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Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa/New Zealand

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Education (Special education) at Massey University New Zealand

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Abstract

A case study approach was used in two early childhood centres which both operate on a mixed age group licence. Purposive sampling was used to select the settings in this study. They were both selected on the basis of their Education Review Office (ERO) report which identified them as inclusive and meeting all children's needs. Each case study involved a critical examination of how the ECE settings responded to children's needs. Families/whānau and teachers' perspectives on inclusion and their practice of inclusion in early childhood education were explored. The study sought to find out whether teachers and/or centres practise what they say they do. Examples of inclusion in the two case study centres were explored. In these two case studies both qualitative and quantitative data collecting methods were used; this research is a mixed-method research which presents the research findings from questionnaires, focus group interviews, pedagogical documentation analysis and observations. The findings revealed that inclusion can be a success in early childhood education if well managed. The attitude of the partners in an early childhood settings define what happens in the centres. It was concluded that having a positive attitude towards inclusion and working in partnership with parents contributed to the success of inclusion. Collaboration and communication, the quality of teacher child interaction and having inclusive centre policies and procedures which are followed through help make inclusive education happen. The successes and challenges are highlighted, so that other educational services across sectors may learn from the success stories of these two settings whilst having an awareness of the challenges which they may face.

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This thesis has played a huge part of my life since the day I started this journey in February 2011. I therefore wish to acknowledge all the people who have supported me since I started this thesis.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the children, parents, the early childhood teachers and management of the settings that I carried out my study. I would like to thank them for sharing their stories and experiences with me and for allowing me to observe them as they carried on their day to day activities in their settings. The stories from these participants, and observing them, provided me with information on some of the factors that make inclusive education a success. I hope that this research will encourage teachers to reflect on their beliefs, attitudes, philosophy, policies and practices. I also hope that this research will motivate other teachers to change their attitudes and practices to create conducive environments for learning for all children and their families.

I also would like to thank my supervisors Dr Angela Ward and Dr Valerie Margrain who have been very instrumental in helping me throughout this project. They both offered me constructive criticism, encouragement and they brought with them enthusiasm that kept me going even when things were getting tough. It has been a great pleasure to work with them on this project. I heartily thank them for the support, guidance, encouragement and their willingness to share their expertise and experience with me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background and justification for the study

As an early childhood educator, I have passion for young children and their families and I want what is best for them. I advocate for their social, emotional, developmental and all educational needs to be met. I advocate for inclusion of all children in early childhood education settings without discrimination or bias. This stems from the fact that children's everyday family life, neighbourhood and social life, is largely characterised by diverse groups of people living together. In one family there can be children with different abilities and different needs but they live together as a family. People's everyday lives are largely heterogeneous, be it at home or in the work place. People with different abilities and/or from different ethnicities can live in the same house or work together and this demonstrates the rights discourse which advocate for the inclusion of all children regardless of their differences.

This study stems from my 17 years of teaching experience in the early childhood sector. Over the years, I have been constantly reminded by the children I have taught, of their uniqueness and of how special each and every one of them is. I have taught children from diverse backgrounds and children with diverse needs within diverse settings. I have taught a range of age groups from birth to eight years. Concerns are sometimes raised by families about the ability of early childhood programmes to meet the needs of children developing typically as well as those with developmental delays (e.g. Diamond, Hestenes, & O'Connor, 1994). Therefore, if there are concerns about whether the early childhood services are meeting children's special education needs, it would be interesting to see if those

centres licensed for children from birth to five years are able to meet the needs of the wider age range as well as those children with special needs. It would be important to see if teachers are able to respond to the needs of all children. This wondering encouraged me to want to find out how centres licensed for children from birth to five years respond to the individual needs of all their children, and to find out teachers' and parents' feelings about inclusion.

I wanted to know if, "Activities will be age appropriate and will enable children with special needs to be actively engaged in learning" (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p.11). I endeavoured to find out the views and feelings of teachers and parents about inclusive education in early childhood. I hoped, gathering views and opinions about how the centres respond to individual needs, assessing documentation, conducting focus groups and making observations could provide some answers. Some families of children with special needs feel that some early childhood settings are supportive and inclusive of their children regardless of their needs whereas, some families feel that other settings exclude their children (Purdue, 2004). Society is heterogeneous and so it is not surprising that there are diverse views about inclusion and exclusion. This could be evident in the policies, practices and the atmosphere or culture of the setting. It can also be expressed by parents/ families and teachers within their centres. I therefore, undertook this study to find out how parents/families and teachers in two chosen early childhood education (ECE) centres feel about inclusion in their settings. I also investigated the policies and philosophies that guide their practice and, I studied the atmosphere, relationships and culture in the context of the settings in relation to inclusive education.

This is a multiple case study of two early childhood settings that are both licensed for children from birth to five years. I analysed how these centres respond to the diverse needs of children, how the teachers feel about their practice and relationships in their centres, and how families feel about the services provided for them and their children. I investigated the values teachers and parents place in their relationships and the child's education through questionnaires and focus group interviews. I also sought to establish the principles underpinning the culture of the centre through observations and document analysis.

Legislation and policies on inclusion

Inclusive education is grounded in the 1975 United States of America (USA) legislation, Public Law 94-142 (PL94-142) now known as, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Salvia & Yssldyke, 2004) which states that all children should be allowed free access to public schools regardless of their abilities. The USA went further to introduce the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) policy in 1994, an amendment to PL94-142, which states the need for students with special needs to receive free, suitable education in the least restrictive environments (Romanczuk, n.d). This policy states that children with special needs should be included in the mainstream as much as possible but when there are instances when the child needs to be restricted, the child has to be moved away to a least restrictive setting. For example, if a child is behaving in a manner that can cause harm to others and/or itself the child can be moved in to a restricted area for protection. The LRE came after The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) (United Nations, 1989) which states that children should be free from discrimination. This Convention also made a huge contribution to the practice of including students with special needs in mainstream settings around the

world. New Zealand had no legislation to support inclusion until the introduction of the Education Act (1989) which saw the education sector move towards social, ecological and critical theories; while rights groups were calling for the rights of all children to be met. This meant that children with special needs could be enrolled in mainstream settings in public schools; however this does did not include children in the early childhood as it relates to the compulsory sector only. Under the Education Act (1989) it is a legislative requirement that all early childhood services be licensed.

All ECE services are to be licensed under the current Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 (SR 2008/204) which have incorporated the Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs) (Ministry of Education, 1998) for the purposes of cutting down paper work to early childhood service providers. However, hospital based services have their own licensing criteria (Ministry of Education, 2011a); *Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008* and the *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework,* together form part of the regulatory framework for ECE (Ministry of Education, 2011a). The *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework* is made up of the English and Te reo Māori versions of the Principles and Strands from the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2011a). It is stated in the SR 2008/204 that the curriculum delivered in ECE should encourage "Children to be confident in their own culture and develop an understanding, and respect for, other cultures" (Article 43, (i) (a) (iv)). It should also,

> Respect and acknowledges the aspirations of parents, family, and whānau and make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the service provider collaborates with parents and, where appropriate, the family or whānau of the enrolled children in relation to the learning and development and decision making about those children. (SR 2008/204, Article 43, a, iv & b)

The Regulations go further to explain that if help is needed from external agencies for any child, this should be sought. Thus, Aotearoa/New Zealand ECE recognises the multi-cultural and diverse nature of people in this country and it encourages teachers and service providers to respect the diversity of the children and families they serve (Ministry of Education, 1996a; Noonan, 2010). The SR 2008/204 refers to the curriculum and states that all services licensed under these regulations should abide by the curriculum standard general. There are some services which are still licensed under the 1998 regulations and therefore the curriculum standard general does not apply to them. However the two settings in this study are both licensed under the SR 2008/204 and both use *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a) as their curriculum document.

The *Special Education Policy 2000* (SE2000) introduced in 1996 is another policy which supports inclusion and aims "to achieve a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all children and school students" (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 5). SE2000 has seven guiding principles:

1. Young children and students with special education needs have the same rights, freedoms and responsibilities as people of the same age who do not have special education needs.
2. The primary focus of special education is to meet the individual learning and developmental needs of the learner
3. All young children and students with identified special education needs have access to a fair share of the available special education resources
4. Partnership between students, families, whānau and education providers is essential in overcoming barriers to learning.
5. All special education resources are used in the most effective and efficient way possible, taking into account parent choice and the needs of the learner.
6. A young child or student's language and culture comprise a vital context for learning and development and must be taken into consideration in planning programmes
7. Young children or students with special education needs will have access to a seamless education from the time that their needs are identified through to post-school options (Ministry of Education, 2003a, p. 6).

The *SE2000* principles also promote equity and working in partnerships with parents in removing barriers to learning. *SE2000* was introduced the same year as *Te Whāriki He Whāriki Matauranga mo nga mokopuna o Aotearoa,* the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1996a).

The government went on to launch the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* in 2001. The Disability Strategy aims to take a critical approach to eliminate barriers to participation faced mainly by disabled people and promote an inclusive environment for all (Minister for Disability Issues, 2010). In this document the Minister stated that one in every five New Zealanders has a long term impairment which bars them from doing things that others take for granted. There is a need to critically examine the conditions of every child and minimise the barriers to learning for those people with special needs, to increase their chances of doing things that others do. The government aims to have an inclusive and just society where everyone has equal opportunities to learn and develop in their local educational settings (Minister for Disability Issues) thus demonstrating its commitment to meet the needs of all children and ensuring that their rights as individuals are upheld. The Ministry of Education (2003b) went on to develop a strategy for teaching quality which insists on:

> Supporting the development of inclusive pedagogies that value diversity within our student population and ensuring that teachers are able to teach a diverse range of students and meet diverse learning needs (and) raising the quality of support and teaching available to children with special education needs and disabilities. (p. 12)

These legislations, policies and strategies show that the New Zealand Government has planned how it could support successful inclusion of all young children and students in the mainstream education sector in respect of *UNCROC,* making sure

that the aims of the government are explicit. Government policies emphasised the right of every child whose parents/caregivers choose an ECE service to quality education that prepares them for future success.

Early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand

It is widely accepted that young children's early years of life are vital in their education, learning experiences and development; young children develop more rapidly in their lives from birth to eight years (Ministry of Education, 1996a). It is at this stage that children develop vital skills in life including language, movement, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and also self regulation and behaviour skills for them to cope in the wider world. There is ample evidence that early onset of behaviour problems start as early as three years of age (e.g. Campbell, 1995); it is also at this stage that children with developmental delays are identified (e.g. Lamorey & Bricker, 1993). Research suggests that intervening in early childhood is more successful than intervening later on in life (Cullen & Carroll-Lind, 2005; ECE Taskforce, 2011; Fergusson, 2009). This therefore calls for high quality early childhood education. The idea of high-quality early childhood education has been widely accepted in Aotearoa/New Zealand because it gives strong foundations for young children's well-being, life-long learning and development (Ministry of Education, 2002; Podmore, 2004).

Aotearoa/New Zealand is a country that strives to provide high quality early childhood education, and its early childhood services have been in existence for over 110 years with improvements over the years (Noonan, 2010). The term ECE in Aotearoa/New Zealand refers to services that provide early childhood education and care such as, kindergartens, play centres, home-based services, education and care centres and Kohanga Reo (centres that provide family based full

immersion Māori language programme for young children from birth to six years of age) . These services provide care and education for young children as it is widely believed that the two are inseparable: "Quality care is educational, and quality education is caring" (Smith, 1996, p.331). This emphasises that early childhood education is a combination of care and education for young children.

However, even though Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood education ranks amongst the best in the world (Noonan, 2010), it is important to note that it is not compulsory. It is up to individual parents, families/whānau and caregivers to enrol their children in early childhood education programmes. It is also imperative to note that participation rates in ECE in Aotearoa/New Zealand are very high when compared to international standards (May, 2000). As of 1 July 2010 about 94.5% of all children enrolled in Year 1 classes had previously participated in ECE. Pākehā had the highest participation rate at 98.1% followed by 96.7% Asian children, and the lowest participation rates were 89.4% Māori and 85.3% Pasifika children (Ministry of Education, 2010). However, it is not clear about the extent of this attendance in terms of hours attended because some children attend for as little as three hours a week, other children attend 20 hours a week, and some children attend up to 50 hours per week or more. Participation rates for Māori and Pacific Island children are still lower than for Pākehā and Asian children. To try and counteract this inequality, the government has allocated $550 million to the early childhood education sector over the next four years in its 2011 budget, most of which is to be used to target Māori, Pasifika and low-income families' children to encourage their participation in ECE services (Tolley, 2011). These changes are currently being contested as most early childhood services feel that they are losing

funding and the quality of service is affected since the government is no longer funding for 100% qualified teachers in ECE (Chapman & Dickison, 2010).

