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 9:09am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time, looking at bee wing</td>
<td>S 3</td>
<td>R 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 9:59am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outdoors, bike riding by himself- watching others play. Going on for a while, repeated actions.</td>
<td>S 1</td>
<td>R 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10 11:04am</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indoors, activity of reflecting on the parts of a bee. Asked by Sofie to join the table.</td>
<td>S 4</td>
<td>R 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wes</th>
<th>Overall Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S 2.83</td>
<td>2.92 = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary, analysis of the interview data collected in Phase Two added depth to four of the themes identified in Phase One: listening to children, talking with children and asking questions, planning learning experiences, and planning for the environment. Furthermore, using the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) rating sheets to analyse the children’s involvement levels revealed that the four children in the focus group each scored at Level three in the pre-intervention rating. Level three is where children are busy, but routine actions without much devotion and with few signals of involvement present (SADECS, 2008, p. 88). An intervention took place in Phase Three and action on the curriculum resulted. The findings from Phase Three are reported in the following section.

4.4 Phase Three Results- Curriculum Intervention Activities

Phase Three of the research study involved the implementation of two curriculum intervention activities with the children in the focus group. The Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity were designed and employed to gather information about the children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Data in this phase were collected through multiple methods: participant and video observation during the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity sharing, document review, and photographs. The data collected in Phase Three were analysed to interpret research question one and three. Like Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014), the researcher looked for evidence of the five types of funds of identity when analysing the video observations. The five types of funds of identity are: geographical (symbols of places), practical (any meaningful activity), cultural (artefacts and social categories), social (significant others), and institutional (any social institution). Identification of the children’s types funds of identity also indicated their funds of knowledge because a person’s funds of knowledge becomes their funds of identity when they use it to define themselves (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Figure 4.12 shows the organisation of this section according to the data collection method and types of funds of identity and themes identified.
Figure 4.12 Overview of Phase Three results organisation
4.4.1 Participant and video observation during the Shoebox Activity

The purpose of the Shoebox Activity was to elicit information about the children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The video observations were taken by the researcher when the children shared the contents of their shoeboxes with Sofie. After the sharing session, the researcher reviewed the videos and analysed them for evidence of children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The results of the Shoebox Activity will now be presented for each child in the focus group.

Anika’s Shoebox Activity

Through the Shoebox Activity, Anika revealed four types of funds of identity: practical, cultural, social, and institutional. The findings show that Anika’s funds of knowledge are from her everyday practices such as praying and reading with her mother (practical), her Indian culture and Hindi language (cultural), her family (social), and religion (institutional). Anika’s shoebox was simply decorated on the outside with a photo of her and her sister and small stickers placed on the lid and sides of the shoebox. Four items were placed inside by Anika: a static electricity snow globe, a figurine of Ganesha, a Piglet stuffed toy, and a book called ‘The Midnight Gang’ by David Walliams. Evidence for each of the types of Anika’s funds of identity is presented below.

Anika’s practical funds of identity

When Anika showed Sofie the “stuffed piggy teddy,” Anika revealed an everyday practice that was important to her, sleeping with her stuffed toys. Anika told Sofie the stuffed animal’s name was Piglet, and explained that she sleeps with him. Sofie asked her if she sleeps with any other stuffed toys and Anika said that she has a favourite one called “Mr Eagle” but he is no longer Winnie the Pooh’s friend. Anika also revealed that she had trouble sleeping sometimes but not when she and Piglet listened to the book being read to them at bedtime. This shows that the routine of reading a bedtime story
was also a practical funds of identity for Anika. Anika also revealed cultural funds of identity during the Shoebox Activity.

*Anika’s cultural funds of identity*

Anika’s connection to the Hindi language was revealed when she was flipping through the chapter book, which aligns to cultural funds of identity. This occurred when Sofie pointed to an illustration, which sparked the following conversation:

**Sofie:** “Oh wow, look at that! Look at this page. There’s people chasing each other! Wow!”

**Anika:** “And this is Tom and this is Raj [pointing to the characters].”

**Sofie:** “Mmmhmm…”

**Anika:** “Raj. My dad is called Raj. His name is Raj. My dad is Raj [said matter of fact with eyebrows moving rapidly up and down].”

**Sofie:** “Is it this one [pointing to one of the characters in the illustration]?”

**Anika:** “My dad, his name is called Raj and Raj means king [making eye contact with Sofie, tilting head, smiling and giggleing]!”

**Sofie:** “Oh! Really?”


**Sofie:** “Your words, yeah. [Pause]. Do you like speaking Hindi at home?”

**Anika:** “Mmmhmm. [Nods yes, while looking down, flipping through book].”

Once all of the items had been shared from the shoebox, an interaction took place between Sofie and Anika linked to the Hindi language. Sofie queried about speaking Hindi and Anika said that Ganesha speaks it too. Sofie asked if she and Ganesha could tell her the Hindi word for flower, while she pointed to the picture of Anika and her sister in the flowers. Anika smiled, giggled and said “it is phool, phool.” Sofie then asked the Hindi word for book and Anika replied emphatically “Well, we’re still learning that!” Sofie asked where Anika is learning Hindi and she explained that she is learning it with her mother, her grandmother, and her Hindi class. During the Shoebox Activity, Anika also revealed social funds of identity.
Anika’s social funds of identity

It was found that Anika’s immediate family members and her grandparents are important people in her life. During the conversation about the photo Anika revealed that it was taken on her birthday and she was on a special family outing to the city with her mother, her sister and her aunt, but her father was not there. Anika explained, “He was gone. He was at Melbourne. He missed all the fun [shaking head, hands upturned]. Today night he is coming back [smiling]!” She also mentioned that she went to her grandfather’s office while in the city for her birthday and told Sofie about getting a Spiderman tattoo there. Then Anika spoke about who was going to attend her birthday party and said that her father would not be there because he would be at work but her friends and her mother would be there with her. During the discussion about the Ganesha figurine, Sofie asked Anika about where she does her praying. She said, “We do it at our grandma’s and Anya.” Sofie then asked who Anya was and Anika confirmed that it is a friend of hers, not her sister who had a similar sounding name. Finally, during the conversation about the book, Anika explained that her mother reads it to her and her sister, showing again that these people are significant to her. Finally, Anika also revealed institutional funds of identity.

Anika’s institutional funds of identity

Information about Anika’s religion was revealed was when she pulled out a gold, gem encrusted figurine from the Shoebox. She carefully cradled it in her hands and said to Sofie, “You know the day my mum did the family sharing? So, we brought a Ganesha in.” Sofie replied, “Yeah, and what’s a Ganesha?” and Anika stated, “He’s a God.” A conversation ensued about who Ganesha is a God for, Ganesha’s gender, and the powers that he holds. Anika explained that his power was to “stop people from doing naughty things.” She also shared that Ganesha and Vishnu “watch from the sky,” and she smiled when she said “and they’re proud when you pray.” As she said this she enthusiastically turned to face Sofie, pulled back her jumper sleeve, and revealed two red bracelets on her wrist. Anika then said, “We pray two times, so two rakhi’s” (Figure
4.13). Near the end of the Shoebox Activity, when Anika was playing with the snow globe item talking about it being magic, Sofie asked if Ganesha caused that magic. Anika said no, because “it’s just real” and Sofie asked for clarification of which magic she meant was real. Anika explained that both are real, and elaborated that “Ganesha is in, every God is in, because they all made it [referring to the snow globe object]. So, that’s why it’s magical!” These conversations show that Anika’s religion of Hinduism is important in defining herself.

Figure 4.13 Anika’s two rakhi’s discussed in regards to praying

Table 4.7 provides an overview of Anika’s shoebox contents and the analysis of the video for the types of funds of identity revealed. It was made evident through the Shoebox Activity that the personally meaningful items she selected to share about related to her practical, cultural, social, and institutional funds of identity.
Table 4.7 Contents and analysis of Anika’s Shoebox Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items outside of the shoebox</th>
<th>Photograph of item</th>
<th>Type of Funds of Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Photo of Anika and her sister</td>
<td>![Image of photo]</td>
<td>![Check] Geographical ![Check] Practical ![Check] Cultural ![Check] Social ![Check] Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stickers</td>
<td>![Image of stickers]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items inside the shoebox</th>
<th>Photo of items</th>
<th>Type of Funds of Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Static electricity snow globe</td>
<td>![Image of snow globe]</td>
<td>![Check] Geographical ![Check] Practical ![Check] Cultural ![Check] Social ![Check] Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Piglet stuffed toy</td>
<td>![Image of Piglet]</td>
<td>![Check] Geographical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Cole’s Shoebox Activity**

Cole revealed practical and cultural funds of identity through the Shoebox Activity. It was found that Cole’s funds of knowledge were from popular culture and the activities in which he was involved. Cole’s shoebox was elaborately decorated both on the inside and outside. He used a variety of craft materials to decorate the box, including stickers, pipe cleaners, and tape. He selected 10 items to put inside his shoebox which included: a homemade gun, a map, a homemade worm, a Lego man, a feather, a shell, a wristband, a magnifying glass, a snake, and a leaf.

**Cole’s practical funds of identity**

A meaningful activity that Cole participates in at home was found to be art and craft, as two of the items he brought were homemade crafts and the shoebox itself was elaborately decorated. Sofie admired the decoration on his shoebox to which Cole said, “I’ve been decorating it for only one day.” Cole told Sofie that he made the gun and the worm at home when these items were being discussed. The worm was made so he could “fiddle with it” and he assured Sofie that the gun was “just pretend.” Sofie mentioned that she had not seen a gun like this before and asked him how he made it. Cole explained the steps and materials involved in constructing the gun. Sofie asked to have a closer look and if she could “have a go,” which prompted Cole to hand her the gun. Cole stood tall and stiff and looked surprised at Sofie as she inspected it and held it up ready to “have a go.” She said that she would not point it towards him and then ‘shot’ the gun, which prompted Cole to say that playing with it was really fun.

Another meaningful activity to Cole is going to the Zoo with his mother and sister. Cole showed Sofie a map and shared information about going to the Zoo to see the dinosaurs. Sofie asked him questions about the features of the map and Cole said that he had “been there lots of times and you have to pay to get there.” He also stated that you can buy things at the Zoo. The snake that he brought was bought at the zoo, but he assured Sofie that it was not a real snake. They talked about the materials of which the snake was made, and Cole said that it was made of “seeds and paint.” The
back of the map was also discussed and Cole explained that you had to collect stamps to make a picture and you should try to be the “fastest” to get the stamps.

Lastly, swimming was found to be a meaningful activity in which Cole is involved. This was revealed through the bracelet he brought in, however, the conversation about this item was very brief, despite Sofie’s attempts to probe for further details about swimming. Cole said that he received the green bracelet because he was “the best at swimming by myself” and moved on to the next item in the shoebox. Cole also revealed cultural funds of identity in the Shoebox Activity.

Cole’s cultural funds of identity

Artefacts from nature were found to be important to Cole. He brought in a shell that was from a “fish and chip place,” a leaf that was from a café he went to with his mother, and a feather that was from near the duck area at the Zoo. Artefacts from popular culture were also found to be important to Cole.

The first item from the shoebox that Cole spoke to Sofie about was a Lego policeman. He talked about the arms and legs being able to be taken off and switching them with other Lego arms and legs. Sofie wondered aloud if he had a lot of Lego at home and Cole nodded vigorously, “Yeah, I have lots! And I have a rescue helicopter.” Sofie asked Cole why he decided to bring the policeman and Cole stated “’Cause I just liked him.” Later, the Lego policeman was discussed again when Cole took it in his hands to show Sofie. Sofie encouraged Cole to share more about why he selected the Lego policeman for his shoebox over the other Lego men he had at home.

Sofie: “Why did you choose this one to bring in?”
Cole: “Because I just liked him.”
Sofie: “Yeah, is he your favourite one?”
Cole: [Nodded yes]
Sofie: “Why is he your favourite one?”
Cole: “Because I just like policemans.”
Sofie: “You like policemen? What is it that you like about policemen?”
Cole: “I like that they catch robbers.”
Sofie: “Ohhh, what else do you like?”
Cole: “That they, they, you know polices don’t catch robbers often, they also solve mysteries.”
Sofie: “Oh really! And you like mysteries, don’t you? What kind of mysteries do they like to solve?”
Cole: “They like to, they can solve any mystery.”
Sofie: “Really?”
Cole: “They can solve, to find something if someone lost. They can find someone that lost.”
Sofie: “Oh, that’s a good thing to do.”

The conversation led to Cole excitedly talking about getting the police Lego from an “exhibition” to which he went. At this “exhibition,” he saw characters from popular culture that he likes and this prompted him to talk about these characters and the dress ups that he has at home. The characters that Cole talked about were Storm Troopers and Darth Vader. He also told Sofie that he likes to play and dress up at home as a “pirate” and a “scary ghost.” Cole talked about scaring his friends when he wears a “ghost mask” and played “zombies” with them. He said, “Well, I’ve got, one of my best friends, has got a super scary, scary, scary mask, and when I put it on everyone runs away from me [a big smile on his face]!” Cole mentioned another character that he liked when he told Sofie that he wore a Superman costume to his friend’s birthday party.

Table 4.8 provides an overview of the contents and analysis of Cole’s shoebox activity. The analysis had identified that Cole revealed practical and cultural funds of identity through the items that he selected to place in the shoebox. Maddy’s Shoebox Activity is discussed in the following section.

**Maddy’s Shoebox Activity**

Maddy revealed practical, cultural, and social funds of identity in the Shoebox Activity. Maddy’s funds of knowledge were from organised sport, popular culture, and her family. Maddy’s shoebox lid was decorated with drawings in vibrant colours and craft materials. Inside, Maddy selected 14 items, which included: a cheerleading hair bow, a ballet medal, a photo of her and her stuffed toy called Pinky, a Busby bee stuffed toy, a cheerleading medal, a glass bear figurine, four L.O.L. Surprise figurines, an amethyst crystal, a bracelet, a fairy mailbox, a fairy figurine, a fairy mail, a keychain with charms, and a toadstool.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items outside of the shoebox</th>
<th>Items inside the shoebox</th>
<th>Type of funds of identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lego man-police officer</td>
<td>Practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Feather</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Shell</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Wristband</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Magnifying glass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Snake (cobra)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Gun (homemade)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Leaf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Worm (homemade)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maddy’s practical funds of identity

Cheerleading is a meaningful activity to Maddy, which was revealed through multiple items in her shoebox. First, Maddy showed Sofie her “cheer bow.” Maddy explained that cheerleading was “when you go up in the air and do cool stuff.” Sofie asked Maddy when she does cheerleading, who she does it with, and who are her teachers? Maddy shared two friends’ names, but could not recall the teachers’ names at the time. Maddy then showed Sofie how she put the bow in her hair and Sofie recognised the text on the bow. She asked Maddy what the words “Tiny Tuckers” meant and Maddy told her that it was the level of cheerleading in which she completed. Sofie probed for further information about the levels and what moves she does in the different levels. Maddy smiled and her eyes widened when she told Sofie about the “flips in the air” that she does when she goes to competitions. Next, Maddy shared a cheerleading medal. Maddy told Sofie that she won third place at a competition where she “did a front flip in the air” in order to receive this award. Her team also got a trophy for this accomplishment.

Maddy also shared that ballet was an important activity to her. She brought in a medal that was from her “baby ballet” that she does not go to anymore. She told Sofie that she is going to go to a “higher level” ballet soon and Sofie asked her to tell her more about the medal, as she read aloud the words on the front “Tiny Tutus.” Maddy told Sofie about the ballet outfit that she used to wear which included special slippers, tutus and a necklace. Maddy said that she did ballet with her “little friends” from her “little school” that she does not attend anymore. Maddy also revealed cultural funds of identity in the Shoebox Activity.

Maddy’s cultural funds of identity

Maddy shared multiple artefacts from popular culture that were important to her including four L.O.L. Surprise figurines. During the sharing of these figurines, Maddy spoke enthusiastically and in more detail than for any other object in the shoebox. Maddy described the dolls to Sofie,
It’s a little doll that comes in a ball and you have to unwrap it and it comes with a secret message and little surprises. It’s a surprise which doll you get and you can’t see what doll you get because it’s in plastic and that’s green and white on it and the big sister L.O.L. on the front.

Sofie asked where Maddy finds the L.O.L. Surprise figurines and Maddy explained that she gets them when shopping with her mother at Coles from the toy section. Maddy spent eight and a half minutes talking about the L.O.L. Surprise figurines, discussing their hair, clothes, names, colour changing features, and what she does when she plays with them.

Maddy also shared two stuffed toys, a bee and a bunny. Maddy told Sofie that her brother bought the bee for her because she likes bees. She also brought in a photo of a stuffed bunny, called “Pinky”. The writing on the back of the photo read “This is Maddy’s most meaningful object. Her name is Pinky. Sorry we couldn’t put her in the box.” Maddy has had “Pinky” since she was a baby and did not want to bring her to school since she could “get dirty and get lost” and that would make her feel sad. Finally, Maddy shared a fairy small world set and a fairy. She talked about where she has it set up at home and that her mother bought it for her for her birthday. Maddy also revealed social funds of identity through the items placed in her shoebox.