Special education in ECE

Early intervention services are offered by the Ministry of Education Special Education which is comprised of specialists such as early intervention teachers, speech language therapists, psychologists, vision and hearing specialists and special education advisors (Alliston, 2007; Mentis, Quinn & Ryba, 2005). These specialists, led by the Early Intervention teacher (EI teacher), provide early help to children whose needs require extra support. Cullen and Carroll-Lind (2005) argue that 'Early' means that intervention is done as soon as possible after the problem, which could be a delayed developmental delay, risk or disability, is identified. They go further to say that 'intervention' implies that planned strategies are designed to help eliminate or alleviate the barriers. The Ministry of Education (2009) describes the needs requiring intervention as those that cannot be met within the home, family or early childhood service without some extra support. The planned strategies are referred to as the Individual Educational Plan or programme (IEP). An IEP is an individualised educational plan/programme developed during a meeting which involves the child's parents/whānau, ECE teachers, the EI teachers, and other specialists working with a child depending on the child's needs. These parties sit down together and discuss the strengths and developmental needs of the child. They then write an educational plan that should be implemented by all the parties working with the child and this is called the IEP (Alliston; Mentis et al.). The IEP enables all those involved with the child to plan together, work together and use appropriate and equitable strategies and techniques in meeting individual educational needs. Thus, EI services are strongly embedded in ecological theory

which seeks to understand the child and its environment and modifies the environment to maximise learning opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2011). The EI service also recommends developmentally appropriate activities and opportunities to learning in ECE and it seeks to find out any barriers to participation and seeks solutions to remove the barriers (Wylie; 2000).

Assessment in ECE

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, assessment in ECE is often done through narrative assessment which is widely referred to as learning stories (Carr, 2001; Cowie & Carr, 2004). Learning stories are structured narratives that track children's strengths and interests in relation to the curriculum (Cowie & Carr, 2004). Learning stories include a description of the learning that occurred usually linking it to the curriculum, an analysis of the learning and the next step to be taken to extend the child's learning. Learning stories written by teachers and families observing children especially those accompanied by photographs are valuable assessment tools (Cowie & Carr, 2004). Writing learning stories is considered an effective way to document what the child is able to do rather than what the child cannot do and identifies children as competent and capable learners (Cowie & Carr, 2004; Dunn, 2004; University of Canterbury, 2008). Writing about what the child can do affirms for families all the great things that their child can do despite their abilities (credit based assessment), rather than focusing on the things the student has not yet mastered. It also fosters positive attitudes of competence between teachers, students and parents and acknowledges multiple levels of intelligence (Hatherly & Sands, 2002).

Te Whāriki: the New Zealand early childhood curriculum

Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Matauranga mo nga mokopuna o Aotearoa is the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, introduced in 1996 and is based on socio-cultural philosophy (Ministry of Education, 1996a). *Te Whāriki* challenges teachers to implement inclusive policies and to develop and implement inclusive practices in early childhood education. It supports the importance of inclusion and diversity in early childhood, addressing the needs of all learners and offering extra support for those who need it (Ministry of Education, 1996a). "*Te Whāriki* made a political statement about children: their uniqueness, ethnicity and rights in New Zealand society" (May, 2000 p. 246). In this regard *Te Whāriki* stipulates that all children regardless of their ethnicity, gender, age, background or abilities should receive equal opportunities for learning. It further states the need for service providers to make sure that the needs of every child are met.

Te Whāriki has four guiding principles: Empowerment-Whakamana; Holistic Development-Kotahitanga; Family and Community-Whānau Tangata; and Relationships-Ngā Hononga (Ministry of Education, 1996a). This means that children should be empowered to learn and grow holistically by adults who are responsive to children's needs through reciprocal relationships with people, places, the family and the wider community, enabling the child to grow and learn to their potential (Ministry of Education, 1996a). To achieve this, the five strands in *Te Whāriki* which are; Well-being-Mana Atua; Belonging-Mana Whenua; Contribution-Mana Tangata; Communication-Mana Reo and Exploration-Mana Aotuaroa; need to be fostered and encouraged (Carr & May, 2000). If these are successfully encouraged then children's needs should be met.

Te Whāriki states the importance of inclusion through age appropriate and developmentally appropriate activities and the development of an IEP for children with special needs (Ministry of Education, 1996a) *Te Whāriki* is seen by some as a powerful curriculum document but its successful implementation depends largely on the attitude and commitment of the teachers and centre management and to some extent on the provision of adequate funding from the government (Carr & May, 2000). This means that having a quality curriculum document does not necessarily mean having quality education provision, but at least the intention to provide quality early childhood education in New Zealand is documented in the curriculum.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I present findings from the literature which I searched through data bases, libraries and websites. I looked at original research from different journals and edited books. I present what other researchers have to say about inclusive education; finding out what other researchers say about inclusive education and what makes inclusive education happen gave me a focus for my study.

Theoretical discourses

Differing theories/discourses are used to justify the best way to meet the diverse range of children's needs. These discourses emanate from diverse attitudes and understandings that different theorists have about people with diverse needs, for example, Fulcher (1989) pointed out four main discourses that are used to explain special education as medical, charity, lay and rights/social discourse. According to Neilson (2005) these discourses are grounded in theories that emerge from different attitudes towards people with disabilities and they are used to explain different beliefs and practices in special education and inclusive education.

Medical discourse. The medical discourse has been the most dominant one and is based on the expert's focal point that places centre of attention on the medical concern for the body (Cahill, 1991). This discourse views disability as a health problem that needs clinical help (Neilson, 2005). The medical discourse is grounded in deficit theory which blames the victim; the theorists who purport this argument believe that one's problem has to be fixed for one to fit in the society (Cahill, 1991). Deficit theory supports the idea that lower (than 'normal') achievement, behaviour problems or disabilities are due to a problem within the

child rather than considering the role of the environment of the ECE setting, instructional practices, or the methods of teaching. Deficit theory that presents disability as having roots in personal, biological, or cognitive impairments has been dominant, emphasising diagnosis and specialised facilities for students concerned (Mortimore, 2011). Neilson (2005) argues that deficit theory is still dominant today even though there are other emerging, and co-existing theories.

In this discourse a child with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) for example, should be helped by medical practitioners to correct the behaviour through medication. As a result, those who strongly believe in this theory tend to segregate those children and argue that they need to be "treated" to get better (Ballard, 1994). Children with ADHD for example, would need medication, need to be in special institutions and be looked after by specialists. Special education as a segregated area has been prevalent over the past centuries in mainly Western countries including New Zealand. The special education (segregated) approach was widely accepted in the 1960s and 1970s and has continuously been a strong element in today's education system (Lupart, Whitley, Odishaw, & McDonald, 2006; Neilson, 2005). In New Zealand ECE there is little evidence of this practice (MacArthur, Purdue & Ballard, 2003; Purdue, 2004), even though it is more evident in school sector, through special schools (Ballard, 2003).

Charity discourse. Charity discourse views the individual with disabilities as helpless, dependent, inactive and in need of help (Neilson, 2005). Those who support this discourse argue that people with disabilities are in need of humanitarian assistance and they also argue that these people should be thankful for the help they receive. This discourse is closely related to medical discourse. It is grounded in difference theory which questions the assumption of sameness; it

challenges the pretence that certain implications do not make a difference, when in reality they do (Howie, 1999). It asks why certain differences are emphasised, while others are neglected. It is therefore a way of making the previously unseen, seen. Most of all, it highlights the relativity of the meaning of these differences, to one system of signs rather than another (Howie, 1999). In charity discourse, there is segregation of people with disabilities because they are considered helpless and therefore, should be locked away in institutions (Morris, 1991). In charity discourse people with special needs are viewed as different from others and because they are different, they require segregated settings and should be given help whilst in those settings. In other words, people with special needs should not be together with those with 'abilities' and they are not expected to make their own decisions or learn anything. Those who believe in this theory advocate for donations to groups that provide segregated services for people with special needs, for example, the former Crippled Children Society (now CCS Disability Action) and the former NZ society for the Intellectually Handicapped (now IHC New Zealand). These are well-known charity groups but they have now changed their names to replicate a more encouraging image of their patron group (Neilson). Thus they are trying to fit into the present day's thinking and emerging discourse but still want to receive and give charity by providing support groups and advocates for children with special needs (Neilson). For this reason some children with special needs in ECE services might be registered with these institutions such as IHC or Deaf Aotearoa for the purposes of networking and advocacy (Neilson).

Lay discourse. Lay discourse is also influenced by medical discourse and to a larger extent affected by charity discourse and therefore is associated with negative myths and stereotypes about people with special needs (Neilson, 2005).

Lay discourse is also grounded in difference theory and to a larger extent deficit theory (Howie, 1999) but differs from charity discourse in that it does not see these people as needing help, but as worthless. In this discourse it is perceived that life is not worth living for those with disabilities because they are useless and they should be isolated (Morris, 1991). People with these beliefs still exist and they hold a negative attitude towards those with disabilities (Ballard, 1998). This type of thinking contributes to negative labelling associated with children and people with disabilities (Neilson, 2005); this discourse plays a part in those who label people by their disabilities instead of their names. Lay discourse is evident in ECE services that label children as, bullies or identify children by the name of the disorder they have such as Down syndrome, or willingly exclude them (Higgins, 2001; MacArthur, et al. 2003).

Rights discourse. The previously discussed discourses however, seem to have been overtaken by the emergence of a rights discourse which promotes human rights, social justice and inclusion and switches focus from the disability to placing focus on removing barriers which hinder the progress of children with special needs (Mortimore, 2011).A rights discourse is underpinned by critical theory which critically examines society and culture in an effort to liberate people from circumstances that suppress them (Littlejohn, 1992). Critical theory seeks to bring about change in the conditions that affect people's lives. A rights discourse encourages self reliance, self independence and individual human rights (Neilson, 2005). A rights discourse is grounded in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory which emphasise the importance of a child's family in their education, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory which stresses the importance of a child's ecosystem in his or her learning and development (Purdue, 2004). Social,

ecological and critical theories seem to have gained a lot of support over the years. In these theories, for example, a child with ADHD is viewed as a child whose environment needs modification to suit his or her learning and developmental needs. The major argument is that it is not right to exclude anyone and it is socially acceptable for society to accept individual differences. Therefore, everyone has the right to be included. The rights discourse looks at how the normal classroom environment and practices can be altered to meet the individual's needs so that no one's rights are violated. Recently, some educational leaders have advocated for the rights discourse and, argued that deficit theory merely perpetuates segregation and discrimination against students with special learning needs (e.g. Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Higgins, 2001; MacArthur, 2009; MacArthur et al. 2003). They argue that the rights discourse promotes social justice and equity, and seek change for the better.

The social, ecological and critical theories, in which the rights discourse is grounded, brought about the call for inclusion in the education sector. For example, in New Zealand when rights groups started calling for social justice and the rights of the disabled, the New Zealand Government introduced, regulations and policies that support inclusion such as, the *Education Act 1989*, *Special Education 2000* in 1996 and the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* in 2001.

Issues of inclusion

What is inclusion? Inclusion seeks to accommodate every learner and removes obstacles in their learning pathway. Ainscow and Moss (2002, p. 3) argue that, "Inclusion is a process of increasing the presence participation and achievement of all students in their local schools, with particular reference to those groups of students who are at risk of exclusion, marginalisation or

underachievement." In ECE this refers to making sure that all children, whose parents are willing, are encouraged and given the opportunity to participate in their local ECE settings regardless of their differences, including those with special educational needs. Ashman (2009) believes that inclusion is about belonging, having rights and having qualities to fit into a group, while diversity is about difference and variety. This definition links with the Belonging strand in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a), which emphasises the importance of belonging for young children and their families, and urges educators to respond to diverse learning needs (Ministry of Education, 1996a). Well-being is also a strand in *Te Whāriki* and by achieving the goals of these first two strands children and their families should feel that they have a place at the centre and they should actively participate in centre activities. Partnership is also encouraged in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a) and strongly supports the inclusion of all families, communities and young children in their early childhood services and encourages them to have a voice through, contributing and participating in their child's learning, stating, "Observations and records should be part of a two-way communication that strengthens the partnership between the early childhood setting and families" (p. 30). Therefore, in ECE, inclusion of families in a child's education is important.

Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad range of learning needs in formal and informal educational settings (Ballard, 2003; MacArthur, et.al 2003; UNESCO; 2003). Rather than being a marginal theme on how *some* learners can be integrated in the mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to alter education systems in order to respond to the diversity of *all* learners (Mentis, Quinn & Ryba, 2005; UNESCO, 2003). It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with

diversity and to view it as a challenge and enhancement in the learning environment, rather than a problem (UNESCO, 2003). Accommodating diversity is about considering differences as potential sources of strengths rather than barriers and responding positively to these differences (Hanson & Zercher, 2001). Inclusive education seeks to cater for every learner's needs within the regular education setting. For some early childhood services, inclusion refers to the right to belong to the centre, to participate and to feel wanted in the centre (MacArthur, et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004); this is consistent with the strands of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a). Research suggests that inclusion is more concerned with the issues of social justice, equity, humanness and issues of equality (Ainscow & Moss, 2002; Ballard, 2003; MacArthur, Kelly & Higgins, 2005) with fairness and social justice playing a role in including every child in ECE. Centres that are inclusive are seen to practise equity, social justice and making sure every child has a right to quality education and care. In this study, inclusion refers to the belonging, presence and participation of all learners and their families regardless of their age, gender, abilities, ethnicity or background while successfully responding to their individual needs and working together as partners in early childhood programmes as stated in The New Zealand early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996a):

> Te Whāriki is designed to be inclusive and appropriate for all children and anticipates that special needs will be met as children learn together in all kinds of early childhood settings. The programmes of each centre will incorporate strategies to fully include children with special needs. (p.11)

For successful inclusion, all partners that are involved in a child's life should work in partnership, sharing experiences, information and the knowledge that each one has about the child, thus reflecting the ecological model. The meso-systems, or interactions and relationships between the child's home environment and other

microsystems are all important in influencing the child's learning and development. The child needs to be understood within participation in various microsystems, that is, the home, ECE centre or school, peer group, family and or other cultural and community contexts, in order to meet individual needs (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Hence, inclusion is rooted in social and critical theories as it puts emphasis on having rights and giving equal opportunities to all; it is also grounded in the rights discourse (MacArthur et al. 2003; Purdue, 2004).

Exclusive attitudes. Research shows that negative attitudes can be the biggest obstacle for children with special needs (Neilson, 2005) as dominating attitudes determines practice. There are some early childhood settings whose cultures are embedded in the medical discourse and/or charity discourse and whose staff believe that children with special needs require segregated education facilities (MacArthur, Purdue & Ballard, 2003). These beliefs are grounded in deficit theory; they blame the child for their difference/impairment and compare the child with typically developing children. Staff whose beliefs are grounded in deficit theory look at ways to fix the problem through differentiating the child from others; however, segregation is more likely to cause discrimination and social injustice for children and their families. This will happen because when the exclusive practices are displayed those children and their families who are being excluded will feel that they are being discriminated against (MacArthur et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004). MacArthur et al., argue that even though there is legislation that is anti-discriminatory and promotes inclusive education there is some evidence that some early childhood settings discriminate against children with special needs. This could be because the teachers feel that they are not qualified enough to teach children with special needs or they feel that they do not have resources to cater for their

needs. Waldron (1995) points out that this issue is a fundamental argument and justification employed in opposition to the move toward regular classroom placement for all children.

There is evidence that teachers and parents have differing views about inclusion. For example, Wing (2007), argues that children with specific special needs require their own space, and they learn better that way. Similarly, Macartney and Morton (2009) presented a study in New Zealand, as a story of Clare. Clare was enrolled in an early childhood setting at the age of two with special needs. Clare had an EI teacher who would come to the centre occasionally and a teacher aide who worked in the centre on the days she attended the centre. Sadly for Clare, the teachers in the centre took little notice of her as she spent most of her time with the teacher aide. Clare was not allowed to attend the centre without an additional adult and as a result her mother attended the centre with her during the days that the teacher aide was not working. This practice by the teachers and centre management of giving the responsibility of teaching Clare to the Early Intervention teacher, the teacher aide and her caregivers, shows that the centre practices are grounded in deficit theory; they believe that it is not their responsibility to teach Clare. Some specialists have the responsibility to fix Clare's 'deficit' for her to fit into their programme.

Clare's mother felt that Clare had learnt to be around other children but, she was not involved in the centre activities. She just sat there. The rights of children with special needs to participate in their education setting and in the community are considered to be met when children have positive relationships with their teachers and peers (MacArthur, Kelly & Higgins, 2005); this was not evident in Clare's relationships with her peers and teachers. Clare was physically present in this early

childhood centre, but did not really participate in centre activities. It seems Clare's mother believed in social theory and wanted her child to be included. However, the teachers displayed deficit theory traits. The teachers seemed to believe that it was the EI teacher and the teacher aide's job to fix the 'problem' (child). The Early Intervention Teacher also presented herself as the expert, and held the IEP meetings in her office instead of the child's centre which all parties are familiar with. This also meant that teachers would not be able to attend and the one teacher who attended Clare's IEP did it in her lunch break. The concept of an IEP meeting as a context for collaboration, consultation and sharing the child's strengths and interest (Mentis, et al. 2005) was not evident. This study highlighted that some teachers in New Zealand ECE have practices that do not support inclusion.

In ECE settings that do not support inclusion, children with special needs are either taken out of the centre to some specialised early intervention service providers or they are accepted in the centre but the teachers expressed concerns that it was not their responsibility to teach these children (MacArthur et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004). This is because they believed that the child's problem should be fixed first in order to fit into their environment. They argue that it is the responsibility of specialist teachers such as EI teachers, speech-language therapists and psychologists among others, to make sure that the needs of children with special needs are met (Cullen & Carroll-Lind, 2005; MacArthur et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004). If parents do not support inclusion, and have children with special needs, they are more likely to enrol their children in centres which are exclusive, such as specialised facilities for children with autism or for children with developmental delays.

Inclusive attitudes. Conversely, there are some settings in which the staff believe in, and practise, inclusion (Purdue, 2004). These settings are embedded in social theory which emphasise equal rights and equal educational opportunities for those with special needs. In such settings children with disabilities, linguistic or cultural differences are accepted, included and their individual educational needs are catered for (MacArthur et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004). In a study of collaborative relationships among preschool parents in UK settings, a case study is presented where an autistic child was enrolled in a preschool programme and managed well in the mainstream early childhood setting because of the positive attitude of the teachers and parents (Lieber et al. 2002). The parents viewed it as an opportunity for the child to be included.

Centres whose staff view inclusion as a right to belong, participate and feel wanted were seen to exhibit those practices that will make children and their families feel a sense of belonging and encourage participation of all children and their families (Cullen & Carroll-Lind, 2005; MacArthur et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004). Teachers in these settings were also seen to be approachable and welcoming. They strived to meet every child's needs. Generally parents'/families' attitude towards inclusion of children is positive (MacArthur, 2009; MacArthur, et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004; Stoneman, 2001). In a study of parents' attitudes toward inclusion, Stoneman found out that even parents whose children do not have special needs were seen to be positive towards including their children with those with special needs. Most researchers revealed that parents who support inclusion believe that inclusion would teach their children to be sensitive to those with special needs and to accept individual differences (MacArthur, et al., 2003; Stoneman, 2001). These parents' beliefs reflect social theorising in which the rights of the child and equity

are important. It is not the child with the problem; it is the child's environment that needs adjustment to accommodate the child's needs. Parents' attitudes influence their choice of an early childhood centre (MacArthur, et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004; Stoneman, 2001). If parents are positive about inclusion they are therefore more likely to enrol their children in inclusive early childhood services regardless of their age, sex, ethnicity or abilities.

Culture of the setting

It is from the legislative and curriculum documents that centres examine their beliefs and culture and write their policies and philosophies. An inclusive early childhood education system would be more meaningful and valuable if the inclusive position is clearly stated in the policy and curriculum documents (MacArthur, 2009; Mentis, et al., 2005; Purdue, 2004), for example, Purdue found that those centres that are inclusive have their centre philosophies clearly stating the 'right' of every child to be included in the centre and they make it clear that they will be responsible for all children, making sure that their specific needs are met. This means that the centre philosophies and polices should be able to tell a story of what happens there. However it is worth noting that parents' attitude also influence the centre polices and philosophies. Some parents whose children have special needs express their concerns as well as clearly telling teachers and management how they expect their child to be treated (Stoneman, 2001); this in turn may be reflected in the centre philosophy, policies and decision making. As a result, if parents who believe in inclusion dominate the centre the centre philosophy is more likely to reflect inclusive values. Likewise, if parents who believe in the deficit model dominate the centre it is more likely that inclusive statements will not be part of the centre's philosophy statement (MacArthur et al., 2003; Mentis et al., 2005).The

culture of the setting and the attitude of staff determine the policies and practices that will be put in place (Mentis, et al.,).

In a study of the organisational cultures of two play centres in New Zealand, Gibbons (2004) argues that the organisational culture dictates the atmosphere of the setting; the behaviour of the members and their actions modify the culture. If the teachers are negative about inclusion, this will reflect on the organisational culture, and procedures. What happens in the settings will tell the story; these beliefs will be explicit. If staff supports inclusion, it is believed that it will be reflected in the setting's philosophy, values and beliefs, and the setting will have an inclusive culture (MacArthur, 2009; Mentis et al., 2005; Purdue, 2004). This means that philosophy and policies should be evident from documentation, activities and relationships in the setting. Nichols (2010) carried out a study to find out preschool parents' perspectives about inclusion and the support they needed. She found out that when interaction was encouraged, there appeared to be a greater sense of belonging for the parents. This emphasises the importance of the culture of the setting; if it is encouraging then children and their families will feel that they belong and participate.

Gibbons (2004) also argues that the culture of an early childhood setting shapes how everyone involved behaves and the behaviour in turn modifies the culture of the setting, for example, teachers in inclusive settings demonstrate this in their language and actions as they show their respect for diversity and speak in an all inclusive language (MacArthur et al., 2003; Purdue, 2004). In Purdue's study, some settings demonstrated exclusive practices in their organisational culture and some parents revealed how they battled for the inclusion of their children. It was also revealed that some parents had to confront teachers with exclusive practices

and address their concerns. These parents had to fight the exclusive culture of some settings through battling with teachers and/or management to make sure that their children were included. Therefore the attitudes of the participants will influence the culture of a setting.

Professional issues

Working in partnership. Lieber et al. (2002) argue that the key to successful inclusion is adults working as a team. When parents, teachers and all the special education providers work together and provide each other with valuable information about a child, the child can be successfully included. This implies that, the success of inclusion depends on settings' collaborative relationships, and the attitudes of those involved. In my study based on a child with challenging behaviours and finding ways to intervene in inclusive settings, I concluded that when adults work in partnership they can help to minimise barriers to learning and inclusion (Moffat, 2011). Effective collaborative relationships and communities of practice enhance success of inclusion (Dunn, 2008; Mentis et al., 2005). When parents/families, teachers and the specialists such as the speech-language therapists and the EI teachers communicate in a constructive way and share information about the child and how the child can be helped, successful participation for the child and the family is promoted. Through positive collaboration with families, teachers are encouraging the parent voice to be heard. The parent voice is considered an important part of early childhood learning and assessment (Cowie & Carr, 2004). When all the parties involved in a child's life communicate, they have the opportunity to share the child's interest in different settings and get to know the child better. When they work together, all those people who are involved in the child's life and education can eliminate or minimise barriers to participation.

Social, ecological and critical theories will be evident in the day to day practice of teachers, parents, families/whānau and all other parties involved in the child's education and life.

All those involved in the early childhood sector have a critical role to play as their attitude and interpretation of inclusion counts. The way management, teachers, and families interpret inclusion influences the way in which children with special needs are included and their needs met in the centre (Dunn, 2008; Nichols, 2010; Purdue, 2004).

Social and developmental benefits. There seem to be many social and developmental benefits for children with special needs when they are enrolled in inclusive settings. Lamorey and Bricker (1993) found that children with special needs enrolled in mainstream early childhood settings demonstrated higher levels of social play and more appropriate social interactions, and were more likely to introduce interactions with peers than children in segregated special education settings. There is research evidence of social benefit for regular students in inclusive situations, as compared to those in specialised settings, and evidence that inclusion does not lower academic achievement of other students (e.g. Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman & Schattman, 1993; MacArthur, 2009). In a study of classroom ecology in inclusive early childhood settings, Odom, Brown, Schwartz, Zercher and Randall (2002) concluded that children with different characteristics experience the ecology of the same programme differently. The programme supported both children with and without special needs, but, they found out that children with and without special needs responded to the same programme in different ways, highlighting the uniqueness of each child and the reality that we are all different. Teachers need to know the individual differences of their students and

how they respond to different programmes. Teachers also need to respond to every child's needs; knowing the children you teach is an important part of an early childhood teacher's role.

Quality of learning experiences. Some research suggests that the nature of learning experiences provided, rather than the type of classroom setting, is paramount in nurturing children's development. Mahoney, Robinson, and Powell (1992) found that children with special needs were more likely to initiate play, and communications with their peers in settings where the adults responded to their needs and used child-centred techniques rather than classes where teacher-directed activities were used most. This seemed to confirm earlier findings by Yoder, Kaiser and Alpert (1991) who concluded that child-centred teaching techniques resulted in greater gains in communication skills for children with severe special needs than did teacher-centred techniques. In this case, it is the teachers' abilities to respond to diversity in students that make a difference in their education and lives. Inclusive teachers are most effective when they utilise children's interests in their teaching strategies and expand on children's interests (O'Brien, 2001). O'Brien further asserts that inclusive education requires enough teachers to be able to cater for every learner's needs. O'Brien argues that if there are fewer than three adults to monitor children and manage their needs, quality is negatively affected. This emphasises the need for lower adult-child ratios in early childhood services. The need for lower ratios was also confirmed by the Children's Commission (2010) report findings and the ECE Taskforce (2011) report, in which they assert that the care for infants is very important and recommended low ratios and qualified teachers in ECE. As O'Brien also noted, some inclusive early childhood services will employ extra staff so that there are more adults to monitor and manage the

children by providing ratios above the minimum requirement. This will mean quality is improved and there are higher chances of meeting individual educational needs.

Assessment. Mentis et al. (2005) argue that inclusive practices where the teaching/learning, and assessment approaches are modified to suit the needs of all children in the classroom, promote successful inclusion and diversity. Using ecological assessment methods where all parties involved in the child's education share what they know about the child enhances inclusion (Ministry of Education, 2009). Reconciling child-initiated and teacher directed approaches, for example, coming up with methodologies such as activity based intervention in early childhood (Mallory, 1998) could also be helpful. Cullen and Carroll-Lind (2005) also applaud the introduction of narrative assessment based on Carr's (2001) learning stories approach. They argue that if each child is assessed individually, it is encouraging and if used effectively can be an all-inclusive assessment method. Dunn (2004) points out that parents agree that the learning stories approach means the child is being assessed individually. Parents have expressed that it means the teacher is 'seeing' their child. The Ministry of Education (2009) argue that learning stories enables the child to be assessed through different perspectives because they accord everyone involved with the child the opportunity to contribute their stories. However, Dunn notes that some early intervention teachers use criterion referenced development assessment which seem to focus on the improvements needed. These EI teachers are basing their practices in deficit theory where they have to fix the problem for the child to fit in the environment. Dunn notes the need for these groups to work closely together for successful intervention. She also applauds the use of learning stories as they do not focus on a deficit, but rather on what the child can do.

In a study to find out whether learning stories were successful in special education, Williamson, Cullen and Lepper (2006) asked all participants involved in the child's education to participate in writing learning stories to share during IEP meetings. They concluded that this approach empowered all participants and they all felt valued members of the group. Learning stories enable parents, whānau, teachers and specialists to celebrate every child's learning, achievement and interests (Macartney, 2008). She argues that the learning stories approach enables participating parents and teachers to resist deficit theory helping them to see the child as a capable learner. The child's voice, parents' voice and the teacher's voice all have a place and using the learning stories approach, are valued.

Furthermore, Macartney (2008) feels that viewing children as 'disabled' or 'special' contributes to the restrictions and barriers to participation. In other words, children should only be addressed by their names and viewed as capable individuals. Getting everyone involved in learning stories promotes communication, collaboration and inclusion of all children and their families. However, Macartney cites the way EI teachers viewed the child in her study as a barrier, as they seemed to be embedded in deficit theory. They did not use the learning stories approach and they seemed to be problem focused. Their services had to be accepted even though not appreciated because refusal would mean no funding for the child. This revelation suggests the need for Early Intervention teachers to find inclusive approaches to early intervention such as the learning stories approach with possible modifications to suit every child's need for successful inclusion.

Professional development. If inclusive education is to be successful, teacher education programmes and professional development programmes need to promote inclusive education. Teacher education programmes should be designed

to educate the teachers and specialist teachers to be “consistent with the aspiration for social justice and inclusive education” (Purdue, 2004, p. 304). Designing teacher education and professional development programmes to suit current thinking and practice will help teachers to understand the importance of inclusion. The ECE Taskforce (2011) also argues that there should be sufficient initial education and professional development to support those working with children who have special needs.

Not all teachers deeply understand the history of special education and inclusive education; teachers should be committed to ongoing professional development in which they can learn about the historical background of special education and the different theories that are used to explain different beliefs and practices (Ballard, 2003). Ballard believes that this will help teachers to examine their beliefs and ask themselves about their ideas about children and diversity. If teachers have a theoretical background it will help them to be critical, and to see and question unfairness and injustice, seeking justice and equity for all children (MacArthur, et al. 2003; Purdue, 2004). As such, it is important that early childhood teachers participate in relevant ongoing professional development for successful inclusion of all children and their families.

It is evident that the New Zealand Government in its legislation and policies is supportive of inclusion, for example, *SE2000* is grounded in socio-cultural theory which promotes inclusion (MacArthur, 2009). Nonetheless, as evident from the literature, the success of inclusion depends on the culture of the setting, the attitude and beliefs of people involved in the setting and the education of the child. It depends on the gains the families are seeing in inclusion, for example, the child becomes happier or more social. It relies on the quality of learning experiences that

centres are providing for the children. If the culture of the setting is supportive of inclusion, the parties involved in the setting have positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and if the quality of learning experiences being provided meet every child's needs then, inclusion will be a success and parents, families/whānau, teachers and the community will see the benefits of inclusion in these children. This study sought to find out if these sign posts for inclusion are evident in the two cases presented. I investigated how these two centres meet the children's diverse learning needs. In seeking to highlight social, cultural, developmental and/or linguistic barriers that prevent children and their families' full involvement in ECE and to highlight those factors that enhance the participation of all learners, I carried out this study. This study was guided by an overarching question: "How do two early childhood centres with children from birth to five years meet the children's diverse learning needs?"

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I provide an overall picture of the way the research was designed and the way I carried out the research. The paradigm that underpins this study is given and I describe the research design. In the next section, I provide a description of the settings, followed by a description of the participants. In the fourth section of the chapter I give a detailed and critical examination of the data collection methods. The fifth section gives a detailed account of how the data was analysed. Finally, I provide an account of ethical considerations which are particular to the methodology with reference to literature.

Research paradigm

In this study I worked within an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive paradigm assumes that reality as we know it is constructed inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially (Angen, 2000). I am basing my study on the notion that people interpret and construct their realities based on their opinions, feelings and beliefs in their socio-cultural contexts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). There is no separation of subject and object in this study because they are both interlinked. Therefore findings and meanings are created as the research progresses (Angen, 2000). This paradigm helped me to understand the operations of the two settings in this study answering how these two centres meet individual needs of all children.

Research Design

A multiple case study design was used in this study to answer the research question: How do two early childhood centres with children from birth to five years

meet the children's diverse learning needs? Stake (1995) describes a case study as a detailed study of a single case to understand the activities and circumstances within. The case provides an opportunity to study people qualitatively and quantitatively, giving the researcher a chance to know participants at a personal level and to experience what they experience in their daily lives (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In these case studies, I sought to understand how things happen and why they happen the way they do (Anderson, 1998). Using the case study method allows an investigation to maintain "the holistic and meaning characteristics of real life events" (Yin, 2003 p. 3). The case study design helped me to gain a thorough understanding of the events occurring in the centres and beliefs that parents and teachers have about inclusion.

Each case study was an existing phenomenon, and beliefs that parents and teachers have in their centres were studied in their real life context. This method was deliberately chosen to explore contextual experiences in the two ECE settings, Bako and Muti. Each case study was carried out within its confined borders (Bassey, 1999), which were the licensed areas of the two centres. In these cases I wanted to find out the detail and quality of interaction, the opinions, values and beliefs of those involved in the centres in relation to inclusive education. Data from each case was collected and analysed. Differences, similarities and themes that emerge between the two cases were noted.

Settings

I used purposive sampling to select the settings. I selected two settings on the basis of their ERO reports which state that the children's individual needs were being met inclusively. They were also selected on the basis of the few centres within the geographic region that operate under a mixed age group range of birth to

five years. Purposive sampling was used so that there would be confidence that the findings from each study are similar to those found among the rest of the category under investigation (Polit & Hungler, 1999). Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which the sample is selected for a particular purpose. In this study it was the fact that they are both identified by ERO as inclusive and they both operate under a mixed age licence. After I got ethical approval from Massey University I wrote a detailed letter to the management (see Appendix A) of these two settings asking for permission to carry out the study. They both consented to me carrying out the study.

The settings are both in the same region for easier access. Bako (not its real name) is licensed for 25 children with up to five under two year olds attending the centre at any one time. It has a roll of 15% Pākehā 60% Māori and 25% African descent. Muti (not its real name) is licensed for 35 children with up to five under two year olds attending the centre at any given time. It has a roll of 35% Pākehā, 58% Māori and 7% Pasifika. Both centres' operational hours are from 7:30am to 5:30pm.

Participants

Information sheets were sent to all potential participants (see Appendices A, B and C). At Bako education centre, a total of five consent forms for teachers and 17 for children and their parents were returned, and these individuals participated in the study. A total of four parents participated in the focus group interview; seven parents had indicated a willingness to participate in the focus group but for three of them, their preferred time did not match the majority. A total of 15 questionnaires for parents and five for teachers were returned. Those who consented to participate and those parents who were willing to be interviewed at a time that suited the

majority of them participated in the study. At Muti education centre, a total of five teachers including the centre manager participated in the study. A total of 20 consent forms for children and their parents were returned and these were included in the study. 20 parent questionnaires and five teacher questionnaires were returned. Eight parents had indicated a willingness to participate in the focus group. However, for five of them their preferred time did not suit others to form a focus group, therefore they were left out. A total of three parents and four teachers participated in the focus group interviews.

Methods of data collection

I used four different data collecting methods: questionnaires, observations, focus group interviews and documentary evidence. Combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods has an advantage of increasing understanding of early childhood inclusive education (Liberty, 2001). A combination of methods allowed me to design my data to avoid the limitations of each methodology (Liberty, 2001; Spillane et al., 2010). By using this mixed method approach; I got a better understanding of the two centres and their operations. It gave me an opportunity to use methodological triangulation through comparing complementary data, parallel data and symmetrical data (Spillane et al.) to study the two settings. Qualitative methods have their disadvantages such as; missing the larger connections that can be made, confounded issues of reliability, selection bias that may affect quality, and restriction of generalisation (Silverman, 2000). I used different techniques to minimise the disadvantages (Silverman), for example, the use of quantitative methods helped me to minimise these disadvantages. Quantitative methods also have limitations such as, missing the richness of contexts and detail, not giving individual choice and may have errors in measurement (Liberty). To overcome

these, I included sections for respondents to write their additional comments on questionnaires. Despite their potential limitations, both quantitative and qualitative approaches have contributed to our understanding of early childhood education (Smith et al., 2000). Therefore in this study the use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods enriched the study of the two settings.

These data collecting strategies allowed me an opportunity to interact with children, parents, families/whānau and teachers, and to explore their experiences in their ECE centres. I used questionnaires to explore parents', families'/whānau and teachers' feelings and understanding about inclusion in their contexts. I used observations to experience firsthand and understand issues that make up inclusion in each setting. I also used semi-structured focus group interviews to get an in-depth understanding of issues about inclusion in each case study. Document analysis was used to search for documented meaning of inclusion, examples of inclusion in learning stories and to analyse the extent to which the two centres practise what they have documented.

Questionnaires. Questionnaires consist of a list of written questions whose purpose is to discover people's opinions (Denscombe, 2007). Teachers and parents were asked to complete a four point Likert-type scale questionnaire on their feelings about diversity and inclusion in the centre (Appendix D & E). Likert-type scale are basic closed-ended questions which are commonly used when one need to know respondents' feelings (Denscombe). In this case, parents' and teachers' views/feelings about inclusion in the centre were explored. Questionnaires are relatively economical and can ensure anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001), and have the ability to cover a larger sample than interviews (Mason & Bramble, 1997).

The questionnaires were given to all teachers and parents in two centres to allow for surveying a larger population. I sent out 50 parent questionnaires and 11 teacher questionnaires for the two case studies. In Bako case study I gave out 20 questionnaires for parents and five for teachers to the centre manager to distribute. In Muti case study I gave out 30 parent questionnaires and six teacher questionnaires to the centre manager to distribute. The parents and teachers returned the completed questionnaires to the centre managers and I collected them from the centre managers. However, there was a separate page on the questionnaire on which participants who wished to participate in the focus group could write their names and how they could be contacted. This detached page was sent back to me in an enclosed prepaid envelope. More than 50% of the questionnaires were returned for both parents and for teachers. In this study, all potential participants got questionnaires and I endeavoured to keep the information anonymous by making sure that there were no names in the questionnaire that may link the data to the person.