**Maddy’s social funds of identity**

A significant person in Maddy’s life is her late grandmother. She was first mentioned during the discussion about the amethyst crystal. Maddy held it very carefully in her hands as she explained that it represents a memory of time spent with her “Grandma”. She told Sofie,

**Maddy:** “This is the crystal and it reminds me of my Grandma [smiling at Sofie, feeling the crystal].”
**Sofie:** “Why does it remind you of Grandma?”
**Maddy:** “Because she found a crystal too.”
**Sofie:** “And did she give this to you?”
**Maddy:** “No, um, she found a different one and it’s [brother], but then I found one.”
**Sofie:** “Did you find this one [points to crystal]?”
Maddy: [Nodded yes].
Sofie: “Yeah. So, did you find it when you were having time with her?”
Maddy: [Nodded yes] “Mmmhmm.”
Sofie: “And what were you doing with her?”
Maddy: “We were digging, um, in dirt, and then we found this crystals.”
Sofie: “Were you looking for them?”
Maddy: “Mmmhmm.”
Sofie: “Was that somewhere special, where you know that there are crystals?”
Maddy: “Yes.”
Sofie: “Where was it, do you remember the name of the place?”
Maddy: “No.”
Sofie: “Did you have to drive a long way?”
Maddy: “Yes [nodded yes].”
Sofie: “Were there lots of houses around?”
Maddy: [Nodded yes]
Sofie: “And why do you like the crystal so much?”
Maddy: “Because it’s purple and white.”
Sofie: “What do you do with this at home?”
Maddy: “I keep it in my room, safe.”
Sofie: “Somewhere special where you can see it? Or do you put it away somewhere?”
Maddy: “I put it away somewhere.”
Sofie: “To keep it nice and safe?”
Maddy: “Yeah.”

Maddy’s grandmother was discussed again when Maddy spoke about the glass bear figurine. Maddy said, “This used to be my Grandma’s and now it’s mine.” Sofie asked why her grandmother gave her the bear and Maddy said “because she was a girl and she wanted to give it to me.” The next time her grandmother was mentioned was when Maddy retrieved a bracelet from the shoebox. Maddy explained that the bracelet was given to her from her grandmother as she tried to slip it onto her wrist. She could not fit it on her wrist so Sofie then looked at the name inscribed on the bracelet, “Maddy”, and Maddy explained that she keeps it in her room. Sofie asked why she keeps it there and does not wear it. Maddy explained that the bracelet is “to remember my Grandma.” Sofie asked if she loved her grandmother and if she visits her a lot. Maddy replied “No, because she’s died.” Sofie asked if she does special things to remember her grandmother and Maddy said “Yeah, we go to the place that she died and we plant flowers near there. They have the name and a little square, um little, um thing, that’s stuck to the ground, and you can put flowers there.” Table 4.9 provides an overview of the contents and analysis of Maddy’s Shoebox Activity. Maddy revealed practical,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items outside of the shoebox</th>
<th>Photograph of item</th>
<th>Type of funds of identity</th>
<th>Items inside the shoebox</th>
<th>Photograph of item</th>
<th>Type of funds of identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Foam stickers, gems and drawing</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Glass bear figurine</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Amethyst crystal</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>11. Fairy mail</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13. Keychain with charms</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14. Toadstool</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cultural, and social funds of identity through the items she selected to bring in the shoebox. Finally, Wes’s Shoebox Activity is discussed in the next section.

**Wes’s Shoebox Activity**

Through the Shoebox Activity, Wes revealed geographical, cultural, and social funds of identity. Wes’s shoebox had one sticker on the outside and contained three items inside: a drawing, a toy car, and three wooden rectangles.

**Wes’s geographical and cultural funds of identity**

Wes’s home language of Chinese and both the country of China and the city of Bangkok were found to be important to him throughout the Shoebox Activity. His home language was first mentioned when sharing the blue car with Sofie and she asked him what the round shape inside the car that he turned was called. Wes replied “I don’t know that [in] English but I know that [in] Chinese.” Sofie asked him if he could tell her the Chinese name for it and he smiled as he said “Fāngxiàngpán” (Chinese word for steering wheel). Sofie, leaning in towards Wes said, “Wow! I really like that word!” and Wes quickly explained, “I just lived in China [pause]. That’s my place.” Sofie asked if that is where he lived before moving to Australia, and he nodded yes.

Sofie asked what else he had inside the shoebox. Wes said “I don’t know that [in] English,” as he grabbed three coloured wooden objects. Sofie prompted him to tell her the Chinese word, but Wes skirted the question a few times, instead showing Sofie how he uses them. Wes stood them up in a row, on the short edge, and then pushed the end one in order to knock the others down. Sofie prompted again for the Chinese word for these objects and Wes said “I don’t know that [in] English.” Sofie told Wes that it was okay and that he could tell her the Chinese word. After another minute playing with the objects Sofie asked again, and Wes said “I just know that [in] Chinese.” Sofie said that she would love to hear it in Chinese. It was then that Wes revealed the Chinese word for the objects, ‘duō mǐ nuò’ (Chinese word for domino), and Sofie told Wes that in English she would call them blocks. Though, Wes did not agree that they were blocks because
the objects did not have “holes,” and his blocks at home have “holes” in them. Sofie instead suggested to call them rectangles, as they are the shape of the objects. Wes was satisfied with this and used the name “rectangles” throughout the remainder of the sharing. As Wes showed Sofie multiple times how he used the rectangles, she said that it reminded her of a game called dominoes, however, he was not familiar with this word.

Wes and Sofie continued to talk about and play with the rectangles and the conversation touched on his toy boxes and train track set at home and the big rectangles that he wished he had at home. Wes said, “I wish had some. My imagination was have that…the big bad wolf could blow it down.” Sofie asked if he liked that story and if Wes could remember reading that story at Kindergarten. He then talked about building an “airport up thing” but he again stated that “I just know that [in] Chinese.” Sofie encouraged Wes to tell her the Chinese word, reassuring him that it was fine to not know the English word. He told her the word and the following conversation ensued:

Sofie: “You know lots of Chinese don’t you.”
Wes: “Yeah, but I, when I got to here I got to learn, when I get to here I learn, I just changing to English.”
Sofie: “Mmm. And how do you find that?”
Wes: “I don’t know, I just got to Bangkok and [giggle], I just change into Chinese. ‘Cause there’s a friend, there’s one my friend, that talks Chinese.”
Sofie: “Can you tell me about your friend?”
Wes: “But, I know he’s now, I know that friend Chinese, but his name Chinese is [name withheld]. That’s his name [smiling].”
Sofie: “Sounds like you enjoy talking in Chinese to him.”
Wes: “Yeah [giggling].”

In addition to geographical funds of identity, Wes revealed social funds of identity through the Shoebox Activity as well.

Wes’s social funds of identity

Wes’s mother emerged to be a significant person in his life, as he mentioned her multiple times throughout the sharing. Wes mentioned her in the first minute of the experience, when he said that he had not told her about putting the sticker on the box while giving a Sofie smile. The next instance was when Wes was showing Sofie a drawing
from inside the box. Wes drew his mother in the picture, “See, that’s my mummy” he told Sofie. He later said that his mother read a book about planets to him and indicated that they went to the shopping centre together to do their shopping.

Table 4.10 provides an overview of the contents and the analysis of Wes’s Shoebox Activity. Wes revealed geographical, cultural and social funds of identity during this activity. The analysis of the Photovoice Activity will now be discussed.

### Table 4.10 Contents and analysis of Wes’s Shoebox Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of funds of identity</th>
<th>Items outside of the shoebox</th>
<th>Items inside the shoebox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Photograph of item</td>
<td>Photo of items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>1. Sticker</td>
<td>1. Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

```
| 1. Sticker | ![Sticker Image] |
| 2. Toy car | ![Toy Car Image] |
| 3. 3 rectangles | ![3 Rectangles Image] |
```
4.4.2 Participant and video observation during the Photovoice Activity

The purpose of the Photovoice Activity was to elicit information about the children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The video observations were taken by the researcher when the children shared their photographs with Sofie and the Kindergarten setting. The researcher reviewed the videos and analysed them for evidence of the geographical, practical, cultural, social, and institutional funds of identity as described by Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014). The results of the Photovoice Activity will now be presented for each child in the focus group and Table 4.11 provides an overview of the types of funds of identity revealed.

Table 4.11 Funds of identity types revealed through the Photovoice Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Geographical</th>
<th>Practical</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Institutional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anika’s Photovoice Activity**

Analysis of Anika’s Photovoice Activity revealed cultural, social, and institutional types of funds of identity. Anika selected 21 photographs to share for the Photovoice Activity, though it was made evident that Anika did not take the photographs herself, as she was in all but one of the images. Anika’s cultural funds of identity is discussed first.
Anika’s cultural funds of identity

Anika included nine photographs of food and explained her enjoyment of these foods at family celebrations. Birthdays were identified as meaningful celebrations where Anika and members of her family made and ate cakes and went out to restaurants for lunch. Anika and her family also spent time out in the community at events and trying the foods on offer at these events. In addition to cultural funds of identity, the Photovoice Activity revealed Anika’s social funds of identity.

Anika’s social funds of identity

Anika’s explanation of the photographs included conversation about significant people in her life, even if not visible in the photographs. Anika spoke often of playing with her older sister, going places with her mother and sister and visiting her grandfather’s office. Anika stated that her mother took many of the photographs displayed when Sofie asked who took the photographs. Anika also revealed institutional funds of identity.

Anika’s institutional funds of identity

Anika spent a significant amount of time with her family including her mother, sister and grandparents when not at school. She included four photographs of her grandparents, 11 photographs with her sister, and one photograph of her mother. Anika revealed cultural, social, and institutional funds of identity through the Photovoice Activity. Cole’s Photovoice Activity is discussed next.

Cole’s Photovoice Activity

During the Photovoice Activity, Cole revealed practical, cultural, and social types of funds of identity. Cole provided nine photographs to share and was in all of the
photographs, indicating that he did not take any of the photographs himself. Cole’s practical funds of identity are discussed first.

**Cole’s practical funds of identity**

Martial arts are a meaningful activity that Cole participates in. He shared a photograph of an award he won from his martial arts school. He said, “I got a certificate because I did a good job.” Cole also embodied martial arts moves when the photograph of the PJ Masks event and block building with PJ Masks figurines were being discussed.

Cole also mentioned spending time in his backyard in two of the photographs. In one of the photographs he was holding a worm and said that he was digging in his backyard looking for a dinosaur bone, but found the worm instead. In another photograph, he was planting “parsley” with his sister. He said, “growing it made me feel happy” and that he enjoyed picking strawberries and had plans to plant other vegetables soon. Cole also revealed cultural funds of identity.

**Cole’s cultural funds of identity**

Cole’s photographs and his talk during the sharing revealed popular culture characters that are special to him, including: Superman, Storm Trooper, Darth Vader, and PJ Masks characters. At times, when talking about these characters, Cole mentioned concepts of good and bad, real and not real. His clothing in the photographs and events that he attended with his family focused around these characters as well. In one of the photographs, he and his younger sister were dressed up as a Storm Trooper and Darth Vader. In another, he was wearing a PJ Masks Gekko costume at a show he went to see that was about the characters. Cole jumped up and down, smiled and gasped when the photograph appeared. He told Sofie that he could go on the stage if he was good. When on stage he said that he could be a “bad guy or a goodie” and “but I prefer to be a bad guy....because they do naughty stuff....because they catch polices....But normally polices go catch bad guys. And shooting can go you to jail.” He also spoke about PJ Masks figurines that he has at home. Cole uses them when he is building with blocks. While
pointing to one of the characters he said, “And that’s night ninja and he’s a ninja but he’s naughty. He’s got sticky spots [imitating sticky spots on hands]. But he’s only in movies….He’s a bad ninja and he fights PJ Masks.”

Cole also had a photograph of a Lego construction he made at an exhibition he attended. He made a “Chinese ship” and a “pirate ship” and a “pirate flag” while he was at the exhibition. At this exhibition, he mentioned seeing a Storm Trooper and Darth Vader. Cole told Sofie that they had guns but that they were not real.

**Cole’s social funds of identity**

During the activity, Cole spoke about his sister, mother and father. These people are therefore identified as being significant to him. In three of the photographs Cole was with his younger sister at the zoo, playing at home, and doing gardening in the backyard. He also spoke about his mother being at the Lego exhibition with him and that Darth Vader was the same age as his father. Cole revealed practical, cultural, and social funds of identity through the Photovoice Activity. The analysis of Maddy’s Photovoice Activity is discussed in the next section.

**Maddy’s Photovoice Activity**

The Photovoice Activity revealed Maddy’s practical, cultural, and social funds of identity. Maddy provided 13 photographs for the activity, of which none were taken by her, as she was in all of the photographs. Maddy’s practical funds of identity are discussed first.

**Maddy’s practical funds of identity**

Meaningful activities that Maddy participates in include cheerleading, ballet, and cross-country running. She included photographs that show her taking part in a cheerleading competition and practicing cheerleading in the pool with her father.
Maddy also showed a photograph of her dressed up in her ballet outfit. In addition to practical funds of identity, Maddy revealed cultural funds of identity.

*Maddy’s cultural funds of identity*

During the sharing, Maddy jumped up and down as she spoke to her peers and Sofie about the photograph of her Shopkins collection. She was enthusiastic as she talked about this photograph, indicating that these popular culture characters are important to her. The collection was quite extensive and she told everyone that her favourite figurine was a pizza themed character. Maddy also revealed social funds of identity through the Photovoice Activity.

*Maddy’s social funds of identity*

The Photovoice Activity also revealed some of the important people in Maddy’s life. She spoke about her older brother, father, mother, and grandfather. Maddy spent time with these people while on holidays, both in Australia and overseas. These people also attended events for the sports that she takes part in, like ballet concerts, cross-country running, and cheer competitions. Four of the photographs showed Maddy playing with her brother as they made potions, went on bike rides, played at the beach, and swam together. The Photovoice Activity revealed Maddy’s practical, cultural and social funds of identity. Next, Wes’s Photovoice Activity is discussed.

*Wes’s Photovoice Activity*

Analysis of the video observation showed that Wes revealed geographical, social, and cultural funds of identity through this activity. Wes provided 21 photographs, of which seven were photographs that he took himself. Wes’s sharing session was over two days due to a situation that interrupted the first session. Wes’s geographical funds of identity are discussed first.
Wes’s geographical funds of identity

Spending time in Bangkok emerged as a place of significance for Wes. He visited his father in Bangkok, as that is where his father worked. He smiled and said that he felt happy in the photograph of him at the Bangkok airport because he was going to see his father. He also mentioned during the sharing that his father “goes to work every day at Bangkok.” Wes said that Bangkok weather is “super hot” and that the sun goes up “quick”, not like in Australia. He also said that the Bangkok sky has a moon but no sky in the daytime. Wes included photographs of things that he saw and what he played with at the “Bangkok shops” and activity centres. He had multiple photographs that showed him playing with his friends from Bangkok. In addition to geographical funds of identity, Wes revealed cultural funds of identity.

Wes’s cultural funds of identity

Wes told Sofie and the class that his friends have a Chinese and an English name, like him. He told them his friends’ Chinese names but Wes did not want to disclose his Chinese name. Sofie asked him during the first sharing session. He said, “maybe next time.” However, in the second sharing session, he willingly shared his Chinese name as he spoke about his friends in Bangkok. As he told the class his Chinese name he covered his mouth, lifted his shoulders and smiled. He explained further that his first name is different to his “other name” and told the class what that name was too. Finally, Wes told everyone “but my name can just be Wes.” Sofie asked if he was called his Chinese name at home and English name at school, and he nodded yes.

Wes included multiple photographs of food and explained some of them with their Chinese names. He included photographs of a restaurant, a fresh drinking coconut, a character cake pop, ice cream, and two traditional Chinese desserts called “mochi.” Wes also had photographs of him cooking, both in real life and in pretend play. Wes also revealed social funds of identity in the Photovoice Activity.
**Wes’s social funds of identity**

Wes revealed important people in his life, including his father, mother, and friends from Bangkok. His father works in Bangkok and Wes visits him there during the school holiday breaks. Wes mentioned multiple times that his father was “at work.” He goes there with his mother and spends a lot of time doing different activities with her, such as going to play centres, shopping and eating at restaurants. Wes also spoke about spending time with his “Bangkok friends” and many of the photographs were of them doing activities around Bangkok. Together they would learn about cars, cook food, make desserts, and play together. The next section will discuss the analysis of the curriculum documents and photographs taken of the Kindergarten setting.

**4.4.3 Curriculum documents and photographs of the setting**

The findings of Phase Three show that Sofie made adjustments to the curriculum based on obtaining knowledge about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. She targeted the curriculum to cater for all five types of funds of identity. In this phase, curriculum planning documents, photographs of the setting, and field notes were analysed.

**Curriculum planning documents**

Analysis of the planning documents found that Sofie planned learning experiences using the five types of children’s funds of identity. First, Sofie constructed a concept map of children’s revealed funds of identity and grouped them to generate common interests (Figure 4.14). Next, Sofie used this information to plan for learning experiences and the physical environment for a two-week period. Sofie informed the researcher that she would observe the children in the focus group over the two-week period as they interacted with the experiences, environment, and provocation so that ongoing planning could take place as well.
Figure 4.14 Sofie's curriculum planning mind map

- Block building - provide lots of variety to stimulate complexity
- Family (including grandparents)
- Special characters/figurines to incorporate into play
- Pretend cooking (creating foods in different ways)
- Planting
- Potions
- Flowers
- Cultural festivals (Chinese New Year, Diwali, festivals/events celebrated by families)
- Use of home language

Anika
- Grandparents
- Family
- Hindi
- Cultural celebrations and beliefs
- Flowers
- Special food
- Creating with sticks

Cole
- Planting plants
- Family
- Building (Lego, blocks)
- Characters (good/bad)

Maddy
- Cheerleading
- Physical movement
- Creating potions
- Grandmother (bracelet etc.)
- Family (holidays, time with brother)
- Figurines

Wes
- Grandma
- Family
- Bangkok (Dad)
- Pretend play (cooking)
- Cultural food
- Mandarin
- Physical movement
- Activity parks/places
Sofie’s planning documents were comprised of the following elements:

- Curriculum Intentions (Learning Goals)
- Learning Experiences: Inside, Outside, and Beyond
- Group Experiences
- Routines
- Relationships
- Ideas to Take Forward
- Weekly Planner Daily Breakdown (Morning Mat, Morning Learning, Mat, Afternoon Learning, Mat)
- Weekly Planner Provocations (Areas)
- EYLF Learning Outcomes (DEEWR, 2009)
- WA Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines (SCSA, 2014)

The learning experiences that Sofie planned, as noted in her curriculum planning documents, have been analysed to identify the correlation to the types of children’s funds of identity and is presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Learning experiences aligned to children’s funds of identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Planning Learning Experiences</th>
<th>Type of funds of identity</th>
<th>Geographical</th>
<th>Practical</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Institutional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bee hotel construction</td>
<td>Cole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss family celebrations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating Diwali</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Video</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rangoli making</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diya making</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Playdough coconut barfi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family book</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potion making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read ‘Flowers’ book and flower making</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read ‘Nanna’s Button Tin’ book, names of family members in diverse languages</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>Wes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read ‘The Day the Bees Buzzed Off’ book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed planting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sofie also made a plan to adjust the physical environment using all five types of children’s funds of identity. The correlation between the children’s funds of identity and the altered physical environment can be reviewed in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Physical environment aligned to children’s funds of identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Planning</th>
<th>Type of funds of identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Provocations</td>
<td>Geographical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal provocation</td>
<td>Cole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block construction</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay animal provocation</td>
<td>Cole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating rangoli provocation</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doll house</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing/writing table</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress ups</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home corner</td>
<td>Wes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music centre</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playdough block provocation</td>
<td>Cole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playdough ethnic food provocation</td>
<td>Anika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small world play</td>
<td>Wes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinkering table</td>
<td>Cole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Sofie’s curriculum planning documents found that she planned learning experiences and planned for the physical environment based on all five types of funds of identity that the children revealed. The next section will present photographs that were taken by the researcher to show the funds of identity related learning experiences and physical environment adjustments.
Photographs and field notes

Photographs were taken by the researcher as evidence of how the learning experiences, physical environment, and Sofie’s interactions with the children were influenced by her knowledge of children’s funds of identity. Unplanned events that related to the children’s funds of identity also emerged during the implementation of the altered curriculum and were documented using field notes. The photographs of the planned and unplanned events and the physical environment is presented using the types of funds of identity as headings.