Focus groups. Focus group interviews are a method of collecting data, in a safe atmosphere, from more than one participant at a time, on the subject of a specified area of examination (Krueger & Casey, 2000; McLachlan, 2005). Data from questionnaires formed the basis of the focus group. The interviewees were selected on the basis of those who, when replying to the questionnaires, indicated they were willing to be interviewed and posted the detached contact details sheet back to me. Thus the focus group questions (see Appendix H) were mainly based on the responses from questionnaires so that some results could be discussed and issues clarified. The data was gathered quicker and at a lower financial cost to the researcher than individual interviews because; participants were interviewed in a

group setting (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2010). In the focus groups data was collected through group interaction, combining the strengths of observing the speakers and interviewing (Flick, 2002). I used the focus groups to explore topics of interest and to stimulate talk from different perspectives within each group (Madrid, 2003). Interesting points that emerged during the focus group were discussed in detail with some leading questions provided by the researcher. Focus group interviews were a follow up to the questionnaires.

There were two focus groups in each case study; one for the teachers and one for the parents. For the teacher focus groups I expected to have between two and five participants. In Bako case study, I had five teacher participants and for Muti case study I had four teacher participants. For the parents, I expected to have a focus group of between five and ten participants. If more than 10 participants had volunteered for the parent focus group and if more than five participants had volunteered for the teacher focus group phase, I was going to randomly select participants. However, this scenario was eliminated because in Bako case study only seven parents indicated an interest in the focus group. It was difficult to find focus group interview time that suited everyone. There were four parents who were comfortable with the same time in Bako case study and they became the participants. The other three were informed that their preferred times did not suit the larger group and therefore were left out. In Muti case study, eight parents expressed interest in the focus group, and of these eight only three were able to agree on a time, and these were participants in a focus group.

Each focus group was interviewed after analysing the questionnaires to explore their attitudes, perceptions, feelings and ideas about specific topics. I audio taped the conversations during interviews. Audio taping data rather than taking

notes personally is advantageous because all data will be recorded, but writing has the benefit of thought-provoking (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) therefore I personally transcribe the data to provoke thought. Audio taping helped me to facilitate dialogue and to go through the questions within a short time. I sought consent from the participants to record the focus group interviews. I wrote field notes afterwards which helped me in relating to the audio tapes through reflection. Each focus group was scheduled for thirty minutes. These were carried out in a chosen room by participants within settings that were familiar to them (McLachlan, 2005). For case study A, it was the staff room and for case study B, it was one of the play rooms. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the participants on the evening of the focus group (Appendix G). This was to ensure confidentiality for all participants. I transcribed data from audio tapes to provide written data for coding.

Documents. Documents were examined and analysed. Documents are a source of information to complement the questionnaires and interviews and they can have factual information if the source is valid and/or reliable (Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2010). I examined documents which already exist and are part of each centre in the case studies such as, *Te Whāriki* the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, *Early Childhood Regulation* 2008, the centre philosophy, policies and procedures, programme planning, Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and learning stories. These provided me with some information on the way things are done in each centre and the philosophy that underpins their practice. However, some of these documents are written within a specific socio-cultural context and therefore analysis can be problematic (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), for example, what they mean in their context in those documents might be different from my interpretation. I had to consider carefully how I interpreted the documents and I tried to relate them to

their contextual meaning because documents can provide a wealthy deposit of investigative topics (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Written consent (see Appendix J) was sought from parents and the centre manager to examine and to analyse the IEPs, learning stories, philosophy statements, policies and procedures.

Observations. Observations are a method of collecting living data from existing phenomenon through direct watching (Edwards, 2001). This method was chosen because it draws on the first hand evidence that one can see to provide data as things happen (Denscombe, 2007; Kervin, Vaile, Herrington & Okely, 2006). In addition, Cohen et al. (2000) argue that observations are less biased than questionnaires and surveys because they provide first hand data. Observations have the ability to lead researchers to focus in certain areas (Oguz-Unver & Yurumezoglu, 2009). On the other hand, observations are necessarily filtered through the lens of the observer and that is why other complementary methods are used to minimise the disadvantages. I was in each of the centres for a period of five days between 7:30am and 5:30pm Monday to Friday to observe events in the natural setting that relate to inclusion in early childhood education. The time was chosen to provide me with an opportunity to observe the routines, observe the pattern of interactions, and to observe relationships and children's learning, and how their needs were being met in the settings. This provided me with data to support and complement the data from questionnaires, focus group interviews and documents to see if there are any similarities or differences. It also provided me with opportunity to see if the centres 'walk the talk'. I related their practice to their documentation and their interviews to see if they do what they say they do. It aimed to give me an insight into the actual practice, as opposed to the documented practice. This allowed me to use triangulation in data analysis; I compared the data

from different methods and verified some findings. In this study, children with diverse needs and their families were observed in their play and interaction with other children and teachers in the centre. Details and specifics of events were recorded. An anecdotal record was kept. Taking notes personally helped me as researcher to record all significant events as they happen (Cotton, Stroke & Cotton, 2010; Kervin et al., 2006). This helped me to record the interactions and children's activities as they occurred.

Liberty (2001) points out that there is the risk of the researcher becoming involved in the events that s/he is researching. Toward the end of my study there were occasions when children wanted to involve me in their play. To overcome this I had to be innovative and distract the children from playing with me, avoiding being involved and only observe events as they unfolded.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was sought from the centre owners, centre managers, teachers, and parents. This was sought through information sheets/letters (Appendix A, B and C), which outlined the extent of participation, the purpose of the study and the procedures of the study. Participants were informed that participation was not compulsory, but voluntary and by written consent. The issue of free informed consent is particularly important (Cohen et al., 2000; Denscombe, 2007; Robinson & Lai 2006) and this has earlier been stressed by Winter (1996) who states that permission must be sought before making observations or examining written material produced for other purposes. The information sheets were detailed and in these, participants were informed of their rights, how the study was going to be carried out and were invited to provide written consent if they were prepared for their child to be observed. In any research it is important that participants know their

rights (Cohen et al., 2000; Winter, 1996). Parents were also asked to provide consent for me to view and analyse their child/children's learning stories and to observe them (Appendix J). The managers were given the task to identify children whose parents did not give consent so that I would not include them in the study.

The issue of *confidentiality* was also addressed as it is paramount in research (Cohen et al., 2000; Robinson & Lai, 2006). Both case studies were given pseudonyms so that it was unlikely that anyone could link the results to the actual settings. No participants were addressed by their actual names in this study, to ensure confidentiality is maintained. For the focus group interviews, all participants were informed that everything discussed during the focus group should remain confidential. Participants signed a confidentiality agreement prior to commencing the interview. I also made sure that the questionnaire results were anonymous; there were no names on the questionnaire and anything identifiable was deleted before final reporting to ensure.

Cultural sensitivity was also taken into account (Cohen et al., 2000) and a Māori cultural advisor was sought to provide guidance on bicultural issues that could arise during the research.

I gained *approval* through an application to Massey University's Human and Ethics committee (MUHEC) Southern B Application 11/44, which outlined all the ethical considerations and procedures to be followed in the study. There was no reward or payment for participating in the study. However, as a gesture of appreciation, each participating centre was given a thank you book.

Data analysis

Data analysis is the stage that enabled me to make an original contribution to the field of inclusive education in early childhood. Data analysis is about bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of time consuming, creative and fascinating process of interpreting data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Data from questionnaires was collated into visual graphs for summarising, organising and displaying a set of numerical data (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). The average scores and range for the two centres were statistically compared.

Data from interviews and from additional comments in the questionnaires were coded into themes for analysis. These were determined through both inductive and deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning draws conclusions based on generalisations, while inductive reasoning takes events and makes generalisations (Silverman, 2000). Data from observations and document analysis were classified under propositions. Propositions are meaningful declarative statements developed from research findings and have been extensively used in summarising research in education (Jordan, 2003). I derived the propositions from a combination of the literature review and the data. These helped me in identifying themes. Content analysis where ideas and words are identified with their frequency occurrences was used to analyse focus group data (McLachlan, 2005). According to Strauss and Corbin (1997), developing an open coding which is as extensive and wide as possible is the most important moment when analysing data. For qualitative data I analysed with the use of manual sorting methods. Manually sorting and coding this data helped me to know my data well. I used constant comparative method in which I perceived what I was looking for and my first impressions, I compared and contrasted my findings, arranged them in order and I determined

categories and relationships in the data Mutch (2005). I then coded the data into categories and/or subcategories which emerged from the findings, after this the data was analysed. I drew some conclusions and made some recommendations.

After collecting all my data and analysing it, I then set about telling the stories of inclusion at Bako and Muti early education centres. These stories are told in Chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis. These case studies generated some understanding about what can be done to make sure that children's individual needs are met.

Chapter Four: Bako questionnaire and focus group results

Introduction

In this chapter I report the results of the Bako case study. I report my analysis of the views that were presented in the questionnaires, the interviews and additional comments on questionnaires. I present data from questionnaires in graphs and discuss the findings. Data from interviews and additional comments on the questionnaires is organised into themes for analysis. In some cases these are further divided into sub themes. However, observations and document analysis data from Bako case study will be presented in chapter 6.The data collection at Bako early education centre started during the second week of August and finished at the beginning of September 2011. A total of five teachers including the centre manager participated in the study. A total of 17 consent forms for children and their parents were returned and these were included in the study. A total of four parents participated in the focus group interview. 15 parent questionnaires and five teacher questionnaires were returned.

The setting

Bako education centre is situated within a suburb of a provincial city. It is near the shopping centre and within Bako secondary school grounds. It has five qualified and fully registered teachers including the centre manager. It has a large outside and inside area. There is a sandpit, some swings, slides, and a play house outside. There are approximately 20 families with 25 children attending the centre at a time. The families are from diverse backgrounds and cultures. There is one child with Down syndrome and others with a variety of special needs, for example, challenging behaviours, vision, hearing, feeding times and they come from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Questionnaire results

Parents' and teachers' opinions about the centre. The results (see Figures 1 and 2) show that parents have positive views about Bako education centre. All teachers reported that it was *very accurate* that the needs of the children were being met, and 93% of the parents agreed with this. Teachers and parents all agreed that the teachers at Bako are *very approachable*. Parents believe that teachers keep them informed whilst teachers also believe that parents give them valuable information about their children. Teachers and parents reported that parents were given opportunities to participate in the centre even though it was not necessarily *very accurate* to some. All parents indicated that it was *very accurate* that they get all the help they need while teachers indicated that it was *accurate* but not necessarily *very accurate* for some that they give parents all the help they need. Both teachers and parents harmoniously agreed that the centre has an open door policy. It seemed both teachers and parents were positive about their centre. The results serves to highlight that having an open door policy and approachable teachers who keep parents informed and likewise parents who keep teachers informed enhance inclusive practices.