Geographical funds of identity

The playdough centre and home corner were set up to cater for Wes’ experiences with cooking and food related activities that he took part in while visiting Bangkok (Figure 4.15 to 4.17). Sofie explained her thinking behind this physical environment decision in her planning documents. She said,

Wes showed an interest in dramatic play – cooking in both his photos and in the observation videos of his play, so this will give opportunities to develop [his] dramatic play around this theme. I will be adding Chinese-style plates and chopsticks to integrate different cultures in this [area].

Figure 4.15 Home corner set up for cooking
In addition to planning for Wes’s geographical funds of identity, Sofie planned for Cole’s practical funds of identity.
Practical funds of identity

Sofie planned for a bee hotel making experience for Cole due to the revelation of gardening at home with his sister and interest in animals (Figure 4.18). Sofie also planned for a gardening experience. She wrote in her planning documents that she planned for the seed planting experience in order to “involve Cole in our inquiry, based on his interest in gardening” (Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.18 Cole’s bee hotel

Figure 4.19 Seed planting experience
Sofie also planned for an animal provocation as Cole revealed information about going to the Zoo during the Shoebox Activity and shared a photograph of himself with a python in the Photovoice Activity (Figure 4.20).

![Image of animal provocations](image)

*Figure 4.20 Animal provocation*

Sofie also considered children’s cultural funds of identity when planning learning experiences and for the physical environment.

*Cultural funds of identity*

Multiple learning experiences and physical environment adjustments were made for the children’s cultural funds of identity. In the outdoor learning environment, Sofie provided a variety of musical instruments and played Indian music on the CD player to “build on [the] experience[s] of Diwali and [Anika’s] culture” (Figure 4.21).
All of the children revealed an interest in popular culture characters therefore, Sofie planned to add figurines to the block centre (Figure 4.22). Furthermore, Sofie added Lego and a variety of blocks in the attempt to attract Cole and Wes as they both showed an interest in blocks, Lego, and building. She added these objects in both the block construction area (Figure 4.23) and playdough table (Figure 4.24 and 4.25).
Figure 4.23 Wes playing at the block construction centre

Figure 4.24 Blocks added to the playdough provocation

Figure 4.25 Playdough and block creation
Anika and Wes both revealed their cultural funds in relation to being Chinese and Indian during the Shoebox and Photovoice activities. Sofie planned a range of learning experiences to explore Diwali and Chinese New Year. Sofie’s rationale for these experiences was,

developing cultural and language sharing....to encourage Wes to feel more comfortable in sharing aspects of his culture....and making connections (similarities) between different cultures and their celebrations. We will also refer to similarities with Chinese New Year, which we celebrated earlier in the year.

One of the provocations set out was to create rangoli, which is an Indian art form used to decorate houses during Diwali (Figure 4.26 and Figure 4.27). Sofie introduced rangoli to the children through a video about the colours, shapes, and significance to Diwali during the morning mat session. Another opportunity for the children to explore rangoli was through chalk in the outdoor area (Figure 4.28).

![Figure 4.26 Rangoli making provocation](image)

![Figure 4.27 Rangoli being made by Anika at the provocation](image)
Unplanned events and interactions between Sofie and Anika were also captured by the researcher in relation to Anika’s cultural funds of identity. An unplanned event that took place outdoors was where Anika made Sofie and the researcher an Indian sweet called laddu while playing in the sandpit (Figure 4.29).

A conversation at the drawing and writing table positioned Anika as the expert in her culture. This area was set up with cards, envelopes, and a post box. Sofie made these additions to the classroom to “engage Anika in more writing experiences and extend her
Another exchange shows that Anika’s culture had a place in the everyday experiences and talk of the classroom. Shortly after Anika finished making her card, she went over to the diya making provocation. A diya is a clay lamp lit during Diwali and has cultural and religious significance. As Anika was constructing her diya (Figure 4.30), she revealed information about the celebration of Diwali to Sofie.

The conversation went as follows:

Anika: “Well, I want to tell you something.”
Sofie: “Okay.”
Anika: “Mostly in Diwali you have a mela to also celebrate.”
Sofie: “You have a...?”
Anika: “On Diwali, when it’s nearly Diwali, there is, you have, you go to a mela to also celebrate Diwali.”
Sofie: “Oh, and what’s that? What’s a mela?”
Anika: “A mela’s a show.”
Sofie: “Ohh. And what is, what happens in the show.”
Anika: “We get dances, songs.”
Sofie: “Oh, that sounds awesome.”
Anika: “And in the grand finale, you get loads of food and you get to play a game and then I went on that roller coaster….Could I tell you something else?”
Sofie: “You may certainly tell me something else.”
Anika: “Diwali, Rama and Sita are just gods. They have all powers.”
Sofie: “And are they, are they gods about what Diwali’s about?”
Anika: “[Nodded heads yes] No, ‘cause Diwali celebrates because of um, Rama coming back from the forest. That’s why it’s celebrated.”
Sofie: “Right.”

Wes’s home language was incorporated into the Kindergarten setting during the curriculum implementation. Sofie’s knowledge of Wes’s home language of Chinese initiated conversation between the two of them about words for family members in Chinese. Sofie took a video of this conversation and later shared it during a mat session with the class to discuss the diverse languages of the children in the class. Following this event, Sofie contacted Wes’s mother and grandmother asking for the Chinese symbols for bee so that she could display it in the classroom in conjunction with their bee inquiry (Figure 4.31).

![Figure 4.31 Chinese symbols for ‘bee’ displayed on the class whiteboard](image)

Children’s social funds of identities were also identified as being included in the planning of learning experiences and the physical environment.
Social funds of identity

Sofie planned for a class “Family Book” to be constructed because “all children included family and talked about extended family [in the Shoebox and Photovoice activities] so the focus is on developing on ideas about family, recognising the importance of families.” Appendix R shows a copy of the letter Sofie sent to families in the class inviting them to send in information for the book, to which all children in the Kindergarten contributed. Cole was one of the first children to bring in images to contribute to the book and revealed information about his grandparents and cousins. These family members were not discussed in the Photovoice Activity where he spoke about significant people, therefore this experience provided an opportunity for Cole to share more about his family (Figure 4.32).

Figure 4.32 Cole contributing to the family book

Maddy’s interests were utilised to involve her in play experiences that promoted her agency and independence. Maddy told Sofie that she made potions at home with her brother during the Photovoice Activity, so Sofie provided a potion making provocation with herbs and flowers so that she could initiate the play at a centre (Figure 4.33). Maddy was the first child to investigate this provocation the morning it was set.
out (Figure 4.34). In the following days, Maddy was found around the Kindergarten
garden organising potion making with friends (Figure 4.35).

Figure 4.33 Potion making provocation

Figure 4.34 Maddy mixing and making potions

Figure 4.35 Maddy making potions in the garden
It is evident that cultural funds of identity were incorporated into the curriculum for all of the children. Institutional funds of identity were also catered for in the curriculum, even though Anika was the only child who revealed such funds.

*Institutional funds of identity*

Sofie planned for a loose part stick provocation due to a noticing an interest of Anika’s in playing with and making things with sticks (Figure 4.36). While the connection to Anika’s religion was not the initiation for this provocation, the connection became clear through interacting with Anika as she played. Anika told the story of Diwali to Sofie and the researcher and it turned out that Anika and her friend, who also identified as Indian, were using the sticks to create bows and arrows. An arrow plays a significant part in the story of Diwali, where Rama and Sita can return to their home after defeating Ravana.

![Figure 4.36 Loose part stick provocation](image)

This prompted the researcher and Sofie to ask if there was a connection between the arrow in the story and the bow and arrows she had been making. Anika immediately said, “well I’ve never made a sharp one” and went to the craft area to start constructing an arrow. Once it was completed, she went over to her existing collection of bows and
‘shot’ the arrow and exclaimed “they can get back! [smiling, hand punching up into the air]” (Figure 4.37).

Figure 4.37 Anika’s bow and the sharp arrow

In summary, the analysis of the participant and video observations in Phase Three identified the types of children’s funds of identity elicited from the curriculum intervention activities. Additionally, analysis of planning documents, photographs of the classroom, and field notes highlighted the influence that Sofie’s knowledge of children’s funds of identity had on the curriculum. Learning experiences planned and unplanned, the physical environment, and educator-child interactions were found to be influenced. This led to the next phase of the research: Phase Four, which will now be discussed.

4.5 Phase Four Results- Video Observations and Interview

Data from Phase Four were collected through multiple methods: video observations and a semi-structured interview. The video observations were collected as the post-intervention data to complete the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings and were analysed in order to interpret research question four. The semi-structured interview data were analysed to add further interpretation to research questions one, two, and three. This section is organised under two headings that pertain to the
methods used to collect data: Video observations and Involvement Scale ratings and the Semi-structured Interview. The Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) rating sheets for the children in the focus group and the themes that were identified by the researcher through analysis of the interview are presented as sub headings. An overview of how this section has been organised is presented in Figure 4.38.

Anika
Cole
Maddy
Wes

Educator knowledge of funds of knowledge and funds of identity

Gathering information about children
• Listening to children
• Observing children

Using information about children
• Planning learning experiences
• Planning for the physical environment
• Relationship building
• Engaging in democratic classroom practices

4.5.1 Video observations and Involvement Scale ratings

The researcher again collected 12 minutes of video observation of each child in the focus group in order to conduct the post-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings. There was a total of six, two-minute videos taken during the time when
the altered curriculum was implemented. The post-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings were completed independently by the researcher and Sofie while viewing the video and the overall mean score for each child is an average of the mean score that Sofie and the researcher assigned.

Table 4.14 shows that comparative analysis of the pre-intervention and the post-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) data indicates that the children’s involvement levels increased when the curriculum was constructed using their funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The setting mean score also increased, moving from three to five, the highest level possible.

Table 4.14 Analysis of children’s involvement levels pre-and-post intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Pre-intervention</th>
<th>Post-intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anika</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Mean Score</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anika, Maddy and Wes all scored level three in the pre-intervention Involvements Scale rating, and scored five, the highest level possible, in the post-intervention Involvement Scale rating. Level five: Sustained intense activity is where:

The greatest involvement possible. The child is clearly absorbed in his/her activities. His/her eyes are more or less uninterruptedly focused on the actions and on the material. Surrounding stimuli do no or barely reach him/her. Actions are readily performed and require mental effort. This effort is personally driven. There is an intensity about the action (an intrinsic, not an emotional tension!) (SADECS, 2008, p. 85).

Cole scored level three in the pre-intervention Involvement Scale rating, and scored four plus in the post-intervention Involvement Scale rating. Level four plus (variation):

Activity with intense moments is where:

Sustained activity with a good deal of concentration, but lacking in complexity: the actions are thoroughly motivated as parts of a chosen task, yet in the sense that they serve a specific purpose (SADECS, 2008, p. 85).
The context of each video, the assigned involvement rating, and the calculated overall mean score for each child in the focus group is presented in Table 4.15 for Anika, Table 4.16 Cole, Table 4.17 for Maddy, and Table 4.18 for Wes.

Table 4.15 Anika’s Post-intervention Involvement Scale rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>Anika Overall Involvement Rating</th>
<th>S-Sofie</th>
<th>R-Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/11 9:49am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indoors, craft table- making cards for Diwali</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td>R 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11 9:52am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indoors, craft table- making Diya</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>R 4+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11 11:24am</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Verandah, craft table- making Rangoli</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>R 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11 12:10pm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time</td>
<td>S 3+</td>
<td></td>
<td>R 3+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 10:35am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Verandah, art area</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>R 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 12:20pm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>R 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean Score S           | 4.75  |
| Mean Score R           | 4.66  |
| Overall Mean Score     | 4.70= 5 |
Table 4.16 Cole’s Post-intervention Involvement Scale rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>Cole</th>
<th>Overall Involvement Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S-Sofie</td>
<td>R- Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 9:59am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Verandah, craft table- making Diya</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 11:11am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indoors, activity table- contributing to family book</td>
<td>S 3+</td>
<td>R 3+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 9:26am</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Verandah, craft table- making bee hotel</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 9:36am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indoors, holiday/post office centre</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 10:01am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indoors</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 11:22am</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Outdoors, rock area</td>
<td>S 3+</td>
<td>R 3+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to this experience, Cole was playing with a wind-up toy with others. As they left, Cole engaged with the researcher, making silly faces and air punches. The researcher can be heard asking at the start of the video if this relates to a photo(s) from his Photovoice Activity collage.

Mean Score S 4.5
Mean Score R 4.5
Overall Mean Score 4.5=4+
### Table 4.17 Maddy's Post-intervention Involvement Scale rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>Maddy Overall Involvement Rating</th>
<th>S-Sofie</th>
<th>R- Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/11 10:23am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outdoors, potion/ lemonade provocation</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11 12:09 &amp; 12:27pm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time- Review of Morning &amp; Storytime: Nanna’s Button Tin story</td>
<td>S 4+</td>
<td>R 4+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There were 2 occasions that Maddy’s Photovoice Activity and Shoebox Activity was connected to the session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 9:53am</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indoors, home corner</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 9:34am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Verandah, craft table- making bee hotel</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prior to this video, Maddy spent a while making the bee hotel on her own</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 9:58am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indoors, playdough provocation</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prior to the video Maddy was playing here, creating flowers and imprints</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 10:45am</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indoors, block area- doll’s house and family figurines</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maddy played here for a significant amount of time prior to and post the video.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean Score             | S    | 4.92 |
| Mean Score             | R    | 4.83 |
| Overall Mean Score     |      | 4.88=5 |

123
Table 4.18 Wes’s Post-intervention Involvement Scale rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time of Video</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Context of Play</th>
<th>Wes</th>
<th>Overall Involvement Rating</th>
<th>S-Sofie</th>
<th>R- Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/11 10:01am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indoors, holiday/post office centre</td>
<td>S 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 4+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11 11:36am</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Verandah, craft table- making Rangoli</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/11 12:16pm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indoors, mat time</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The video being watched is Wes and a peer talking with Sofie about speaking Chinese and family.</td>
<td>R 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 11:39am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indoors, holiday/post office centre</td>
<td>S 4+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At the first request to video, Wes said “No, because I am so busy” (10 minutes prior).</td>
<td>R 4+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 11:12am</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indoors, block area</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wes was playing here for a very long period of time in the morning.</td>
<td>R 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11 11:29am</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indoors, cooking provocation</td>
<td>S 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wes was invited over to this centre by Sofie as she reflected on his food photographs from the Photovoice Activity.</td>
<td>R 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean Score: S 4.75

Mean Score: R 4.83

Overall Mean Score: 4.79=5
It was also found that the children’s global rating of high in the four essential signals for involvement were significantly increased following the intervention. The four essential signals for involvement are: concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, and persistence. The comparisons were calculated by the researcher identifying the average number of high global ratings assigned by Sofie and the researcher, both in the pre- and post-intervention ratings, for the six video observations of each child. As there were six video observations taken pre- and post-intervention of each child, the maximum amount of high ratings a child could have been rated in each the pre- and post-intervention, is six for each of the essential signals.

In Anika’s post-intervention involvement ratings, the number of high ratings assigned for concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, and persistence were significantly greater than the number of occurrences in the pre-intervention rating (Figure 4.39).

**Figure 4.39 Anika’s Involvement Scale essential signals high global rating comparison**

Comparative analysis of Cole’s pre- and post-intervention involvement ratings found that all four of the essential signals were rated high more frequently in the post-intervention rating (Figure 4.40).
The analysis of Maddy’s pre- and post-intervention ratings showed an increase in the frequency of high global ratings being assigned for all four of the essential signals (Figure 4.41).

Figure 4.40 Cole’s Involvement Scale essential signals high global rating comparison

Figure 4.41 Maddy’s Involvement Scale essential signals high global rating comparison
Finally, Wes’s pre-and post-intervention ratings show a significant increase in the number of high global ratings assigned to the four essential signals in the post-intervention ratings (Figure 4.42).

![Figure 4.42 Wes’s Involvement Scale essential signals high global rating comparison](image)

Following the video observations and Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings, the researcher conducted the final semi-structured interview with Sofie. The findings from the interview are discussed in the next section.