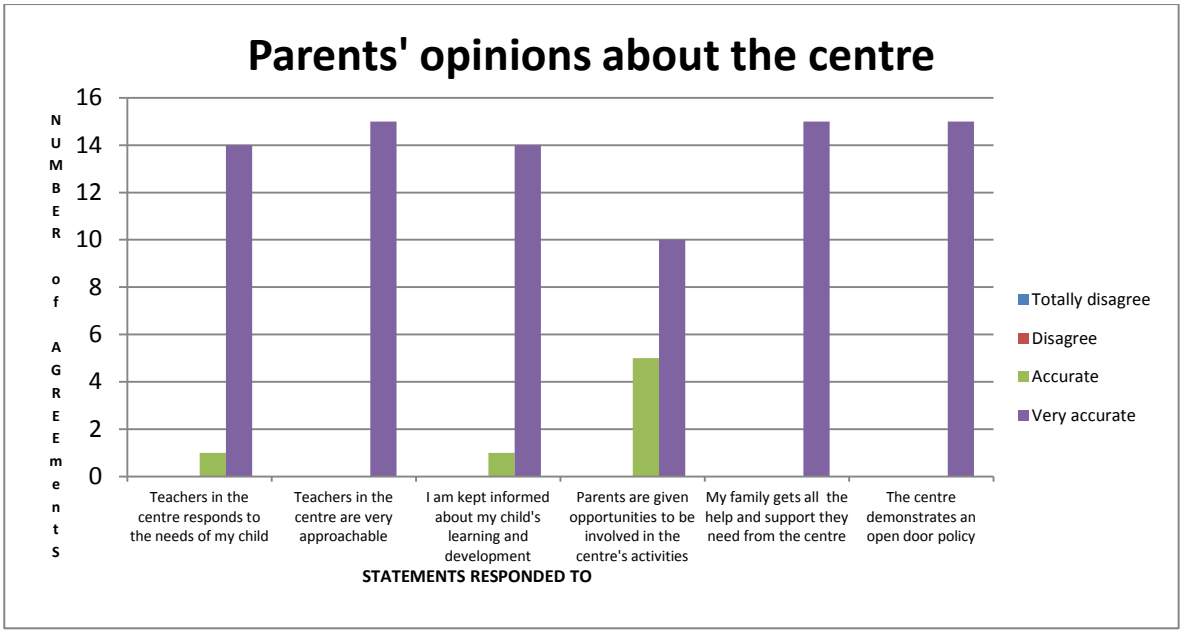

Figure 1 Parents' opinions about the centre

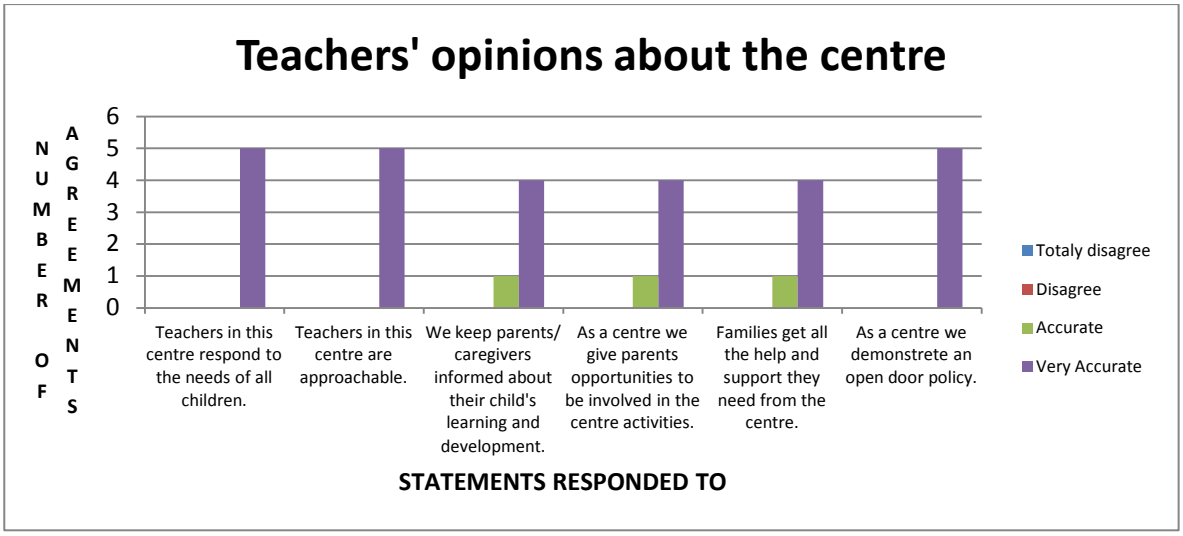

Figure 2 Teachers' opinions about the centre

Parents' and teachers' opinions about values. Parents' and teachers' opinions about values show that parents and teachers at Bako education centre value feedback about the child's day (see Figures 3 and 4). While it was *very important* for all parents that they get feedback about their child's day, it was *important* for teachers but not necessarily *very important* to give parents feedback

about a child's day. Parents and teachers both reported that it was *important* but not essentially *very important* to be informed about the child's night or weekend. Although all teachers indicated that it was *very important* for parents to have a look at their children's progress, it was *important* but not necessarily *very important* for some parents. There was consensus between teachers and parents on the importance of discussing any concerns that may arise about a child. 93.3% of the parents valued the knowledge that teachers have about their child as *very important* while it is important for 6.7%. In contrast, 60% of the teachers value as *very important* while 40% value as *important* the knowledge that parents have about their children. The level of agreement on the importance of teacher-parent meetings was similar for both teachers and parents. There was a shared understanding on the importance of parents' contribution to their children's portfolios. The results seem to indicate that both teachers and parents values similar aspects in their centre hence, this enable them to work together to make inclusion happen in their centre.

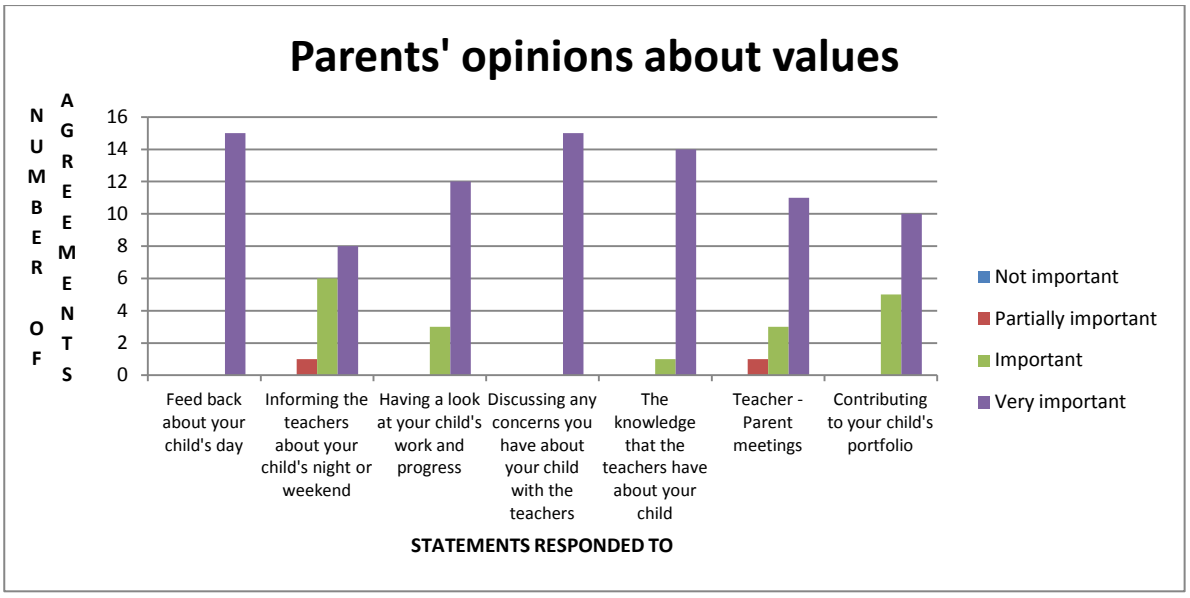

Figure 3 Parents' opinions about values

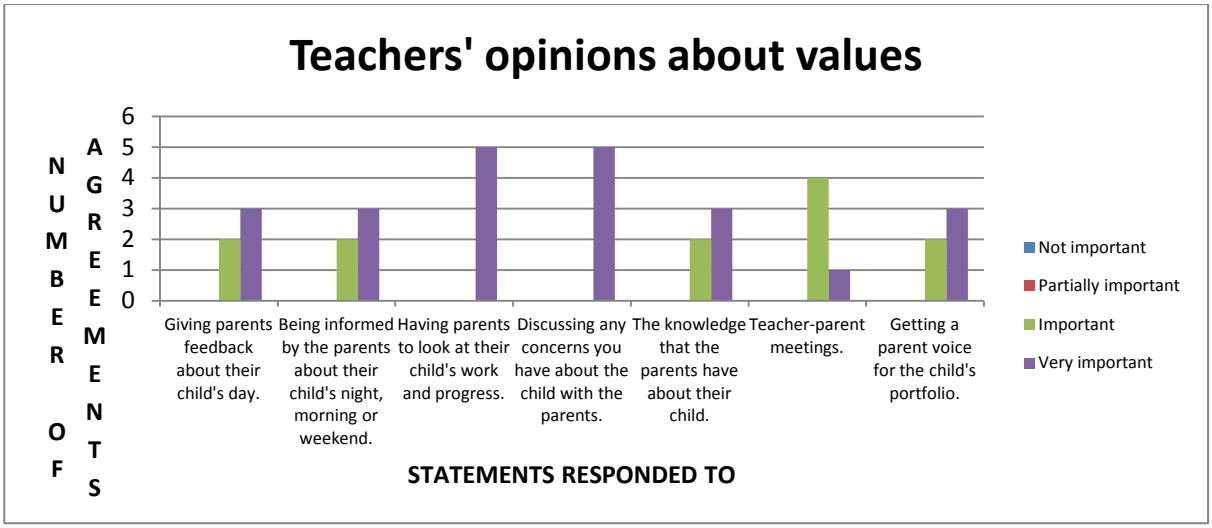

Figure 4 Teachers' opinions about values

Frequency of parents' and teachers' communication. From the results (see Figures 5 and 6), it is evident that most parents and teachers believe they *always* communicate with the each other on matters concerning their child/children. 100% of teachers signified that they *always* communicate to parents about their children's positive performance, while parents signified that they communicate with teachers about their children's positive performance though not necessarily *always*. There seemed to be an agreement on the importance of communication if a child does something out of character for both teachers and parents. While all teachers reported that they *always* communicated with parents about positive behaviour parents *often* communicated even if not necessarily *always*. There appeared to be a shared understanding on the need to communicate about challenging behaviour between teachers and parents. Both teachers and parents revealed that they frequently communicate about a child's day even if it may not be necessarily *always*. Teachers and parents reported having good communication frequency with each other most of the time even though; it did not have to be *always*. 67% of the parents indicated that they *always* contact teachers if they have any concerns while

33% *often* do. However, 20% of the teachers indicated that they *always* contact parents if they have any concerns while 80% indicated that they *often* do. Parents seem to be more comfortable with their teachers than teachers are comfortable with the parents. Though the results are positive about communication frequency, the dynamics of the communication and the values differ in some ways. The results showcase that both teachers and parents at Bako value communicating with each other for the children's needs to be met.

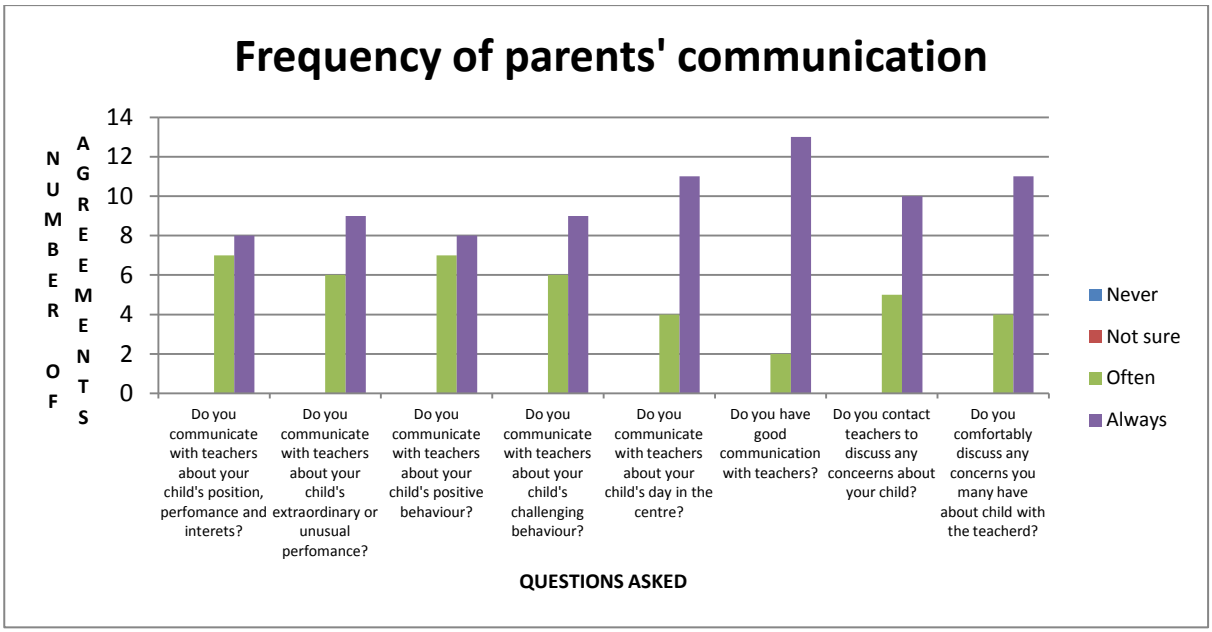

Figure 5 Frequency of parents' communication

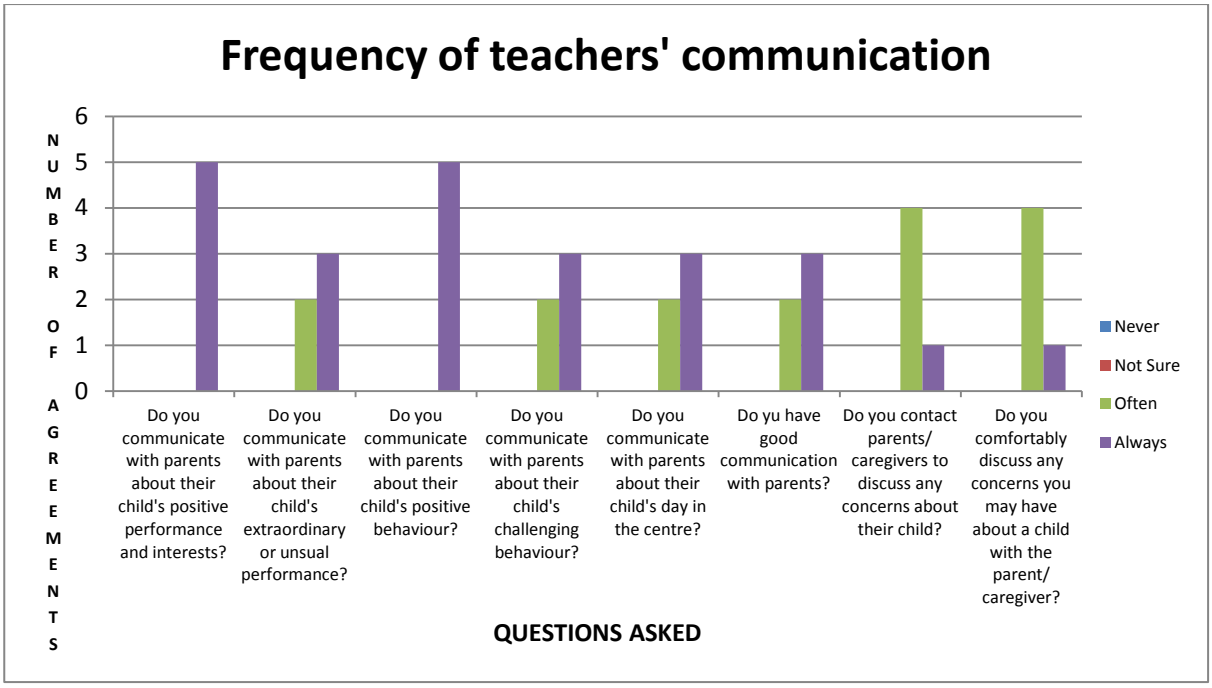

Figure 6 Frequency of teachers' communication

Parents' and teachers' feelings about inclusion. In most cases parents and teachers had similar views about inclusion even though a few differed in opinion (see Figures 7 and 8). While 67% of parents were *very comfortable*, 26.7% were *comfortable* with children with diverse needs socialising with others and only 6.3% were not sure. This was in comparison to 100% of the teachers who were all *very comfortable* with the socialisation of children with diverse needs. Most parents indicated that they were *comfortable* but not necessarily *very comfortable* with mixed age group setting whilst a small percentage was not sure. Similarly all teachers were comfortable but not necessarily *very comfortable* with mixed age group settings. Though all teachers were *very comfortable* with the way all children are treated in the centre, most parents felt the same whereas a few were not necessarily *very comfortable*. All teachers indicated that they were *very comfortable* working with children with special needs, parents were *comfortable* even though not essentially *very comfortable* that teachers can work with children with special

needs. While all teachers indicated that they were *very comfortable* working with children from diverse backgrounds, most parents agreed but, a few were just *comfortable*. There seemed to be a shared understanding of inclusion even though the percentage of comfort differed in some cases. The results revealed that all teachers at Bako and most of the parents had positive attitude about including everyone in their ECE setting. The attitude plays an important part in building inclusive environments.

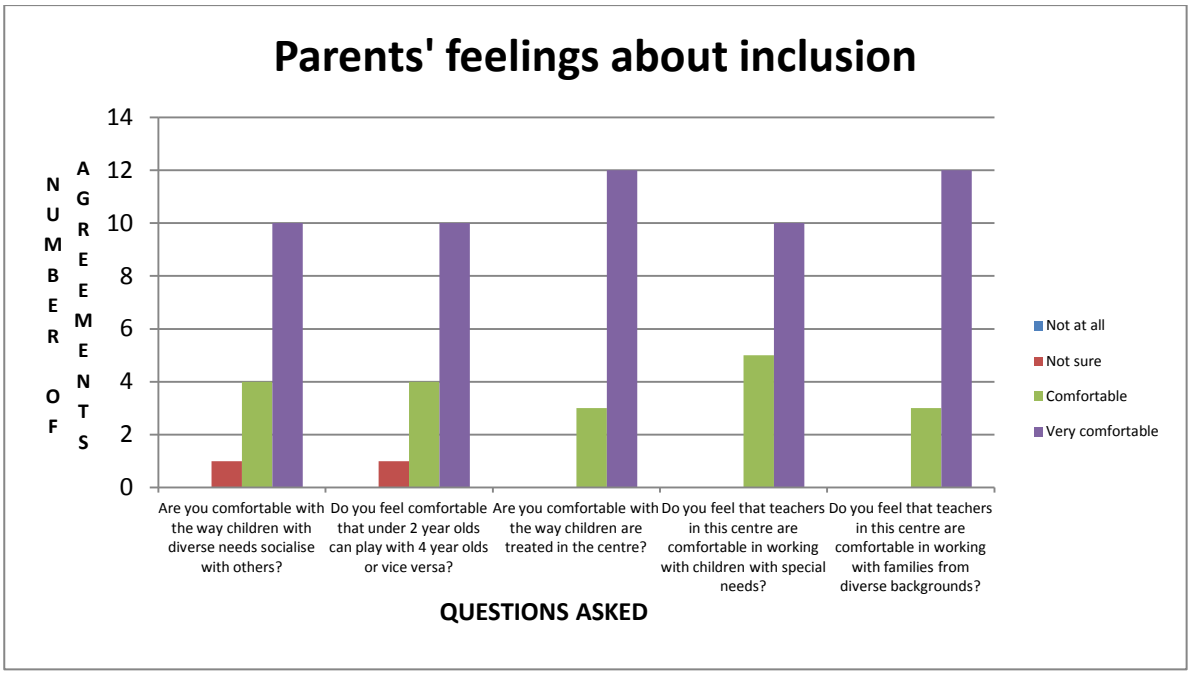

Figure 7 Parents' feelings about inclusion

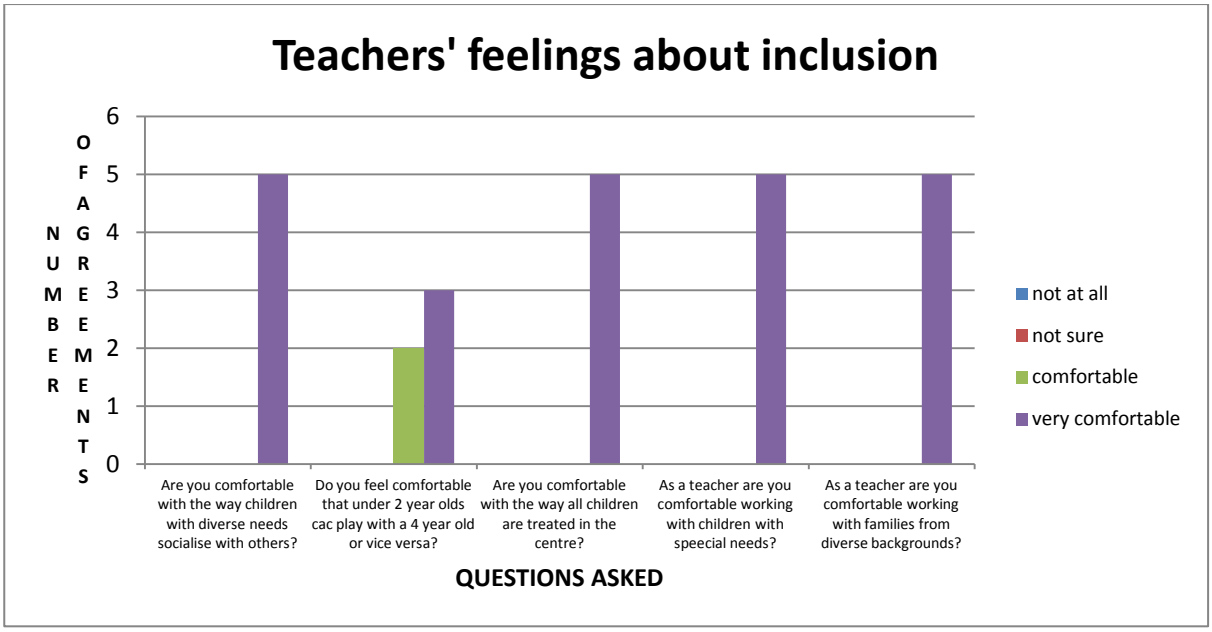

Figure 8 Teachers' feelings about inclusion

Parents' and teachers' opinions about help for teachers. The results show varied opinions from both teachers and parents (see Figures 9 and 10). Most parents and teachers agreed that teachers were *very adequately* equipped to work with children with diverse needs; some thought it was just *adequate*, while a small percentage of parents felt that teachers were *inadequately* equipped. While most parents thought that the help for children with special needs was *adequate* but not necessarily *very adequate* for some, 60% of the teachers believed that the help given to teachers was *adequate* and the other 40% thought it was *inadequate.* Thus, parents seem to think that teachers get more help compared to what teachers think. Though more than 50% for both parents and teachers believed that help for challenging behaviour was *adequate* but not necessarily *very adequate* a small percentage of parents and 40% of teachers thought the help was *inadequate.* It seemed parents and most teachers agreed that help from diverse families was *adequate* though not essentially *very adequate* but a few teachers disagreed and thought it was inadequate. Whilst parents reported the community support as

adequate to *very adequate*, most teachers reported the same but a 20% reported the community support as *inadequate*. This seems to suggest that teachers expected more help than what they were getting. Generally teachers and the parents supported each other but there was a demand for more help from the Ministry of Education and the community to enhance their inclusive values.