### 4.5.2 Semi-structured interview

The Phase Four semi-structured interview schedule included five open-ended questions (Appendix P). Question one and four pertained to educators’ knowledge about funds of identity and funds of knowledge. Question two elicited information about how educators use information about children and their interests. Questions three and four related to the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale and how using the scale in the research study influenced the educators’ practice and their views on the use of this tool in EC settings. Finally, question four also addressed the usefulness of being
familiar with these approaches in relation to getting to know young children. This section is organised using the purpose of research questions one, two, and three as headings and themes identified as sub headings.

**Educators knowledge of funds of knowledge and funds of identity**

Findings show that Sofie’s knowledge about funds of knowledge and funds of identity increased from participating the study. She was unfamiliar with both of the terms prior to the commencement of the study yet in the final interview with Sofie she spoke with confidence about each of terms. In relation to funds of knowledge she said, “So, funds of knowledge I think...is more relating to like the family and the cultural transmission of ideas and knowledge and so on. So, it’s the learning that gets transmitted from...within families.” She also said that funds of knowledge is where an educator is “...going to get something from the parents and [is] something that [the educator is] going to derive from parents. [The parents] give that background of what’s going on in the house.” Sofie was also asked to share her understanding of the term funds of identity.

Sofie described funds of identity as “a far more personal thing.” She elaborated on this by saying,

it is more related to their developing sense of identity....everyone has so many different experiences, that their identity is shaped in different ways. But, I think it is an accumulative build-up of all of those experiences that they have had that contributes to their personal sense of self.... it’s more personal than what you’re going to get out of funds of knowledge.

In addition, Sofie reflected on the children in the focus group when responding to this question and explained that a child’s family influences a child’s funds of identity. She said,

What they [the children] may have with their family...might impinge them.....We saw that with Anika, because her culture was so important to her that obviously...it impinged on her identity, that was a big component of her identity. You can see it with Cole, that he did things with his family, but it didn’t, it wasn’t quite such an integral part of his identity.
Sofie’s final statement for this question was, “what comes through with the identity part, is what they [the children] see as being important from the funds of knowledge.” The interview also sought information about how Sofie gathered information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity.

**Educators gathering information about children**

Findings show that Sofie gathered information about the children in the focus group, during the implementation of the two curriculum intervention activities, by listening to and observing children. Sofie needed to listen and observe children in order to interpret the objects and photographs and their personal significance to the children. Furthermore, she needed to observe children to ascertain their level of involvement in the Kindergarten in order to adjust the curriculum so that they were highly involved. Listening to and observing children is discussed first.

**Listening to and observing children**

Sofie expressed that the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity were effective strategies to gather information about children. These two curriculum intervention activities helped Sofie to learn what the children were deeply interested in and how their interests were personally significant to them. However, Sofie stated that gaining insight into the children’s interests was not possible from the objects and photographs alone. She highlighted the importance of children’s talk during these experiences. Speaking about the objects and photographs, Sofie explained that “they were obviously significant to the children but sometimes the significance wasn’t always overt. Sometimes, it was, it seemed to be something, but it was actually something else.” Listening to and observing children were important to ascertain the personal meaning behind the children’s objects and photographs. Sofie described this when she said,

There was so many different layers that these objects brought to it and they were sometimes far more transparent and sometimes, very, very, overt. Sometimes verbal, sometimes non-verbal, but you really had to listen to the
child, you had to look at the child. You had to see the behaviours that were associated with their talk about it. It needed to be three dimensional, not two dimensional.

In addition to observing children during the sharing of the curriculum intervention activities, Sofie needed to observe children in the classroom to determine their level of involvement.

Sofie indicated that the introduction and implementation of the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale influenced her practice as a teacher. She explained that she found the scale to be “very, very powerful” and she recommended her school educate their teachers about the tool and stated that she thinks they all need to be using the scale in their classrooms. What made the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) so impactful for Sofie was that she “internalised it” and it assisted her in being able to understand children’s involvement in the learning activities at a higher level. She explained this when she said,

I now look at all these things that are happening. In Kindergarten, it’s really made me think differently about, I guess we use the word engagement. Now I think more involvement. But, I use both of them!

Sofie explained further what the term ‘involvement’ means to her, based on her new knowledge of this term through using the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) in her setting. She described involvement as,

It’s like all the different dimensions. Involvement means, it’s not just like ‘Oh they look like they’re doing something’, it’s like it means all of these different things. And they might be to different degrees. And I can now find myself rating, ‘Oh, oh, yeah, wow, look at the expression in their eyes, the shine in their eyes when their talking about it. What’s the emotion that’s conveyed through their talk?’ Just all those different dimensions and then what it looks like in terms of the scale: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Through her knowledge of the indicators and the levels of the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008), Sofie was able to make assessments of children’s involvement during their classroom experiences. This guided Sofie’s curriculum decision making and contributed to the construction of the curriculum during the study. She explained,

And because I’ve internalised it, I can stand and I’ll find myself, I’ll be watching children and just mentally, and that’s good because I can see when they’re really involved, that, that’s an interest of theirs. And then I’ll watch out and I might see
it reoccurring with different children and it might reoccur with time with that child. And think ‘Wow! That’s something that I need to...’ But I guess just, because what I was bringing in before, I see children engaging in different activities, but now looking back on it, their engaging in it, but really understanding. For example, Cole, he was doing a lot of, he was engaging in a lot of behaviours, a lot of play, that he wasn’t fully involved in. So, it’s like my understanding was more superficial before, and now I’ve found that it’s really informing me richly as to what they are truly invested in.

Therefore, Sofie uses information about children’s interests and involvement levels to plan learning experiences and construct a physical environment that promotes high levels of involvement.

**Educators using information about children**

The findings indicate that Sofie used information about children’s funds of identity and involvement levels to plan learning experiences and plan for the physical environment. Additionally, Sofie used information about children to develop her relationships with them and to engage in democratic classroom practices. How Sofie used children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity to plan learning experiences is presented in the next section.

**Planning learning experiences**

After gathering the information about children’s funds of identity through the two curriculum intervention activities, Sofie took time to reflect on what she learned about the children’s knowledge and interests. Then, with this new knowledge, she constructed engaging and contextualised learning experiences for the children. While curriculum was contextualised for each of the children in the focus group, Sofie also planned experiences for the shared knowledge and interests among the children. Sofie explained that she found it “difficult to get young children to learn” unless based on children’s interests and content that is personally meaningful. She continued by saying that the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity provided an opportunity for her to plan around common themes. In addition, she designed open-ended experiences in
order to “draw out different areas of significance” for each of the children, which she
demed to be “very important.” It was also found that Sofie used her knowledge of
children’s funds of identity to adjust the physical environment of the Kindergarten
setting.

*Planning for the physical environment*

The implementation of the two curriculum intervention activities provided Sofie
with insight into items of personal significance to the children that Sofie made available
in the learning environment. She did so to encourage the children to engage in less
frequented areas of the setting. One instance is the block area, where Sofie thought all
of the children would be interested to play. There was limited access to this area by the
children during the first week, so she purchased Ooshies to link with children’s cultural
funds of identity. The result of this adjustment increased the frequency that the children
played here as well as their level of involvement while playing with the blocks and
figurines. Sofie explained this when she said,

> So, I didn’t have that [Ooshie figurines] the first week and I did notice that it [the
block area] didn’t really involve the children, but then adding that, and I got that
information from the interview that we had over the boxes. That was really overt
in those interviews. Some of it came from the interviews like Cole, and his
photograph in front of that character. And you know there was photographs with
characters. So, I drew the information and that information was used, just very
simply in adding those figures to the construction blocks and look at the
difference it made! It was very significant.

On a broader scale, Sofie mentioned the value of getting to know children and making a
connection with them in order to support young children with the transition from home
to school. Sofie was asked about how educator awareness of funds of knowledge, funds
of identity and the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) might be useful. Sofie was
emphatic when she said,

> I think it’s essential! I think it’s essential. Because with early childhood, we’re in a
position where we’re getting children straight right out of home. Now already,
you need to be setting up an environment for that child, for the children to feel
comfortable in, and it needs to be home-like. So therefore, for it to be home-like,
you have to have an understanding of them, and what they’re coming from.
That’s to make them comfortable in their classroom environment. That’s just setting the stage.

Sofie continued to talk about an emotional connection that children must have to the environment but also to the educator in order to support their involvement and learning.

**Relationship building**

Implementation of the two curriculum intervention activities and the curriculum that ensued, fostered more trusting relationships between Sofie and the children in the focus group. For example, with Wes, Sofie described a significant trust established between them because of the intervention. She said,

Before that, he wouldn’t tell me his Chinese name, after that he told me his Chinese name [smiling]. I think that’s a pretty good indication. I think he felt more appreciated for who he is. And I think that was also indirectly through seeing me interact with different cultures, that he felt it was a safe place to express himself....To me that was huge! Because the fact that he did that, I think that speaks volumes. And, I think he talks a lot about his dad now, because he feels that he can. So, it’s brought his emotional investment in the classroom has become greater.

Similarly, Sofie noticed a positive shift in her relationship with Cole. She explained this by saying,

Cole, you found a difference in his involvement, he was greatly affected by this. Because my relationship is deeper and I find that because it’s deeper, it’s actually affecting the way he responds to me. It’s far more positive. It’s brought about all of these positive benefits. I feel that he feels more connected with me....I found doing this with him, it’s really brought about really positive changes to our relationship, its deepened it, and I find that he is, that’s the key. That’s the key to him. It has greatly benefited him emotionally, socially and the way he thinks about himself. I feel he’s got a more positive self-image out of it.

The establishment of stronger relationships extended beyond the focus group to the other children in the class as well. Sofie explained this process as the creation of a “community of learners.” She said,
I think all of them actually, all feel more connected. It’s just deepened my relationship with them, it has given a greater sense of connectedness. So, we have these connections, so yeah, I think it has really brings in the whole child. I think it really, even the children who weren’t involved in it, I think they sensed an interest and it deepened. It deepened the relationship and us as a community of learners.

The overall sense of a community of learners was also established through the distribution of power in the classroom by Sofie. She positioned the children as experts and empowered them by constructing the curriculum using their funds of identity.

**Engaging in democratic classroom practices**

The two curriculum intervention activities and the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale encouraged Sofie to distribute power in the Kindergarten setting with the children. She saw this as beneficial to support children’s agency and identity development. She described,

It [using their funds of identity] shows that they can be experts when I am not an expert. It puts them on a more level playing field. They can be experts for things that other people aren’t experts at and it gives them that sense of [pause], that they’ve got that capability and that they know and it enriches their sense of self and it enriches their sense of agency and feeling like ‘Oh, I’m actually quite important! And I have got ideas and I know stuff that other people don’t know. And I can actually tell people because people are interested’.

The children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity were utilised by Sofie to co-construct a curriculum that related to children’s genuine interests. She was equipped with more personalised information about children’s interests following the curriculum intervention activities and she took action with this information by constructing learning experiences and the physical environment to reflect the children’s interests. Children’s voices became central to the construction of curriculum in the Kindergarten setting during the intervention.
4.6 Summary

This chapter reported the findings from the data collected in the research study. Phase One semi-structured interviews were conducted with four educators, two from a childcare-based Kindergarten setting and two from a school-based Kindergarten setting. The results from this phase showed that the educators were not familiar with the phrases ‘funds of knowledge’ and ‘funds of identity’. Themes that were identified from the interviews in relation to how educators gather information about children were gathering information from parents, through conversation and forms and gathering information from children, by listening, observation, talking and asking questions. Themes that were identified in relation to how educators use information about children were planning learning experiences, planning for the physical environment and relationship building.

The results from the semi-structured interview with Sofie in Phase Two of the study added depth to four of the themes identified from Phase One, listening to children, talking with children and asking questions, planning learning experiences, and for the physical environment. Four children were selected by Sofie to be a part of the focus group, for which a curriculum intervention took place. The pre-intervention results from the participant and video observations of the four children in the focus group setting and Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings showed that all four of the children were rated as Level three: More or less maintained activity and the overall setting rating was three. The next phase of the study included the implementation of the two curriculum intervention activities, the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity, in order to elicit information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity.

The types of funds of identity revealed during the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity were identified through the analysis of the video observations. The children’s types funds of identity indicated where their sources of knowledge (funds of knowledge) come from, as a person’s funds of knowledge becomes their funds of identity when they use it to define themselves. Analysis of the curriculum intervention activities, curriculum planning documents, photographs of the setting, and field notes, made evident that Sofie adjusted the curriculum to cater for children’s geographical,
practical, cultural, social, and institutional funds of identity. During the curriculum implementation, the post-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings were completed for the children in the focus group.

The results from the Phase Four Involvement Scale ratings showed a significant increase in involvement levels for all children. These results showed that children’s involvement levels increased when curriculum was constructed using their funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Three of the children’s rating in the focus group increased from Level three: More or less maintained activity to Level five: Sustained intense activity, the highest level possible. One child’s rating moved from Level three: More or less maintained activity to Level four plus (variation): Activity with intense moments. The involvement signals of concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, and persistence are essential to involvement and were found to have been increased for all four of the children in the post-intervention ratings. Due to the individual ratings increasing, the overall setting rating also significantly increased from three to five.

Finally, analysis of the semi-structured interview with Sofie in Phase Four indicated that Sofie’s knowledge of the terms ‘funds of knowledge’ and ‘funds of identity’ increased. Depth was added to the key themes identified in previous phases in relation to the way that educators gather and use information about children. One additional theme, engaging in democratic classroom practices, was identified as emerging from how Sofie used the information. The results from these phases are discussed in relation to other research in the next chapter, Chapter Five: Discussion.
Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the results from the research study in relation to the research questions and literature. The chapter is organised by the research questions and will present themes that have been identified from the analysis of data collected in all phases of the study. The research study aimed to investigate why and how educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum, and the subsequent influence this had on child involvement. The research questions were:

1. How do educators gather information about children and their interests?
2. What knowledge do educators have about funds of knowledge and funds of identity?
3. How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?
4. How does a curriculum constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity influence child involvement?

Children's lifelong outcomes are positively influenced when children are involved in high-quality EC experiences (OECD, 2012). Specifically, high-quality curriculum is important to children’s positive outcomes. Curriculum has been positioned by Tayler (2016) as a means to improve the quality of EC experiences being offered for young children in Australia, as some settings have been identified as not meeting quality standards. Children’s involvement level in their EC setting is an indicator of the quality of curriculum experiences being offered (Laevers, 2005) and high levels of involvement promote children’s learning and development. In order to engage children actively in learning, the EYLF calls for educators to make curriculum decisions using their in-depth
knowledge of each child (DEEWR, 2009, p. 9). In-depth knowledge of children is required to be able to construct contextualised learning experiences for children that promote high levels of involvement and unite children’s home and setting identities. A focus has been placed on the setting being prepared for the child, rather than the child for the setting, to encourage continuity between settings (OECD, 2017). To date, little research has been conducted to explain how Australian educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests for curriculum construction and the subsequent influence on child involvement. Furthermore, little consideration of children’s identity’s and interests in facilitating EC setting transition processes has been investigated. Hence, the motivation for this research study.

5.2 How Educators Gather Information About Children and Their Interests

Educators in this study were found to gather information about children and their interests from parents and the children themselves. The discussion in this section pertains to research question number one, ‘How do educators gather information about children and their interests?’ The interviews conducted in Phase One, with the four educators from Kindergarten settings, as well as the interviews with Sofie in Phase Two and Phase Four included questions concerning how educators gathered information about children and their interests. Educators were found to gather information about children from parents through conversations and the use of forms and from children by listening to them, observing them, and talking with them and asking questions.

5.2.1 Gathering information from parents

Conversations

Educators in this study were found to gather information about children and their interests by way of the children’s parents. Specifically, the educators utilised informal conversations with parents to gather this information. Hedges and Cooper (2016) found that relationships with families are critical in being able to identify the
significance of children’s interests when using a funds of knowledge approach. However, they cautioned that parents may not always recognise funds of knowledge because they are everyday practices. Furthermore, they suggested that educators engage in deep dialogue with families to successfully identify the significance of children’s interests.

Three out of the four educators in this study indicated that their main methods of gathering information from parents were brief conversations. These alone, do not provide an opportunity for deep dialogue with families, which Hedges and Cooper (2016) identify as essential to deeply interpret children’s interests. “Partnerships” one of the underpinning Principles of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12). However, this finding may justify the need for specific strategies to be suggested in Australian EC policy documents in regards to effectively gathering information from parents that go beyond a surface level. These may include conversational strategies that support ongoing dialogue and consultation with families about their children interests at home and at the EC setting.

The study also found that educators used forms to gather information about children.

**Forms**

The educators in this study utilised standardised forms to gather information from parents about children and their interests. The use of a form reflects Rouse and O’Brien’s (2017) findings, that parents are often found to be “recipients of the opportunities offered by the teacher” (p. 50). Additionally, they found that parent-educator relationships are often one-directional, positioning the educator as the expert. To combat one-directional relationships, the authors identified mutual trust, reciprocity, and shared decision making as essential to authentic educator-parent relationships. As generic forms were distributed to parents by the educators in this study, on a singular occurrence upon enrolment, the essential elements of authentic partnerships with families may be compromised. However, reciprocity on some of the forms was evident as parents were asked to identify their expectations of the setting and aspirations for their child. Jane (Phase One) discussed the relationship she fosters with parents as being more friendship focused, rather than teacher-parent focused. One of the tools to which Jane referred as supporting this “friendship” was the ongoing use of the home-school
book to gather information about what the families and children do at home. She also had regular, open communication with the families and invited them to stay and share in the home-school book sharing experience. Furthermore, the letter sent to parents from Sofie (Phase Three) for the family book somewhat positioned families as experts in sharing their family’s cultural background. However, the generic format of using a letter to obtain this information could compromise the development of authentic partnerships with families. The NQS (ACECQA, 2018) and EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) both suggest that it is important for educators to gather information from parents, as collaboration and consultation with families contributes to children’s inclusion, learning, and wellbeing. This finding may justify the need for a supplementary resource to the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) and NQS (ACECQA, 2018) that addresses effective partnerships with families. This resource could include effective communication strategies and form exemplars that position the family as expert in their child’s wellbeing and development. This study also found that educators gathered information about children’s knowledge and interests by listening to children.

5.2.2 Gathering information from children

Listening to children

Educators in the study were found to listen to children in order to gather information about their knowledge and interests. Active listening is one of the main characteristics of participatory pedagogy noted by Kangas et al. (2016) who explained that participatory pedagogy encourages children’s involvement and participation in their setting. Observation through sensitive listening was found to be a requirement for collecting information about children and understanding the child’s perspective. Jane (Phase One) sought children’s perspectives on the setting’s transition form prior to attending Kindergarten. She also positioned children to be able to share information about their lives outside of the setting through the home-school book, where she listened to what the children were saying was important to them. Mary (Phase One) described listening to the many ways that children say what they are interested in in her
setting. Her qualification as a counsellor could have influenced her relying on listening as a primary strategy for gathering information about children (see Table 3.2). Ava (Phase One) stated that the educators at her centre listened for the things that children were saying repeatedly in order to gauge what they were interested in or what they knew. Sofie listened to children’s talk during their play to gain insight into their interests (Phase One), to ascertain their knowledge and for teachable moments (Phase Two), and during the Shoebox Activity and Photovoice Activity to understand the significance of the objects and photographs to each child (Phase Four). These encounters can be considered to be sensitive listening as the educators took action, in the form of curriculum decisions, with what they learned from listening to children. However, as this research question is about gathering information, further discussion about the use of this information is discussed in another section of this chapter. Article 12 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989), positions adults as responsible for listening to children and taking into account the things that children say when making decisions that will affect them. Rinaldi (2012) explains that the pedagogy of listening is where educators give meaning and value to the perspectives of children by listening with all of their senses. When educators establish a listening context in their setting, as evident in Sofie’s Kindergarten during the intervention, children and their theories are legitimised (Rinaldi, 2012). Rinaldi (2012) purports that a listening context enables children to represent and interpret their theories through sharing and dialogue in the hundred languages. The curriculum intervention activities positioned children to be able to express themselves through their funds of identity and Sofie legitimised these funds by integrating their genuine interests into the curriculum. It is highlighted in the NQS (ACECQA, 2018) that settings deemed to be high-quality are those that promote children’s agency and right to participation through responsive teaching practices and programs. These findings could support the effectiveness of listening to children as a pedagogical practice that promotes children’s participation in EC settings. In addition to listening, this study found that educators observe children to obtain information about their knowledge and interests.
Observing children

Educators in this study were found to gather information about children through observation. Specifically, they used observation to identify children’s interests through their play choices and use of materials in the Kindergarten setting. Chesworth (2016) found that educators often misunderstood children’s interests as relating to their choice of play and material selection. She found that a funds of knowledge approach, where parents provided contextualisation of children’s choices, was important in identifying children’s genuine interests. Likewise, Hedges and Cooper (2016) found that there was potential to minimise children’s interests if they did not employ a funds of knowledge approach to “deeply” (p. 317) understand children’s play choices within the setting. This may indicate that the purpose of observation for both Mary (Phase One) and Sofie (Phase One) may not actually be effective in identifying children’s interests. They both explained that observation was employed to learn of children’s interests through their use of the materials provided for them in the environment. Jane (Phase One) however, used observation in the classroom to obtain information about the child’s interests to refine what she has been told by the families. This may be closer to the ‘deep’ interpretation of children’s interests, however, without further consultation with families about those interests identified, there may be a missed opportunity for greater understanding of children’s interests. During the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity, Sofie deemed observation of children’s non-verbal behaviours as critical, in conjunction with listening, to be able to identify the significance of the object or photograph to the child. Again, a greater understanding of children’s interests could result from the interpretation of the significance of the object and/or photograph through family members. This finding could provide educators with reason to enhance their observations and identification of children’s interests by taking a funds of knowledge approach and consulting with families to interpret children’s play choices in the setting. This finding may be especially important to address in reference to educators being called to use children’s interests for the purpose of constructing curriculum in the NQS (ACECQA, 2018), EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), and KCG (SCSA, 2014) yet no framework for identifying these interests is provided in these documents. Perhaps, a
funds of knowledge approach could be recommended as a means to contextualise children’s interests as observed in EC settings for curriculum development. Sofie also used observation for another purpose later in the study (Phase Four).

Sofie used observation to determine children’s involvement in the Kindergarten setting. Importantly, the study found that once Sofie had knowledge about the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) she was observing children differently. She described the scale as “very, very powerful” and that by becoming familiar with the indicators and levels, her practice as a teacher had been influenced. She stated that with knowledge of the scale, her understanding of children’s investment shifted from “superficial” to “rich”. The result of the significant shift was Sofie’s ability to make robust curriculum decisions using this information about children. This is reflective of Lenaerts (2017) findings that educators who were using the Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children (LIS-YC), felt more equipped to make appropriate adjustments to the curriculum as they better understood children’s learning requirements. High levels of child involvement are important to children’s learning and development (Lavers, 2000; SADECS, 2008).

Through the assessment of children’s involvement levels in their setting, educators are provided with an indication of how well the “educational environment succeeds in meeting children’s learning priorities” (SADECS, 2008, p. 79) Equipped with this knowledge, educators can be proactive in making the necessary adjustments, as Sofie did, to raise the overall level of involvement, through the curriculum. This finding suggests that the inclusion and training of the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) in tertiary EC teacher education programs and Diploma based training programs would bring a different orientation to how educators observe young children. Observation is posited as important to the assessment and learning cycle in Element 1.3.1 of the NQS (ACECQA, 2018, pp. 124-126). The SADECS (2008) Reflect, Respect, Relate resource has already been distributed to Australian EC settings and schools, and can be used in early childhood professional learning. Finally, educators in this study were found to talk with children and ask children questions in order to gather information.
Talking with children and asking children questions

This study found that educators gathered information about children through talking with them and asking questions. Mary (Phase One) discussed talking with children and asking them about their interests from the past to see if they are still relevant to the child. Sofie (Phase One) described using open-ended questions while speaking with children to discover their interests and not dominating the conversation. Later in the study, Sofie elaborated on the specific strategies that she used to obtain information about children’s knowledge and interests. She used “predictions”, a “See Think Wonder” routine and “wonderings” to help shape the direction of the inquiry projects (Phase Two). Standard 1.2 in the NQS (ACECQA, 2018) is concerned with educator practices. Specifically, Element 1.2.1 highlights intentional teaching practices that promote children’s agency, which includes sustained shared conversations and open-ended questioning (ACECQA, 2018, p. 112). Element 1.2.2 focuses on responsive teaching practices, where action is taken in response to children’s ideas and interests (ACECQA, 2018, p. 114). Einarsdottir (2010) found that while policy documents encourage pedagogical practices that promote children’s agency in curriculum development, in practice they were not always evident. This was not the case for Sofie (Phase One), as she employed intentional and responsive practices that promoted children’s agency in the direction that the projects took following these conversations. However, it is not evident from Mary’s (Phase One) response whether or not these conversations with children, and the types of questions she asked, contributed to the learning program. It was positioned by Houen et al. (2016) that educators build and use a wide range of strategies that promote children’s agency and participation in curriculum decision-making. They found that co-constructed exchanges between children and educators where educators used an ‘I wonder...’ request were effective at promoting children’s agency. Their agency was further endorsed when educators actioned children’s responses. Sofie’s acknowledgement of the children’s play as an opportunity to use the ‘I wonder...’ request strategy in the linking shapes example (Phase One) was an opportunity to co-construct the curriculum content. This example aligns with Houen et al.’s (2016) findings that the ‘I wonder...’ requests promote
children’s participation in curriculum decision-making. This finding may endorse the need for specific strategies to be included in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) “Responsiveness to children” (pp. 14-15) Practice and “Intentional teaching” (p. 15) Practice, where educator-child conversations are discussed. It is also suggested that responsive and intentional strategies be addressed in Diploma based training programs as this, in part, could account for the difference between Mary (Diploma of Children’s Services) and Sofie’s (Master of Education) intention behind talking with children and asking them questions (see Table 3.2). This section has discussed the findings for research question number one in relation to literature. The next section discusses educators’ knowledge about funds of knowledge and funds of identity.

5.3 Educators’ Knowledge About Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity

This study found that educators were not familiar with the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Sofie became familiar with and was able to explain both of the terms following the intervention in her setting. The discussion in this section pertains to research question number two, ‘What knowledge do educators have about funds of knowledge and funds of identity?’. The interviews conducted in Phase One, and the interview with Sofie in Phase Four had questions concerning educators’ familiarity with and understanding of these terms. Funds of knowledge is described as the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). Funds of knowledge can be utilised as either a theoretical approach and/or an educational intervention (Llopart et al., 2018). Funds of identity is explained as “the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person’s self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31). A person’s funds of knowledge becomes their funds of identity when people use them to define themselves (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014).

The findings show that in the initial interviews, the educators in this study were not familiar with these terms, nor their meaning. However, Sofie (Phase One) did make a
guess at what funds of knowledge meant that had some connection with the term. She stated that it sounded like knowledge you could access, draw, and build upon. In Phase Four, Sofie was able to confidently discuss both of the terms and it was found that she had increased her understanding of each. Sofie perfectly summarised funds of identity when she said, “what comes through with the identity part, is what they [the children] see as being important from the funds of knowledge.” Llopart et al.’s (2018) findings showed that the benefits of a funds of knowledge approach greatly outweigh the limitations. Some of the benefits of employing the approach include strengthening family-school relationships, improved educator understanding of children’s attitudes and behaviours, and educators feeling better equipped to teach a diverse group of children through understanding the culture of families. In relation to a funds of identity approach, Miller Marsh and Zhulamanova (2017), explained that this approach could be utilised by educators to facilitate connections between home, school, and community. This study found that through educator awareness of these terms and approaches, they were positioned to provide a curriculum that catered to children’s interests and identities and high levels of involvement. Furthermore, the children’s home-identity and setting-identity were united through the employment of the approaches as a curriculum intervention. Australian educators, families, and children, may therefore, be missing out on such benefits if educators are not familiar with either funds of knowledge and funds of identity and employing the approaches. As educators have a responsibility to facilitate successful transitions between home and setting, within settings, and EC settings to school settings in partnership with families and children (DEEWR, 2009, p. 16), knowledge of these terms and approaches could be employed to support successful transitions. Furthermore, knowledge of these terms and approaches can support educators to act effectively in their role as “border-keeper” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 761) of the setting domain. Finally, educator awareness of funds of knowledge and funds of identity promotes children’s “belonging, being and becoming” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7) by attending to children’s agency, voice, and right to participate. This study found that educators use their knowledge of children and their interests for various reasons, which is discussed in the following section.
5.4 How Educators Use Their Knowledge of Children and Their Interests to Construct Curriculum

Educators in this study were found to use their knowledge of children and their interests to plan learning experiences, plan for the physical environment, build relationships and to engage in democratic practices. The study also found that knowledge about children influenced educator-child interactions. The discussion in this section pertains to research question number three, ‘How and why do educators use their knowledge of children and their interests in the construction of curriculum?’ The interviews conducted in Phase One, with the four educators from Kindergarten settings, as well as the interviews with Sofie in Phase Two and Phase Four had questions concerning how educators gathered information about children and their interests. Four key themes were identified upon analysis of the data:

- Planning learning experiences,
- Planning for the physical environment,
- Relationship building and educator-child interactions, and
- Engaging in democratic practices.

5.4.1 Planning learning experiences

The study’s findings show that educators used their knowledge about children and their interests to plan learning experiences. Brough (2012) identified that co-constructing curriculum with children was a strategy employed by educators who acted democratically in the classroom. Educators who positioned children’s voices as central to curriculum decision-making were in a position to develop meaningful learning contexts and democratic learning environments. The educators in this study described using children’s interests as a starting point to establish projects and learning experiences that focused around these interests. As children’s input was central to the development of such projects, the educators in this study were acting democratically by co-constructing the curriculum with children. This finding indicates that educators’ practices are influenced by the mandated EC policy documents they use. The EYLF
(DEEWR, 2009) positions children’s interests as “an important basis for curriculum decision-making” (p. 15) while the KCG (SCSA, 2014) states that educators “take into account the experiences, interests and capabilities of individuals and groups of children” when planning learning experiences (p. 2). The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) is likely to soon be revisited as it has been a decade since its inception. The findings of this study reveal the effectiveness of using children’s interests on child involvement so it is important to continue to advocate for children’s interests as part of curriculum decision-making to promote democracy in EC settings. In part, co-constructing curriculum with children will continue to encourage educators to uphold Article 12 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989), children’s right to participate in decisions that affect them, but also to provide a contextualised curriculum for each child. A contextualised curriculum, using children’s genuine interests, may resist the ‘schoolification’ of the early years, a concern reported by the OECD (2017), and academic focused practices, found to be eroding play-based pedagogies in the early years by Barblett et al. (2016). Children’s level of involvement was found to be influenced by a contextualised curriculum in this study.

Personally meaningful learning experiences were found to significantly increase children’s involvement levels in this study. The contextualised curriculum was made possible through the employment of the Shoebox Activity and Photovoice Activity, which elicited information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Children’s involvement levels were found to be influenced by the provision of personally meaningful learning experiences by Ebbeck et al. (2018). In their study, contextualised learning experiences were partly associated with an increase in children’s involvement levels. This study also found that contextualised learning experiences increased children’s involvement levels. Three out of four children’s involvement levels increased from below the minimal acceptable standard (three), to the highest possible level of involvement (five) and one of the four children’s involvement level increased from below the minimal acceptable standard (three) to a four plus. In the Phase Four interview, Sophie explained how she found it difficult for children to learn if learning experiences were not personally meaningful to them. Yet, the strategies that she had previously employed showed that the children were participating in the curriculum at a surface level. All four of the children received an overall rating of Level three: More or less maintained activity, prior to the curriculum intervention. After employing the two
curriculum intervention activities, children’s involvement levels were increased when the learning experiences were connected to their funds of identity. This finding provides evidence of effective curriculum intervention activities to employ with children in order to obtain information to construct contextualised learning experiences. The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) explains that educators can collaborate with children and families to ensure learning experiences are meaningful. The Shoebox Activity and Photovoice Activity would be best positioned in EC policy documents as effective activities to employ where in-depth knowledge of children and curriculum decision-making is discussed. Furthermore, supplemental advice on how to implement the activities should be provided to facilitate their use in EC settings. The two curriculum intervention activities were also found to provide Sofie with rich information to plan for adjustments to the physical environment.

5.4.2 Planning for the physical environment

Educators in this study were found to use children’s knowledge and interests to plan for the physical environment. Chesworth (2016) found that the types of materials provided for children by their educators could preference certain interests over others. She deemed this inequity to be related to children’s diverse funds of knowledge. This study found evidence that prior to the intervention, Sofie’s setting did not include as diverse of a range of interests that represented those of the four children in the focus group. However, after the intervention she did cater to their individual interests and often did so through open-ended experiences that could lend themselves to children’s individual funds of identity. Miller Marsh et al. (2019) suggest that educators use their knowledge of children’s family and community resources as a way to work towards equitable experiences for all children and to interrupt dominant discourses in EC settings. They found that children were able to express themselves in the way that they knew best through the employment of a funds of knowledge approach. This was especially evident for Anika and Wes in this study, with the inclusion of their geographical (Wes), cultural (Anika and Wes) and institutional (Wes) funds of identity into the physical environment. This finding calls to introduce educators to funds of
knowledge and funds of identity approaches to mediate issues of dominant interests and materials preferred in the early years. This could lead to educators offering a physical environment that considers the diverse ways of knowing for all children in their setting. The inclusion of popular culture as a mediated tool for learning was also identified to positively influence children’s involvement in this study.

Children were found to be highly involved when their interests in popular culture were incorporated into the learning environment. Miller Marsh and Zhulamanova (2017) found that when educators learned of children’s popular culture interests and provided children with related artefacts in their setting, children’s involvement was improved. This was also evident in this study, where Sofie included characters from popular culture based on all four children revealing an interest in such characters. Sofie described that she noticed children’s involvement in the block area, where the characters were situated, was more frequent and their play was sustained once these characters were added. Children’s whose post-intervention involvement rating took place in the block area scored at the highest level possible for involvement, Level five: Sustained intense activity. This finding indicates that children’s popular culture interests should be considered by educators as legitimate interests to recognise and include in the curriculum to promote high levels of involvement. Hedges (2011) made a call for educators to challenge their beliefs about the place of popular culture in EC settings in order to develop children’s funds of knowledge in the setting. She found that children were exploring the qualities and characteristics of families, communities, cultures and society through their inclusion of popular culture in the setting. This study found that Cole was exploring such characteristics when he shared the good and bad characters during the curriculum intervention activities and his affinity towards the “baddies.” The resulting conversation between Sofie and Cole about why he felt drawn to the bad characters and behaviours were aligned to Hedges’ (2011) suggestion of discussing with children issues of “identity, fairness and justice” (p. 28) brought about by popular culture. This study also found that educators developed their relationships with children through children’s knowledge and interests.
5.4.3 Relationship building and educator-child interactions

The findings show that educators use children’s knowledge and interests to develop their relationships with children. Jane (Phase One) used her knowledge about children to make connections with them so that they felt safe at school. The relationship between Sofie and the children in the focus group (Phase Four) were found to be closer following the intervention. High-quality educator-child interactions and subsequent high-quality positive educator-child relationships are beneficial to young children’s growth and development (McNally & Slutsky, 2018). Educator-child interactions are an indicator of a setting’s process quality. Howard et al., (2018) used the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEW) scale to identify the impact of pedagogical practices that influence children’s language, numeracy, and socio-behavioural development. One of the indicators of a child-centred, high-quality curricula and high-quality educator-child interactions is how well the educators know individual children, including their interests, beliefs, cultures, and achievements (Howard et al., 2018, p. 3). This may explain why Sofie’s relationships were identified as more trusting and positive following the intervention, as she had obtained information about the children through the curriculum intervention activities and therefore had a greater understanding of the children. Importantly, this knowledge was utilised for curriculum purposes and it was during these subsequent experiences that the children responded to Sofie positively and with more trust than before the intervention. Through opening up to Sofie and revealing personal information, (such as Anika with information about praying, and Cole with his dilemma with good versus bad, Maddy about her deceased grandmother, and Wes with his Chinese name,) the children’s trust and security in their relationship with Sofie was evidently affected. This finding indicates that when the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity are employed as a tool for curriculum intervention, they are effective in enhancing educator-child interactions and subsequent relationships. The final finding for how educators use information about children, is to engage in democratic teaching practices.
5.4.4 Engaging in democratic classroom practices

Power distribution in the classroom was found to be influenced by the implementation of the two curriculum intervention activities, and the subsequent curriculum decisions. This was reflected in the construction of curriculum and Sofie’s validation of the children’s voice and participation in the setting. Giamminuti and See (2017) found that educators who utilised participatory practices, such as co-constructing curriculum, effectively promoted children’s agency and their rights. By attending to what children needed and wanted to learn, the school in their study challenged a needs-based perspective of curriculum documents. This is similar to Sofie’s explanation of what was occurring when children were empowered to be heard and to be an expert in what is worth learning at school. Often in curriculum, children are positioned as the receiver of information not the co-constructor, and the two curriculum intervention activities used in this study provide tangible tools for educators to employ with children in order to challenge dominant power discourses among adults and children. Discussion pertaining to the final research question is addressed in the next section.

5.5 Curriculum Construction Using Children’s Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity and the Influence on Child Involvement

This section pertains to research question number four: ‘How does a curriculum constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity influence child involvement?’ The pre-intervention and post-intervention Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) ratings were used in the analysis for this research question.

Children’s involvement levels increased from Level three to Level five (three children) and from Level three to Level four plus (one child) when the curriculum was constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. As children, and the setting, were rated at high levels of involvement, this indicates that following the intervention, the setting was supportive in meeting the children’s learning priorities. The overall setting quality increased from three to five, which was from below the minimal acceptable standard of 3.5 to the highest possible rating. These findings are similar to
Miller Marsh and Zhulamanova’s (2017) study that employed a funds of identity approach and Miller Marsh et al.’s (2019) study that utilised a funds of knowledge approach. In both of these studies, children’s level of participation was increased following the intervention on the curriculum. However, in contrast to this study, neither of them used a formal scale to measure children’s involvement. This study employed the use of the Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children (LIS-YC), through the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale, and found definitive results of increased involvement in the Kindergarten setting for all four children in the focus group. In relation to supporting high levels of involvement for young children, it could be recommended with this finding that the LIS-YC be implemented alongside an intervention using either funds of knowledge or funds of identities approaches as a tangible measure of increased involvement. The two curriculum intervention activities, and their successful implementation in this study are presented in the following sections.

The Photovoice Activity

The Photovoice Activity was successful at obtaining information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity in this study. Esteban-Guitart (2016) hypothesised that the utilisation of photography as a tool, for the purpose of educational contextualisation, could link learner’s experiences inside and outside of school. The findings from Phase Three and Phase Four of this research study, substantiate Esteban-Guitart’s (2016) hypothesis, as from the Photovoice Activity, Sofie constructed experiences in the Kindergarten setting that were linked to the children’s lives outside of school. Examples of this include, the exploration of Indian culture and Diwali at school linked with Anika’s cultural and religious identity. She was afforded many opportunities to be the expert through conversation and creating culturally significant artefacts and food. The introduction of popular culture figurines, Ooshies, in the block area was linked with Cole’s interest with fictional characters and his exploration of the theme good versus bad. He was also afforded one-on-one time with Sofie, to demonstrate his knowledge and understanding about bees and gardening. Maddy’s potion making at home connected with sensory-mixing experiences made
available to her in the school setting. In these experiences, she took a leading role in the play with her peers, a goal set for Maddy by Sofie. Also, the memories Maddy had of her grandmother were welcomed to be a part of the space through book selection and conversation. Furthermore, Wes’s experience with cooking and the traditional Chinese foods he likes linked with a dramatic play area. This provided him with the opportunity to demonstrate his skills in preparing ethnic foods. Both Anika and Wes’s home languages were also integrated into the setting, through invitations to speak in their home language and incorporating words/symbols in the environment. This study provides evidence that using Photovoice can support educators in being able to link children’s experiences inside and outside of school. Esteban-Guitart (2016) also hypothesised that photography could improve children’s agency in their setting.

In this study, the children’s agency in the setting was mobilised through the enactment of the Photovoice Activity. Agency is defined in the EYLF as “being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one’s world” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 45). The focus group children were invited to take photographs of things that they do outside of Kindergarten. It is interesting and significant to note that only one of the four focus group children took photographs themselves, in contrast to the instructions for the activity. Many of the children’s photographs were taken by a parent, as indicated by the child during the sharing. Photovoice, when the photographs are taken by the participants, positions the participants in a role of power, where they are not “passive subjects to other people’s intentions and images” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 371). Therefore, the Photovoice Activity did not meet the researcher’s expectations of mobilising children’s agency through the process of taking their photographs. However, the children’s agency was promoted through the children’s telling and re-telling about the photographs during the sharing. Furthermore, the researcher acknowledges that the children’s family funds of knowledge were revealed in an unexpected way, through the parent/s taking and/or selecting photographs for their child to share in the Photovoice Activity. The parent/s taking and/or selecting photographs acted as an important stimulus for conversation between the children and Sofie, which in turn revealed information about children’s funds of identity. This activity revealed their funds of knowledge and funds of identity which subsequently had influence over the curriculum that Sofie constructed. The third hypothesis that Esteban-
Guitart (2016) made about the use of photography as a tool, was to improve children’s school involvement.

Through the implementation of the Photovoice Activity and subsequent curriculum decision-making, children’s involvement levels in the Kindergarten setting increased from Level three to Level five (three children), the highest rating possible, and Level three to Level four plus (one child). This research study therefore provides evidence to support Esteban-Guitart’s (2016) third hypothesised point, improve school involvement. This study answers the call made by Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2016) for instructions on how photography can elicit children’s funds of identity for pedagogical purposes.

The Shoebox Activity

The Shoebox Activity in this research study was also successful at obtaining information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Subero et al. (2017) suggested that shoeboxes could be used for the purpose of obtaining information about children’s funds of identity. They describe the shoeboxes, and the objects placed inside, as being projections of children’s identities which could be used to connect what happens at home with school in order to construct new knowledge. Further to children constructing new knowledge, the use of shoeboxes was also suggested to promote “identity investment” (Subero et al., 2018, p. 165). Identity investment, as a pedagogical practice, seeks equity and inclusion for all children by legitimising their lifeworlds; comprised of diverse social, linguistic, religious and economic contexts (Cummins & Early, 2011). Significantly, Anika’s and Wes’s lives outside of Kindergarten, were legitimised in the school context. Both of their home languages and culture were incorporated into the learning experiences, the learning environment, and interactions with Sofie. Wes’s mother made a comment to the researcher that he was very much looking forward to coming to school each day during the study and that he had been talking more openly about school to his family. Sofie found the same to be true that Wes was opening up at school about his home life. Anika was overtly enthusiastic during the curriculum intervention. She would come into the classroom in the morning and start
sharing stories with Sofie and the researcher about her Indian culture and religion in detail. These interactions would carry on throughout the day and became more frequent and detailed as time went on, showing her sense of safety and trust in sharing this information. The role Sofie played in welcoming and fostering these funds into the setting relate to Campbell Clark’s (2000) border theory.

Sofie can be identified as the “border-keeper” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 761) of the Kindergarten setting, who lessened the intensity of the daily transitions for both Anika and Wes between their home and school domains. The curriculum intervention saw the Kindergarten border become more permeable and flexible, resulting in the blending of home and school domains for the children. Campbell Clark (2000) explains permeability as the “degree to which elements from other domains may enter” (p. 756) and flexibility as the “degree to which a border may contract or expand, depending on the demands of the other” (p. 757). The benefit of blending domains is a sense of “wholeness” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 757). The children in this study did not have to reject their home-identity while situated in the Kindergarten domain following the intervention as the border strength was weakened. Their home-identity and school-identity were blended. This is important to consider for home to school EC transitions, where weaker borders will see children’s interests from the dominant domain (home) situated in the less dominant domain (setting), enabling balance between the two domains. Furthermore, when children have agency within a domain, such as co-constructing curriculum, children have the power to negotiate and make changes to the domain itself and its borders, thus creating balance. When children’s identities are prominent across their domains, they are more readily able to improve the balance among them. In this study, the attainment of and curricular use of their funds of identity and the increased involvement that resulted, indicates a greater balance among their home and school domains. This study has shown that the Shoebox Activity is well suited for use with young children when obtaining information about their funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Furthermore, employing the Shoebox Activity has shown to be successful at identity investment and to elicit information for educational use, which were discussed by Subero et al. (2018) as important if the shoebox were to be used as an identity artefact. The two curriculum intervention activities utilised in this study contribute overall to children’s “belonging, being and becoming”, where children’s
participation in everyday activities relating to their funds of knowledge and funds of identity, develops their interests, identities, and understandings of the world (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7).

5.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings from the research study in relation to answering the research questions and comparing the results to the literature. Overall, the findings showed that with knowledge gained, by the use of the two curriculum intervention activities, Sofie was able to adjust the curriculum to significantly increase children’s level of involvement.

More specifically, the study found that educators gather information about children from parents and the children themselves, but at a surface level. This is likely due to the means by which they collect the information. Educators gather information from parents through brief conversations and forms that mostly position the educator as expert. Information was gathered from children through listening, observation, and talking with children and asking questions. Whilst these methods were appropriate, the issue of interpreting children’s interests beyond the surface was not possible, until Sofie employed the curriculum intervention activities and had knowledge of the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008).

The study also found that educators were not familiar with the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Sofie participated in the curriculum intervention (Phase Three and Four) and at the conclusion of the study Sofie showed an increased understanding of each of the terms and how they impacted her practice. This finding was considered against literature that found the positive benefits of a funds of knowledge approach outweighed the negative. Educator knowledge of these two terms and approaches contributes to a curriculum that fosters children’s “belonging, being and becoming” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7). Additionally, the research study investigated how educators use the information they gather about children’s knowledge and interests.

Educators were found to use the information to plan learning experiences that were contextualised for individual or group interests. Literature concerning democratic
classroom practices and how such practices uphold children’s rights and their agency were discussed. Children’s increased involvement levels in relation to contextualised curriculum experiences was also discussed in relation to this finding. This study found that in addition to planning learning experiences, educators used information about children to plan for the physical environment.

Educators were found to select resources and construct areas of play for children based on the children’s knowledge and interests. This finding was compared to literature about diverse funds of knowledge and how these were not catered for prior to the intervention. Also discussed was child involvement levels increasing when the physical environment catered for the diverse funds of children in the focus group. The educators also used their knowledge about children to develop relationships and this information influenced educator-child interactions.

It was found that Sofie’s relationships with the children in the focus group were more trusting and secure following the employment of the two curriculum intervention activities. Literature in relation to high-quality educator-child interactions and relationships were discussed as being enhanced through educators knowing and proactively using children’s knowledge interests. Finally, children’s involvement levels were found to significantly increase when their knowledge and identities were prioritised in the curriculum.

Children’s individual involvement levels significantly increased, especially in the four essential involvement signals, when the curriculum was constructed using their funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The overall setting quality also increased from below the acceptable standard to the highest level possible due to the curriculum intervention as identified by the setting mean score increase from three (pre-intervention) to five (post-intervention). This finding was discussed in relation two studies with similar findings, yet no other research has used the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) to measure the influence of employing a funds of knowledge and/or funds of identity approach. The two curriculum intervention activities that were utilised in the study were effective in obtaining children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity and they were discussed in relation to literature that called for research using the Shoebox Activity and Photovoice Activity for pedagogical and curriculum purposes. Children’s “belonging, being and becoming” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7) were bolstered through
the employment of the curriculum intervention activities in this study. The next chapter, Chapter Six: Conclusion, will provide a summary of the research study, present the study’s limitations and include recommendations for future research.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate why and how educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum and the subsequent influence on child involvement. This chapter will include an overview of the thesis and review key findings from the study. It will then explain the limitations of the study followed by recommendations, and implications for future research. Finally, the chapter will conclude with final remarks.

6.2 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters, including this concluding chapter. Chapter One introduced the background and rationale for the research study. Chapter Two included a review of the literature pertaining to quality curriculum in EC education, child involvement levels, funds of knowledge and funds of identity. This chapter also included a review of EC educator pedagogy and practices and family-setting partnerships. Chapter Three discussed the methodology of the research project including the conceptual and theoretical framework that guided this study, methods used to collect data, and how the data were analysed. Chapter Four presented the results of the study, across the four phases of data collection and highlighted the key themes that were identified upon analysis. Chapter Five discussed the study’s findings in relation to the four research questions and relevant literature. This chapter, Chapter Six, gives a summary of the key findings from the research, highlights the limitations of the study, and presents recommendations for future research.
6.3 Key Findings of the Study

Data were collected across four phases in this study using multiple methods. The key findings from the study are reviewed.

6.3.1 Educators gathered surface level information from parents and children

This study found that educators gather information about children from parents and children, but at a surface level. Educators were unable to gather in-depth information about children from parent’s due to the means by which they collected the information, which were brief conversations and generic forms. Interpretation of children’s interests was not found to be effective by educators through listening, observing and talking with children and asking them questions. However, Sofie was able to interpret children’s interests, in relation to their funds of knowledge and funds of identity, when the Shoebox and Photovoice activities were employed. Sofie was also found to utilise observation more effectively when she had knowledge of the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008).

6.3.2 Educators were not familiar with the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity

The findings from this study showed that educators were not familiar with the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity, or their meaning. In Sofie’s Kindergarten setting, it was found that through the intervention, she became familiar with the terms funds of knowledge and funds of identity and was able to describe each of the terms with an understanding of both.
6.3.3 Educator knowledge about children for curriculum purposes was used more effectively following an intervention

The educators in this study were found to use their knowledge about children and their interests to plan learning experiences, plan for the physical environment and to build relationships with children. However, in this study, Sofie was found to use in-depth information about children more effectively by contextualising learning experiences for each child that involved them at higher levels. Furthermore, Sofie used in-depth information about children’s interests to lessen the strength of the border between children’s home and school domains, uniting the children’s home-identity and school-identity in the Kindergarten setting. This occurred through the provision of more targeted learning experiences, changes to the physical environment and more connected interactions with the children. Sofie was also able to develop more trusting and secure relationships with the children through the employment of the curriculum intervention activities and making the most of the information gathered. Sofie co-construct the curriculum with the children in the focus group, which positioned the children as agentic and as valued contributors to the setting and curriculum.

6.3.4 Children’s involvement levels increased when the curriculum prioritised their funds of knowledge and funds of identity

All four of the children’s involvement levels significantly increased due to the curriculum intervention. Three of the children’s rating went from Level three to Level five, the highest possible rating. One of the children’s rating increased to Level four plus, from Level three. Each of the four children’s post-involvement ratings showed an increase in the overall global rating for the four critical involvement signals: concentration, energy, complexity and creativity, and persistence. The overall setting rating was also substantially impacted by the intervention, as the rating went from below the acceptable standard (3.5) to the highest possible rating (five). This rating indicates that a curriculum constructed using children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity was supportive and met the learning requirements of the children.
Furthermore, this study showed that the Shoebox Activity and Photovoice Activity were effective curriculum intervention activities used to gather information about children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity for the purpose of curriculum construction.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

As with all research studies, there were limitations to this study. The first limitation is in relation to the sample size. This study took place, in part, with four Kindergarten educators, and the curriculum intervention took place in one Kindergarten setting in Perth, Western Australia. The focus group of four children should also be considered as a limitation, though, for the purpose of utilising the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) in EC settings, the recommended sample size is a minimum of four children, to which this study adhered. Due to the small sample, findings cannot be generalised to all Kindergarten settings. Also in regards to the sample, the qualifications and position of the educators were not the same, and should therefore be considered a limitation.

Another limitation is that the settings selected to participate in this study made a declaration on their website that they used children’s interests in the construction of curriculum. This was part of the criteria for inviting the settings to participate in the study. As these settings agreed to participate, and their website declarations, this may indicate that they were already interested in the topic of using children’s interests in the construction of curriculum. Therefore, some findings may be relevant to other Kindergarten settings, though they cannot be generalised to all. Finally, the research study utilised Kindergarten settings situated in the Perth metropolitan area and Sofie’s Kindergarten setting was situated in a high socio-economic status area. Future research utilising this methodology should consider a diverse range of contexts to mitigate these limitations.
6.5 Recommendations

The findings from this research study highlighted four recommendations, which are presented and discussed in this section.

6.5.1 Recommendation one: Include funds of knowledge, funds of identity, and the Involvement Scale in early childhood educator training and professional learning programs

This study found that children’s involvement levels significantly increased when educators prioritised children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity in the construction of curriculum. High-levels of involvement support children’s learning and development and also reflect a high-quality curriculum. Tayler (2016) stated that the everyday learning experiences offered for young children in some settings in Australia are not meeting the minimum quality standard. Curriculum content is suggested as a means by which educators can provide activities that challenge children and engage their interests (Tayler, 2016). Children could benefit from educators who seek and utilise children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity to construct curriculum. Furthermore, the quality of experiences in which children are involved, may increase when educators use the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) to assess individual involvement levels and the setting’s overall score. Equipped with this knowledge, educators can then make necessary curriculum adjustments to increase involvement levels and consequently, the quality of the experiences. Educators’ observations of young children in EC settings can also be enhanced with knowledge of and competency in identifying the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) signals and indicators.

For these reasons, it is recommended that the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008), funds of knowledge, and funds of identity be incorporated into teacher education and Diploma based training programs. Practicing educators should be made aware of the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008), funds of knowledge, and funds of identify through professional learning programs. In these programs, educators could be trained to become familiar with and practice using the Involvement Scale with the existing
Reflect, Respect, Relate (SADECS, 2008) resource that has been provided to EC settings across Australia. Funds of knowledge and funds of identity approaches could be introduced to educators and this study could be referred to as an example of how to use the approaches as an educational intervention. Consent has been given to use the data from this study for teaching and learning purposes.

6.5.2 Recommendation two: Employ the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity to gather in-depth knowledge about children and their interests

This study was successful in using both the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity to gather information about young children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. Employment of the two curriculum intervention activities provides educators with an opportunity to discern children’s real interests, as opposed to a superficial understanding of children’s interests. The curriculum intervention activities also played a significant role in positioning children as a co-constructors of curriculum and therefore upheld their right to participation. The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) calls for educators to use their in-depth knowledge of children to make curriculum decisions, however, does not provide information about how educators can obtain such in-depth knowledge. These two curriculum intervention activities are effective in obtaining information about children and are suggested to be included in the anticipated re-write of the Framework. These curriculum intervention activities would be well positioned in areas of the Framework that pertain to in-depth knowledge about children for the purpose of curriculum-decision making and children’s interests as a foundation for curriculum construction. A professional learning resource could be constructed to explain how to prepare for and implement both of these curriculum intervention activities using this study as a guide. Furthermore, the professional learning resource could include details about how to analyse the curriculum intervention activities to identify children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity.
6.5.3 Recommendation three: Facilitate transitions in Early Childhood using funds of knowledge and funds of identity approaches

Children’s home-identity and school-identity were united through the intervention that took place in this study. The curriculum that was offered, following the intervention, was found to be more equitable for the diverse knowledge and interests of the children. This study also found that educator-child relationships and interactions were strengthened through the child being invited to reveal information about their funds and the educator taking action in the curriculum with the information. The importance of building on children’s multiple ways of “being, belonging and becoming”, is critical when facilitating transitions (DEEWR, 2009, p. 16). The OECD (2017) states that when children’s “perspectives, interests, motives and questions” (p. 208) are accounted for in transitions, the process is transparent and promotes parent and child agency. Children’s sense of trust and security is also imperative to successful transitions (DEEWR, 2009). Children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity could therefore be acquired by educators and utilised to facilitate successful transitions. Part of successful transitions is continuity for children.

The continuity of transitions between home to childcare/school, childcare to school, school year to school year, could all benefit from the inclusion of a funds of knowledge and funds of identity approach being employed. Llopart et al. (2018) found that in order to improve the use of a funds of knowledge approach, teachers should pass on the information about children to promote continuity of the work in the following educational years. This echoes what the OECD (2017) described as a key focus going forward in relation to continuity in transitions. Policy should focus on “making schools ready for children, not children ready for school” (p. 254). This is important for equitable curriculum for all children, where their home-identity and setting-identity are balanced, and not one culture or discourse is dominant in the curriculum. Children are “border-crossers” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 759) between their home domain and setting domain, and the border between the two can be made more permeable and flexible if children’s diverse ways of knowing are considered in the construction of curriculum. Educators and parents are the “border-keepers” (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 761), and
therefore must be made aware of how to manage and facilitate the borders for young children during transitions. Co-operation and co-ordination between all stakeholders in transition will impact the quality of children’s experiences and high-quality experiences are critical to children’s positive life outcomes. The previous suggestion of including funds of knowledge and funds of identity in professional learning programs for educators may need to be extended to programs designed for EC leaders and those responsible for transition policy in the early years. This may promote a co-ordinated, child-centred approach to transitions and facilitate continuity amongst the multiple transitions children are involved in in the early years.

6.5.4 Recommendation four: Championing children’s participation in curriculum construction; their agency, voice and rights.

In this study, children’s participation in the construction of curriculum was successfully facilitated through the employment of the two curriculum intervention activities. It is recommended that these two curriculum intervention activities and the funds of knowledge and funds of identity approaches be utilised by educators in order to contest the schoolification of the early years. The results of this study show that a contextualised curriculum involves children at the highest possible level, a desirable state for learning and development (Laevers, 2000; SADECS, 2008). Furthermore, these approaches and curriculum intervention activities promote children’s “belonging, being and becoming”, the central characteristics of children’s lives (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7). Children’s agency is promoted through the co-construction of curriculum, as seen in this study, which is pivotal to shaping “children’s experiences of becoming” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 20). Children’s voices were central to the curriculum decisions in this study through employing the curriculum intervention activities that surfaced the children’s genuine and current interests, children’s “being” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7). Finally, the resulting curriculum from the intervention in this study prioritised children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity. The contextualised curriculum drew upon and developed children’s identities, essential to “becoming” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 7). All children have a right to participate in a curriculum that upholds “their cultures, identities, abilities and
strengths” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13) and educators are responsible for ensuring that such curriculum is constructed in EC settings.

6.6 Implications for Future Research

Future research could be focused on the use of children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity as a curriculum intervention in a range of EC age groups. The curriculum intervention in this study was situated in a Kindergarten setting and had a positive influence on children’s involvement levels. Future studies could use a similar pre-post study to measure children’s involvement levels across different year levels in the early childhood phase.

Other future research could consider both a funds of knowledge and a funds of identity approach for a more robust overview of children’s interests. This study took a funds of identity focus as it has been highlighted that children’s social worlds can be overlooked in a funds of knowledge approach (Subero et al., 2017), however, research has shown that children’s interests can sometimes be misinterpreted without consultation with the family (Chesworth, 2016; Hedges & Cooper, 2016). Including a funds of knowledge approach may be important as it is evident that partnerships with families is a priority across Australian EC policy documents and this study found that educators obtained surface level information about children from parents.

Finally, other research may wish to focus on educators’ use of the Involvement Scale (SADECS, 2008) and the impact on their teaching practices. This study identified that the knowledge and use of the scale impacted Sofie’s practices, specifically assessment (observation), educator-interactions and relationships with children. Educator practices, an aspect of process quality, have been identified in some settings in Australia and internationally to not be meeting quality standards. Children’s life and academic outcomes are linked to high-quality EC experiences and therefore reliant on high-quality curriculum and interactions.
6.7 Concluding Remarks

Children have the right to participate in all decisions that are made in matters that affect them. This includes the content of the curriculum in which children participate in and learn. Australian educators are called to co-construct curriculum with young children and use their in-depth knowledge of children to guide curriculum decision-making. The challenge behind this is having evidence of strategies and tools that are effective in gathering such in-depth information. Children’s funds of knowledge and funds of identity were successfully revealed through the Shoebox Activity and the Photovoice Activity in this study, which were used to construct the Kindergarten curriculum. The resulting curriculum, involved children at high levels and reflected a high-quality curriculum. Children’s life and academic outcomes are reliant upon high-quality EC settings and every child has a right to participate in and co-construct a curriculum that is connected to and develops their identity.
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Appendix A

Phase One Centre Director information letter

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

XX/XX/XX

Dear XXXXX,

I am a researcher from XXXX completing my Masters of Education (MEd). I would like to invite your centre to be part of a study that is exploring curriculum construction in the early years. Little is known about how Australian educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests for curriculum construction and how this influences child involvement. This research study will investigate why and how educators make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum. This study will take a Participatory Action Research approach, where partnership between the researcher and the educator is paramount to its success.

How will the research benefit educators and young children?
Results from this study will contribute to literature in relation to how educators obtain knowledge about children, for the purpose of constructing curriculum, that will lead to greater child involvement with curriculum and more positive learning outcomes.

What does the research involve?
The research study involves initial interviews with four Kindergarten educators, across childcare and school settings, and later, a case study with one Kindergarten setting. I am asking to conduct an initial interview with the lead educator in the 3-5 year old program at your centre.

The interview will focus around how educators gather and use information about children’s knowledge and interests to construct curriculum. The interview will:
• Be conducted by Vanessa Wintoneak, the researcher.
• Be audio recorded and later transcribed with permission.
• Take place at your setting, at a time convenient for the educator, and will be approximately 30 minutes in duration.

Does my centre have to take part?
No, your centre does not have to take part. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. Once a decision is made to participate, you can change your mind at any time. All decisions made, will be respected by the researcher without question.

What if participants change their initial decision?
Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Should the participants wish to withdraw their participation at any stage, they are free to do so without disadvantage or prejudice.
If the project has already been published at the time they decide to withdraw, the contributions that were used in reporting the project cannot be removed from the publication. However, all participants will be non-identifiable in any written reports.

**What will happen to the information given?**
The interview data will be used to select one setting, from the four initial educators interviewed, to participate in a case study. The interview data will also be used to write a thesis and may be published in a journal/book and given at conference presentations.

Data will be stored securely in a lockable cabinet in an office at XXXX and will only be accessed by the research team working on the project. The data will be stored until the youngest participant turns 25 years of age, in accordance with the Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding hard copy data and permanently erasing electronic data.

Data may also be used for a future research PhD project, which is an extension of this study, within the next 5 years. Explicit consent will be obtained from the participants before the data is used for future research and the nature of the research explained.

**Is this research approved?**
This study has been approved by the XXXX.

**Who do I contact if I wish to discuss this project further?**
If you have any questions about this research project you may contact the researcher directly. If you have any concerns about this project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at XXXX.

**How do I access results?**
A summarised report of the research results will be sent to you, the centre Director. Alternatively, participants can formally request a summary of results from the researcher.

**How does my centre become involved?**
If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing for your centre to participate, please complete the Participation Form on the following page.

This letter is for you to keep.

I look forward to discussing this with you further. I will ring you in a week to answer any questions you may have or, if you have any questions, my contact details are below.

Yours sincerely,

*Student Researcher*
Vanessa Wintoneak
Vanessa Wintoneak

*Supervisor*
Lennie Barblett
A/Prof Dr. Lennie Barblett

*Supervisor*
Pauline Roberts
Dr. Pauline Roberts
Appendix B

Phase One Centre Director consent to participate form

**Title of Project:** Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

- I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter
- I have read and understand the information provided
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction
- I am aware that if I have any further questions I can contact the research team
- I understand that my Centre’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary

Centre Director’s Name:

........................................................................................................................................

Centre Director’s Signature:

........................................................................................................................................

Date: ........../........./........
Appendix C

Phase One educator information letter

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

[Date]

Dear Early Childhood Educator,

I am a researcher from XXXX completing my Masters of Education (MEd). I would like to invite you to be part of a study that is exploring curriculum construction in the early years. Specifically, I am conducting interviews with four Kindergarten educators, across childcare and school settings, and later, engaging in a case study with one Kindergarten setting.

Little is known about how Australian educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests for curriculum construction and how this influences child involvement. This research study will investigate why and how educators make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum.

How will the research benefit educators and young children?
Results from this study will contribute to literature in relation to how educators obtain knowledge about children, for the purpose of constructing curriculum, that will lead to greater child involvement with curriculum and more positive learning outcomes.

What does participating in the interview involve?
I am asking that you take part in one interview with myself, the researcher. This interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed. The interview will take place at your setting, at a time convenient for you, and will take approximately 30 minutes. The questions in this interview will be focussed around curriculum decision making and getting to know children.

Do I have to take part?
No, you do not have to take part. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. Once a decision is made to participate, you can change your mind at any time. All decisions made, will be respected by the researcher without question.

What if I wanted to change my initial decision?
Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw your participation at any stage, or to withdraw any information involving yourself, you are free to do so without disadvantage or prejudice.

If the project has already been published at the time you decide to withdraw, your contributions that were used in reporting the project cannot be removed from the publication. However, all participants will be non-identifiable in any written reports.

What will happen to the information I give?
The interview data will be used to invite one setting, from the four initial educators interviewed, to participate in a case study. The interview data will also be used to write a thesis and may be published in a journal/book and given at conference presentations.
Data will be stored securely in a lockable cabinet in an office at ECU and will only be accessed by the research team working on the project. The data will be stored until the youngest participant turns 25 years of age, in accordance with the Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding hard copy data and permanently erasing electronic data.

Data may also be used for a future research PhD project, which is an extension of this study, within the next 5 years. Explicit consent will be obtained from you before the data is used for future research and the nature of the research explained.

Is this research approved?
This study has been approved by the XXXX.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss this project further?
If you have any questions about this research project you may contact the researcher directly. If you have any concerns about this project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact the XXXX.

How do I access results?
A summarised report of the research results will be sent to the school Principal/centre Director. Alternatively, participants can formally request a summary of results from the researcher.

How do I become involved?
If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing to participate, please complete the Consent Form on the following page.

This information letter is for you to keep. Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Student Researcher
Vanessa Wintoneak

Vanessa Wintoneak

Supervisor
Lennie Barblett
A/Prof Dr. Lennie Barblett

Supervisor
Pauline Roberts
Dr. Pauline Roberts
Appendix D
Phase One educator consent form

**Title of Project:** Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

- I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter
- I have read and understand the information provided
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction
- I am aware that if I have any further questions I can contact the research team
- I understand that my participation in the project is entirely voluntary
- I am consenting to give an interview of approximately 30 minutes that will be audio recorded with my permission at a day, place and time that is suitable to me
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time, without affecting the relationship with the research team or XXXX
- I understand that data can be withdrawn from the study up to the point of publication
- I understand that this research will be used to write a thesis and may be published in a journal/book, and given at conference presentations, and agree to this, provided that neither the participants nor the school/centre are identified in any way
- I understand that the information provided will be used for the purposes of this research study and may also be used in a future study over the next 5 years, with explicit consent sought, should this occur
- I understand that a summarised report of the research results will be sent to the school Principal/centre Director

Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Date: ......../........./........
Appendix E
Phase One semi-structured interview schedule

1. Have you heard of the phrase funds of knowledge/funds of identity? If so, can you tell me what you think it means?

2. How do you gather information about children and their interests?

3. How do you use the information that you gather about children and their interests?

4. How is information about children’s interests useful to you when constructing the curriculum/making programming decisions?

5. Can you give an example of how you used children’s interests recently?
Appendix F
Phase Two Principal information letter

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

[Date]

Dear Principal,

I am a researcher from XXXX completing my Masters of Education (MEd). I would like to invite your school to be part of a study that is exploring curriculum construction in the early years. Little is known about how Australian educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests for curriculum construction and how this influences child involvement. This research study will investigate why and how educators make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum. This study will take a Participatory Action Research approach, where partnership between the researcher and the teacher is paramount to its success.

How will the research benefit educators and young children?
Results from this study will contribute to literature in relation to how educators obtain knowledge about children, for the purpose of constructing curriculum, that will lead to greater child involvement with curriculum and more positive learning outcomes.

What does the research involve?
The research study involves initial interviews with four Kindergarten educators, across childcare and school settings, and later, a case study with one Kindergarten setting. I am asking to conduct a case study with one of the Kindergarten teachers and four children at your school.

Children’s involvement in the curriculum will be studied before and after an intervention in the case study. This study will take a Participatory Action Research approach, where partnership between the researcher and the teacher, is paramount to its success. The case study will involve:

• Two interviews with the teacher, which will be audio recorded and approximately 30 minutes in duration at a time and place convenient for you (at the beginning and the end of the project). The first interview will take place at the beginning of the case study.
• Observation and video recording of four focus group children in order to complete the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale Rating Sheet. The observations are two minutes each and occur six times in one day for each child. The children will be observed and video recorded twice during the project (before and after the intervention). Both the researcher and the teacher will conduct the observations and complete the Rating Sheet, but only the researcher will conduct the video recordings.
• Implementation of two tools to obtain information about children’s knowledge and their interests, which may then be used in curriculum construction. The two tools are the Shoebox activity and the Photovoice method.
  o The Shoebox activity is where we will provide four children with an empty shoebox to take home and fill with items meaningful to them. The shoeboxes will be brought back to the school, where the children are then invited to share with the teacher what they have put inside their shoebox. The sharing session will be video recorded by the researcher.
  o The Photovoice method is where we will provide four children with an iPad to take photographs of the things that they do outside of the school. The children will be asked to take a minimum of one and maximum of ten photographs, and then to share the photographs they have taken with the teacher. The sharing session will be video recorded by the researcher.
• The second interview will take place after the setting has had time to implement the curriculum constructed from information obtained from the two tools. Curriculum planning documents, class journals, pedagogical documentation or other similar items may be requested for review during and after the interview(s), as additional evidence of changes made from the implementation.

Does my school have to take part?
No, your school does not have to take part. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. Once a decision is made to participate, you can change your mind at any time. All decisions made, will be respected by the researcher without question.

What if participants change their initial decision?
Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Should the participants wish to withdraw their participation at any stage, they are free to do so without disadvantage or prejudice.

If the project has already been published at the time they decide to withdraw, the contributions that were used in reporting the project cannot be removed from the publication. However, all participants will be non-identifiable in any written reports.

What will happen to the information given?
The case study data will be used to write a thesis and may be published in a journal/book and given at conference presentations.

Data will be stored securely in a lockable cabinet in an office at XXXX and will only be accessed by the research team working on the project. The data will be stored until the youngest participant turns 25 years of age, in accordance with the Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding hard copy data and permanently erasing electronic data. Data may also be used for a future research PhD project, which is an extension of this study, within the next 5 years. Explicit consent will be obtained from the participants before the data is used for future research and the nature of the research explained.

Is this research approved?
This study has been approved by the XXXX.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss this project further?
If you have any questions about this research project you may contact the researcher directly. If you have any concerns about this project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact the XXXX.

How do I access results?
A summarised report of the research results will be sent to you, the school Principal. Alternatively, participants can formally request a summary of results from the researcher.

How does my school become involved?
If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing for your school to participate, please complete the Participation Form on the following page. This letter is for you to keep. I look forward to discussing this with you further. I will ring you in a week to answer any questions you may have or, if you have any questions, my contact details are below.
Appendix G
Phase Two Principal consent to participate form

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

- I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter
- I have read and understand the information provided
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction
- I am aware that if I have any further questions I can contact the research team
- I understand that my school’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary

Principal’s Name: ..........................................................................................................................................

Principal’s Signature: ..................................................................................................................................

Date: ........../........./........
Appendix H
Phase Two educator information letter

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

[Date]

Dear Early Childhood Educator,

I am a researcher from XXXX completing my Masters of Education (MEd). I would like to invite you to be part of a study that is exploring curriculum construction in the early years. Specifically, I am conducting interviews with four Kindergarten educators, across childcare and school settings, and later, engaging in a case study with one Kindergarten setting.

Little is known about how Australian educators obtain and make use of knowledge about children and their interests for curriculum construction and how this influences child involvement. This research study will investigate why and how educators make use of knowledge about children and their interests in the construction of curriculum.

How will the research benefit educators and young children?
Results from this study will contribute to literature in relation to how educators obtain knowledge about children, for the purpose of constructing curriculum that will lead to greater child involvement with curriculum and more positive learning outcomes.

What does participating in the case study involve?
Children’s involvement in the curriculum will be studied before and after an intervention in the case study. This study will take a Participatory Action Research approach, where partnership between the researcher and the [insert either teacher/lead educator], is paramount to its success. The case study will involve:

• Two interviews with the [insert either teacher/lead educator], which will be audio recorded and approximately 30 minutes in duration at a time and place convenient for you (at the beginning and the end of the project). The first interview will take place at the beginning of the case study. The questions in the first interview will be focussed around curriculum decision making and getting to know children.

• Observation and video recording of four focus group children in order to complete the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale Rating Sheet. The observations are two minutes each and occur six times in one day for each child. The children will be observed and video recorded twice during the project (before and after the intervention). Both the researcher and the [insert either teacher/lead educator] will conduct the observations and complete the Rating Sheet, but only the researcher will conduct the video recordings.

• Implementation of two tools to obtain information about children’s knowledge and their interests, which may then be used in curriculum construction. The two tools are the Shoebox activity and the Photovoice method.
  o The Shoebox activity is where we will provide four children with an empty shoebox to take home and fill with items meaningful to them. The shoeboxes will be brought back to the [insert either school/centre], where the children are then invited to share with the [insert either teacher/lead educator] what they have put inside their shoebox. The sharing session will be video recorded by the researcher.
  o The Photovoice method is where we will provide four children with an iPad to take photographs of the things that they do outside of the school/centre. The children will be asked to take a minimum of one and maximum of ten photographs, and then to share the photographs they have taken with the [insert either teacher/lead educator]. The sharing session will be video recorded by the researcher.
The second interview will take place after the setting has had time to implement the curriculum constructed from information obtained from the two tools. Curriculum planning documents, class journals, pedagogical documentation or other similar items may be requested for review during and after the interview(s), as additional evidence of changes made from the implementation. The interview questions will be focussed around the two implemented tools, curriculum construction and child involvement.

Do I have to take part?
No, you do not have to take part. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. Once a decision is made to participate, you can change your mind at any time. All decisions made, will be respected by the researcher without question.

What if I wanted to change my initial decision?
Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw your participation at any stage, or to withdraw any information involving yourself, you are free to do so without disadvantage or prejudice.

If the project has already been published at the time you decide to withdraw, your contributions that were used in reporting the project cannot be removed from the publication. However, all participants will be non-identifiable in any written reports.

What will happen to the information I give?
The data will be analysed and used to write a thesis and may also be published in a journal/book and given at conference presentations. Neither the participants nor the [insert either school/centre], will be identified in any way. Videos are only for the purposes of data collection and will not be viewed by anyone outside the [insert either school/centre] or research team. The researcher may decide to use the videos, or parts of, for teaching purposes. However, explicit consent will be obtained from participants for the use of video for teaching purposes, should this occur. Should any incidents occur that might cause embarrassment to the [insert either teacher/lead educator], children or the [insert either school/centre], these video recordings will be erased.

Data will be stored securely in a lockable cabinet in an office at XXX and will only be accessed by the research team working on the project. The data will be stored until the youngest participant turns 25 years of age, in accordance with the Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding hard copy data and permanently erasing electronic data.

Data may also be used for a future research PhD project, which is an extension of this study, within the next 5 years. Explicit consent will be obtained from you before the data is used for future research and the nature of the research explained.

Is this research approved?
This study has been approved by the XXXX.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss this project further?
If you have any questions about this research project you may contact the researcher directly. If you have any concerns about this project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact the XXXX.

How do I access results?
A summarised report of the research results will be sent to the [insert either school Principal/centre Director. Alternatively, participants can formally request a summary of results from the researcher.

How do I become involved?
If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing to participate, please complete the Consent Form on the following page.

This information letter is for you to keep. Thank you for your help.
Appendix I
Phase Two educator consent form

**Title of Project:** Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

- I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter
- I have read and understand the information provided
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction
- I am aware that if I have any further questions I can contact the research team
- I understand that my participation in the project is entirely voluntary
- I am consenting to give 2 interviews of approximately 30 minutes that will be audio recorded with my permission at a day, place and time that is suitable to me, make observations of four focus group children to complete the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale Rating Sheet twice during the project and implement and be involved in the sharing of two tools, the Shoebox activity and the Photovoice method
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time, without affecting the relationship with the research team or XXXXXXXXX
- I understand that data can be withdrawn from the study up to the point of publication
- I understand that this research will be used to write a thesis and may be published in a journal/book, and given at conference presentations, and agree to this, provided that neither the participants nor the school/centre are identified in any way
- I understand that the information provided will be used for the purposes of this research study and may also be used in a future study over the next 5 years, with explicit consent sought, should this occur
- I understand that a summarised report of the research results will be sent to the school Principal/centre Director

Participant Name:
..................................................................................................................................................

Participant Signature:
..................................................................................................................................................

Date:  ......../......../........
Appendix J

Phase Two parent information letter

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

[Date]

I am a researcher from XXXX completing my Masters of Education (MEd). I am writing to you to invite your child to participate in a research study, which aims to investigate how educators get to know children, use children’s knowledge and interests in order to construct the curriculum and what influence this has on child involvement. Your child’s teacher, with permission from the school Principal, has given permission for me to send you this letter.

What does the research involve?
I would like to work with your child in this research project, as I highly value children’s contributions and believe that children are valued research partners who contribute meaningful data. During this research, I will be in your child’s classroom over a two-week period, getting to know all of the children and the setting. Once the children become used to me being in their setting, I will be:

- Observing your child while they participate in everyday activities in the classroom in order to identify their level of involvement. These observations will be video recorded and I will then analyse these videos, back at the University, using a child involvement scale. I will have this scale with me at the school at each of my visits, should you be interested in discussing it with me further. Your child’s teacher will also be observing your child in order to complete the same involvement scale rating sheet. These observations will occur twice during the study, at the beginning and the end of my time at the school. There will be 12 two-minute observations in total.

- Working in partnership with your child’s teacher to introduce two tools, a Shoebox activity and the Photovoice method in order to get to know more about your child and their interests.
  - The Shoebox activity is where we will provide your child with an empty shoebox to take home and fill with items meaningful to them. The shoeboxes will be brought back to the classroom, and then your child will be invited to share what they have put inside their shoebox with the teacher. The sharing session will be video recorded.
  - The Photovoice method is where we will provide your child with an iPad to take photographs of the things that they do outside of the school. Your child will be asked to take a minimum of one and maximum of ten photographs, and to share the photographs they have taken with their teacher. The sharing session will be video recorded.

What are the benefits and risks of this research project?
This research project will benefit children by potentially increasing their involvement in the curriculum due to their teacher getting to know their interests and constructing the curriculum based on these interests. There are no risks associate with this research project.

Does my child have to take part?
No. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. Participation is voluntary and your decision will be respected. You are free to withdraw your child’s participation at any time, without affecting the relationship with the researcher or XXXXXXXXXX. All decisions made will be respected by the researcher without question. Your child’s assent will also be sought, and their decision of whether they want to be a part of this will be respected by the researcher without question.
What if I and/or my child want to change our initial decision?
Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw your child’s participation at any stage, or to withdraw any information involving your child, you are free to do so without disadvantage or prejudice to you or your child.
If the project has already been published at the time you decide to withdraw, your child’s contribution that was used in reporting the project cannot be removed from the publication. However, all participants will be non-identifiable in any written reports.

What will happen to the information my child gives?
The data will be analysed and used to write a thesis and may also be published in a journal/book and given at conferences presentations. Neither the participants nor the school will be identified in any way. Videos are only for the purposes of data collection and will not be viewed by anyone outside the school or research team. The researcher may decide to use the videos, or parts of, for publication and/or teaching purposes. However, explicit consent will be obtained from you for the use of video for publication and/or teaching purposes, should this occur. Should any incidents occur that might cause embarrassment to the teachers, children or the school, these video recordings will be erased.

Data will be stored securely in a lockable cabinet in an office at XXXX and will only be accessed by the research team working on the project. The data will be stored until the youngest participant turns 25 years of age, in accordance with the Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding hard copy data and permanently erasing electronic data.

Data may also be used for a future research PhD project, which is an extension of this study, within the next 5 years. Explicit consent will be obtained from you before the data is used for future research and the nature of the research explained.

Is this research approved?
This study has been approved by the XXXX.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss this project further?
If you have any questions about this research project you may contact the researcher directly. If you have any concerns about this project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact the XXXX.

How do I access results?
A summarised report of the research results will be sent to the school Principal. Alternatively, participants can formally request a summary of results from the researcher.

How does my child become involved?
If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing for your child to participate, please complete the Consent Form on the following page. Please discuss this project with your child, should you agree for them to participate, so that they are aware that you have agreed to their participation.

This information letter is for you to keep. Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Student Researcher
Vanessa Wintoneak

Supervisor
Lennie Barblett

A/Prof Dr. Lennie Barblett

Supervisor
Pauline Roberts

Dr. Pauline Roberts
Appendix K
Phase Two parent consent form

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

- I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter
- I have read and understand the information provided
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction
- I am aware that if I have any further questions I can contact the research team
- I understand that my child’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary and that my child will be observed and filmed participating in everyday activities and asked to fill a shoebox and use an iPad at home and to share with the teacher
- I understand that my child’s assent to be involved will be sought
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my child’s participation at any time, without affecting the relationship with the research team or XXXXXXX
- I understand that data can be withdrawn from the study up to the point of publication
- I understand that this research will be used to write a thesis and may be published in a journal/book and given at conference presentations, and agree to this, provided that neither the participants nor the school are identified in any way
- I understand that the information provided will be used for the purposes of this research study and may also be used in a future study over the next 5 years, with explicit consent sought, should this occur
- I understand that a summarised report of the research results will be sent to the school Principal

Participant Name: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Participant Age: ……/……../……………
        dd / mm / year

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name (printed):

..................................................................................................................
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature:

..................................................................................................................
Date:  ………/……/……. Date:  ………/……/…….
Appendix L

Phase Two semi-structured interview schedule

1. Can you please discuss the plan-teach-assess cycle that you use in your classroom?

2. In the initial interview, you mentioned that you listen to children as one of the ways you gather information about them and their interests. What are you listening for that indicates a child’s interest? Can you give a recent example of this?

3. In the initial interview, you mentioned that you set up the physical environment very purposefully to support children’s engagement and learning. You discussed how you and your team pay close attention to what children gravitate to and what they are enthusiastic about. What are the current areas of interest of the children that are reflected in your environment?

4. For the purposes of the case study, can you think of four children that would be well-suited to the implementation of the Shoebox activity and the Photovoice method?
Appendix M

Involvement Scale Rating Sheets (SADECS, 2008, pp. 88-90)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>OBSERVATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frequently interrupted activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More or less maintained activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Activity with intense moments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sustained intense activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Aimless, absent minded
- Tinkering/dreaming
- Busy but routine actions without much devotion, few signals of involvement
- Strong involvement with interruptions/involved but not all signals
- Involved with essential signals (concentration, energy, complexity/creativity and persistence)
## Involvement Scale: Rating sheet

Using the results from the Indicator Observations make a judgement of the global quality of each signal and assign low (l), medium (m) or high (h) for each signal.

### Rating Observation 1: Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief description of Observation Context</th>
<th>l</th>
<th>m</th>
<th>h</th>
<th>Factors affecting observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity &amp; creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial expression &amp; posture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal utterances/language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rating Observation 2: Time

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Brief description of Observation Context</th>
<th>l</th>
<th>m</th>
<th>h</th>
<th>Factors affecting observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Facial expression &amp; posture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal utterances/language</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Rating Observation 3: Time

<table>
<thead>
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<th>l</th>
<th>m</th>
<th>h</th>
<th>Factors affecting observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Facial expression &amp; posture</td>
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<td>Persistence</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>Precision</td>
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<td>Reaction time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal utterances/language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
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</table>
Involvement Scale: Rating sheet (continued)

Using the results from the Indicator Observations, make a judgement of the overall quality of each signal and assign low (l), medium (m) or high (h) for each signal.

### Rating Observation 4: Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief description of Observation Context:</th>
<th>Factors affecting observation:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complexity &amp; creativity</td>
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<td>Satisfaction</td>
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### Rating Observation 5: Time

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### Rating Observation 6: Time

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**INDIVIDUAL’S MEAN SCORE:**
Appendix N

Phase Three Shoebox Activity letter to children and parents

FRONT PAGE
Dear [insert child’s name],

This is your ‘All About Me’ box. Over the school holidays, please choose items that are special to you and put them inside. You can even decorate the box too!

When you come back to Kindy in Term 4 you will get to show us what is inside and tell us all about it. We can’t wait to see the box and find out what you put inside!

From,

[Insert teacher name] and [Insert researcher name]

BACK PAGE
Dear [insert parent names],

Thank you for agreeing to your child’s participation in the research project I am undertaking at [insert school name] with [insert teacher name].

This box is a part of an activity called the ‘Shoebox Activity’, where we hope to learn more about your child and their interests outside of Kindy.

Thank you for your help in ensuring that your child selects personally meaningful items to put inside over the school holidays. They are welcome to decorate the box if they would like as well.

Please may I ask that you return this box to Kindy in Week 1 of Term 4. [Insert teacher name] and I will then be able to conduct the Shoebox Activity sharing with your child. Once this is complete, we will return the box and items to you and your child.

Kindly,

Vanessa Wintoneak
Appendix O
Phase Three Photovoice Activity letter to children and parents

FRONT PAGE
Dear [insert child’s name],

We hope you have a nice school holiday break! During the holidays, can you please take some photos of the things you like to do and places you like to go? We would like to get to know more about what you do and where you go when you are not at Kindy.

When you come back to Kindy in Term 4, we will look at the photos together and you can tell us all about the things that you do and where you go. We can’t wait to see your photos!

From,

[Insert teacher name] and [Insert researcher name]

BACK PAGE
Dear [insert parent names],

Thank you for agreeing to your child’s participation in the research project I am undertaking at [insert school name] with [insert teacher name].

This USB is for use in the ‘Photovoice Activity’, where your child is invited to take between 1 and 10 photographs of the things that they do outside of Kindy. We hope that this activity will help us to gain insight into your child’s identity and interests. It is important that your child take the photographs for this activity.

Please may I ask that you transfer the photographs taken onto this USB and that you return it to Kindy in Week 1 of Term 4. [Insert teacher name] and I will then be able to conduct the Photovoice Activity sharing with your child.

Kindly,

Vanessa Wintoneak
Appendix P

Phase Four semi-structured interview schedule

1. Now that we have completed our research project together, can you please tell me what you think the terms Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity mean?

Curriculum is explained in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) as encompassing all of the interactions, experiences, routines and events that occur in young children’s learning environments.

2. Can you discuss how you used the information you learned about the children and their interests from the Shoebox activity and the Photovoice method for your curriculum? (You may like to refer to your planning documents and/or pedagogical documentation to support your response).

3. In this research project, we utilised the SADECS (2008) Involvement Scale. Did the use of this observation scale influence your practice as an educator? If so, can you explain how? If no, why do you think this did not influence practice? What are the barriers to this?

4. How do you think the awareness of the Involvement Scale and getting to know children’s Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity is important for early childhood educators?
Appendix Q

Title of Project: Investigating Curriculum Construction: Children’s Knowledge, Interests and Right to Participation in Driving Curriculum Decision-Making

This will be read to the child.

Hi [insert child’s name],

Last time we talked, I told you about when I visit your classroom that I am going to take video of you while you are playing. I thought that I should remind you of the things I said before:

• When I talk to other people or write about what you said and did, I won’t use your real name.
• If you decide at any time that you don’t want me to talk to you or video you, just let me know, and I will stop.

You can tell me if you want me to video you or not by pointing to these faces (point to the faces). This face (point to the smiling face) means yes, you would like to talk to me, and this face (point to the other face) means no, you don’t.

Thank you very much.

Participant Name [inserted by teacher]: ……………………………………………………………………

YES ☑️ (tick) NO ☐️ (tick)

Date: ……../……../……
Appendix R

Phase Three Family Book letter to parents from Sofie

Kindy Family Book

In response to children talking about their families, we are going to create a book all about the families of Kindy, including extended family members important to your child.

CHILD’S NAME: ____________________________________________

DOES THIS NAME HAVE ANY SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR YOUR FAMILY OR CULTURAL BACKGROUND?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

PEOPLE IN THEIR FAMILY (NAMES YOUR CHILD CALLS THEM):

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

DO YOU HAVE ANY FAMILY CONNECTIONS TO OTHER COUNTRIES? (eg your family may have emigrated from there, have family there, visit family there – please specify)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

IS ANOTHER LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD? DOES YOUR CHILD SPEAK ANOTHER LANGUAGE?

________________________________________________________________________