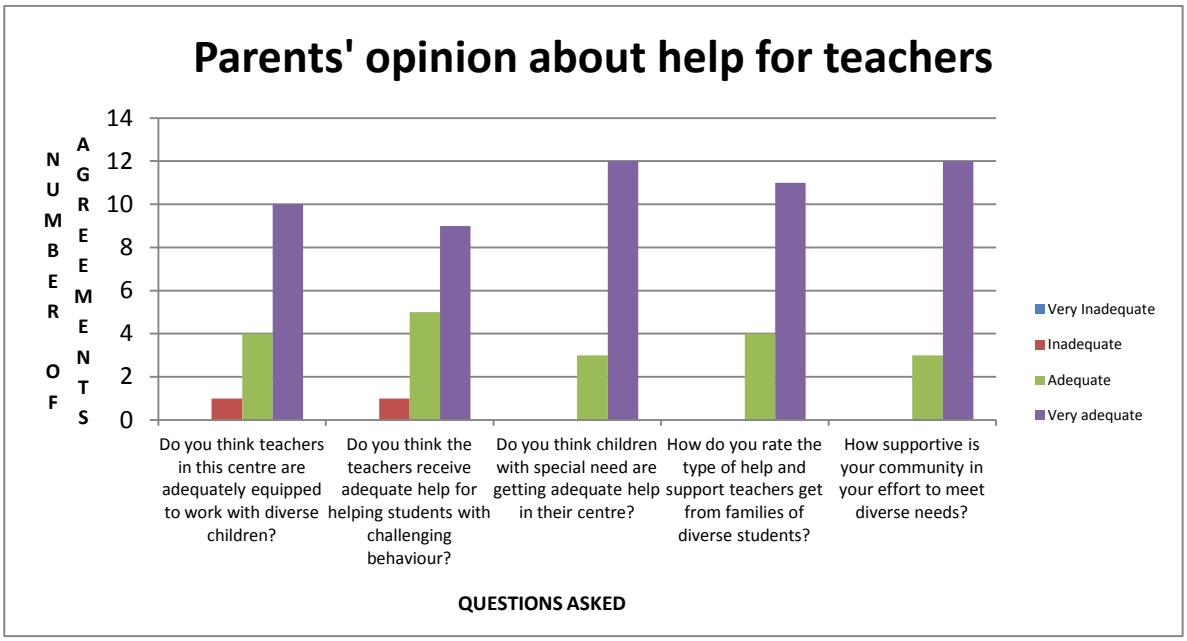

Figure 9 Parents' opinion about help for teachers

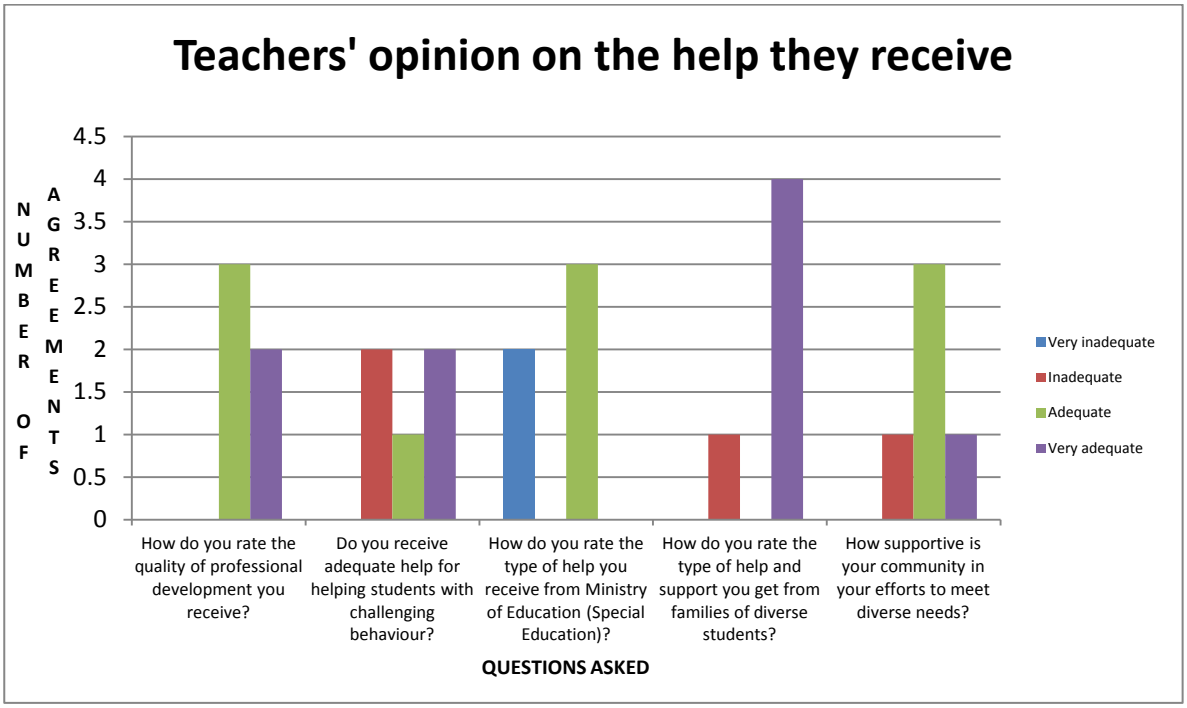

Figure 10 Teachers' opinion on the help they receive

Focus group interviews and additional comments from questionnaires

In this section I present results from the focus group interviews and additional comments from the questionnaires. I transcribed the interviews and notes that I took and then used a highlighter to mark any ideas or key words that seemed to answer my research question. I used the constant comparative analysis (Mutch, 2005) to search for common ideas of interest emerging from the data and then looked for common ideas that formulated the themes which I related back to my literature review. In some cases the data was further categorised into sub themes.

Perspectives on inclusion and belonging at Bako. At Bako education centre, participants held a similar meaning of inclusion to each other. The following comments by some of the teachers reveal what the teachers see as inclusion:

> I see inclusion as, free of race, creed or religion, no matter what background they come from, their religion, their race or their circumstances.

Another teacher added that:

> We have different age groups, so we are inclusive of a wider range.

They also added that New Zealand is a multicultural society and therefore there is a need to include all cultures and also including children with special needs. The parents shared the same views but, one parent went further to suggest that inclusion means:

> Being able to be part of, to be able to participate in and to be able to have a voice.

One teacher put it this way:

> I love diverse backgrounds; there is so much to learn from children and families with special needs, there is so much to learn from families who

> come in from overseas, and the diverse backgrounds. We are a multicultural society.

Teachers and parents expressed that they experience inclusion in the centre everyday and they are satisfied with the way it is. The teachers expressed that they do not differentiate children; there are diverse cultures, diverse abilities and different age groups in the centre. The age groups range from birth to four years old and the cultures include African, European, Pākehā and Māori. One teacher said:

> Every day we treat all the children as children, we do acknowledge their background and their abilities and everything else but, at the end of the day they are children who are welcomed into the centre and treated with respect.

The teachers went on to give an example of a family who does not want their child to go to the marae and they respect that position. Teachers expressed a view that inclusion is their responsibility and therefore they should make all the necessary effort to make sure that all children and their families/whānau are included. Parents expressed that they are actually asked and encouraged to be part of the centre and to participate. One parent expressed that she has seen herself:

> Being able to offer correction to pronunciation of Maori words, being able to offer interpretation and given an opportunity to provide feedback.

Teachers and parents at Bako education centre perceived themselves as having a sense of belonging in the centre. One parent suggested that Bako is like a second home to her and her child:

> They become part of my relationship.

Another parent expressed her sense of belonging:

> Put it this way, I came in, put the jug on and made a cup of tea. I came in one day and I said, I need lollies, I need sugar, and they had lollies and they gave them to me ... If they have special things on, parents are invited to participate.

The teachers expressed their sense of belonging in different ways which suggested a mutual understanding with the parents. One teacher wrote:

> We are a very small centre and as such we know our families very well. Families know they can come to us with concerns etc. We work hard as a team to develop a positive relationship with the families/whānau.

The teachers all agreed that they welcome all their families and give them a sense of belonging. They talked about how some parents come and help themselves in the cupboard, in the kitchen, in the bathroom and in their library. The centre manager concluded that:

> Our philosophy is to work in partnership with parents to develop a sense of belonging.

Partnership at Bako. Teachers and parents both expressed their belief in the importance of communication and collaboration. These were some of their comments from teachers about their value of communication and collaboration:

> We are excited by children's learning and developments and we are keen to share these with parents verbally and via their folders. When a child's behaviour is challenging or a concern we work with parents to address it. Even when busy, we try to make time to talk to parents.
>
> To me it's very important that parents get positive feedback and also it is important to give parents honest feedback particularly if their children have had a difficult day. We try here to give positive feedback then the challenging feedback and finish with another positive, so parents aren't feeling that their child is always challenging.
>
> It's a day by day thing, when the parents come in with their children, we ask how they are and how their nights were or have you had a good day, how is your family and they know they can trust us with information.

These quotes reveal how teachers feel about the importance of communicating with parents at Bako. Like teachers, parents expressed that communication with their child's teachers was important for the child's learning and development. One parent

expressed her satisfaction with the teachers' contributions and support through communication by saying:

> I had toilet training issues with my baby. It's not easy, I was getting really annoyed at home, but these ladies have been just so understanding and so helpful ... We wouldn't have been able to do it without the support ... It has been a conversation that happened between us and them.

Another parent felt that if there was no communication and collaboration between teachers and parents then she would not leave her child in the centre. This is what she had to say:

> If there wasn't collaboration between teachers and I, I wouldn't feel comfortable leaving my child here. This centre is very much a family centre. It's a kindy that takes care of the needs of the child but they also know every one of my family.

Parents and teachers at Bako education centre both expressed their views about work in partnership for the successful inclusion of all children. Teachers revealed that they even go an extra mile to make this work and this is some of what they had to say:

> In regards to the parents too, it's not just what you see there ... those parents, a lot of them some can't speak English; some don't do it very well. And even the ones who do, like we have had to have the WINZ [Work and Income New Zealand] people come down and I have had to support them with their WINZ application. We have to write out their forms, we have to tell them what to say ... And the migrant centre too and we have the dental hygiene people come and look through all the teeth and vision and hearing too.
>
> We have had to support people through domestic violence.

> Someone in the team will give some positive comment about a child's day when children are picked up.

Some participants gave examples of children who exhibit behaviour problems and argued that communicating about what is happening in the child's life would help. For example:

> We would like to know, what is happening at home. If a child is behaving in a certain way because things have changed we would like to know.

Another one said:

> I have had a parent who was having problems with her daughter, we discuss through different strategies they can use at home that we use here.

One teacher expressed that they work with the families in efforts to minimise barriers to participation by saying:

> When a child's behaviour is challenging or a concern we work with parents to address it. Even when busy, we try to make time to talk to parents.

The teachers feel that by doing this, they are working in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the child. Parents also expressed their views concerning working in partnership and they were quite similar to teachers' views. This is some of what they had to say:

> I don't feel like I am the parent and they are the teachers and we are worlds apart ... We are just one big family.
>
> Christmas time we have had hangi ... or we had meals and stuff here. The parents just come in and do it all. The teachers don't have to worry because they know that there are parents who will take care of what needs to be taken care of and they will take care of the kids.

I also asked if there are certain measures they put in place to help diverse children including those with challenging behaviour. The response was that they do participate in a lot of professional development to enhance their practice. With regards to professional development for managing challenging behaviour the manager had this to say:

> All our teachers are going to do The Incredible Years programme as part of their professional development next year. We are all going to do it.

This views show a commitment to ongoing professional development which is relevant to inclusive education.

Parents' contribution to learning stories. Some parents talked about what they do to contribute to the child/children's portfolio, for example:

> I just have to make time to contribute to my baby's portfolio. We value the contributions made by her teachers in our babies learning stories. We show these to her grandparents every weekend on Skype.
>
> One day when we were walking, he started talking about the skeleton, bones ... and he is talking about this connects to that and I help him out when he can't remember the name. We share these stories with his teachers but I don't write them down because, I am really busy.
>
> I help Clara when she is at home and I share the experiences with her teachers.

The teachers also had their say about parents/families contribution to their children's learning, for example:

> Folders are easily accessible for parents to access and take home. Many parents look into it on a regular basis. We would like more input into folders by the parents.
>
> Here at our centre it can be difficult to get a parent voice out of some of parents as writing English and/or speak English is a second language to them.
>
> Usually when I talk to parents and they tell me about their child's learning, I write it down and put in the portfolio. Monthly we send the portfolios home with a note to encourage parents to contribute.

Summary

The combination of using questionnaires, focus group in studying Bako education centre revealed the teachers' and parents' feelings about issues of inclusion. The results highlighted the similar opinions and views teachers and parents held about issues of inclusion in their setting. It revealed that positive attitudes help in unlocking doors to successful inclusion (Neilson, 2005). The results seem to show that the rights discourse and to some extend the charity discourse are dominant in the views of teachers and parents at Bako. In this case the positive attitude of parents and teachers helped in building a strong foundation for an

inclusive setting. These results also helped me throughout my observations and document analysis as I was able to relate their opinions to their actual practice.

Chapter Five: Muti questionnaire and focus group results

Introduction

In this chapter the results of Muti questionnaires and focus group are reported. I present data from questionnaires in graphical representation. I present data from interviews and additional comments from questionnaires into themes for analysis. Observations and document analysis data for Muti case study will be provided in chapter six together with observations and document analysis for Bako case study providing a link between the two cases. The data collection at Muti early education centre started during the second week of August and finished mid September 2011. A total of five teachers including the centre manager participated in the study. A total of 20 consent forms for children and their parents were returned and these were included in the study. 20 parent questionnaires and five teacher questionnaires were returned. A total of four parents and four teachers participated in the focus group interviews. Muti has children and families from Pākehā, Māori and Pasifika descent. Of these three identified groups there were children who even though identified as Māori have a parent with other European or Asian background. These children and their families have various individual needs such as hearing impairment, vision impairment, behaviour needs, sleep routines and eating routines.

The setting

Muti education centre is situated in a rural (farming) area, close to a large provincial city. Muti has a huge play area with a lot of natural resources such as trees, sheep, cats and fruits that the children can have access to with adult supervision. There is a sandpit, some swings, slides, monkey bars, obstacle courses and a play house outside. There are four qualified and registered teachers including the centre manager, plus one teacher in her third year of training and two who are not trained.

It has a sizeable inside area. There are approximately 30 families with 35 children attending the centre at a time. There are five under two year olds on the roll Monday to Friday and 30 over two years old. The families are from diverse backgrounds and cultures namely Pākehā, Māori, Pasifika Islanders and others with mixed European or Asian background.

Results from questionnaires

Parents' and teachers' opinions about Muti education centre. From the results (see Figures 11 and 12) parents and teachers seem to agree unanimously that the teachers at Muti are approachable and that the centre has an open door policy. Teachers and parents believe that teachers in this centre respond to the needs of their child/children *very adequately.* It seems parents and teachers agree that parents are given all the necessary support even though it was not necessarily *very accurate* for some. Like teachers, parents indicated that they were kept informed about their child's learning and development and they were given opportunities to participate in centre activities, even though not necessarily *very accurate* for others. There is an agreement that the centre has an open door policy and that the teachers are friendly and welcoming. They also agree that parents are given opportunities to participate and they are kept informed about their child/children's progress. The results show that both parties are content with their education centre. Both teachers and parents at Muti have positive attitudes about inclusion and this seem to give a strong foundation for inclusive settings.

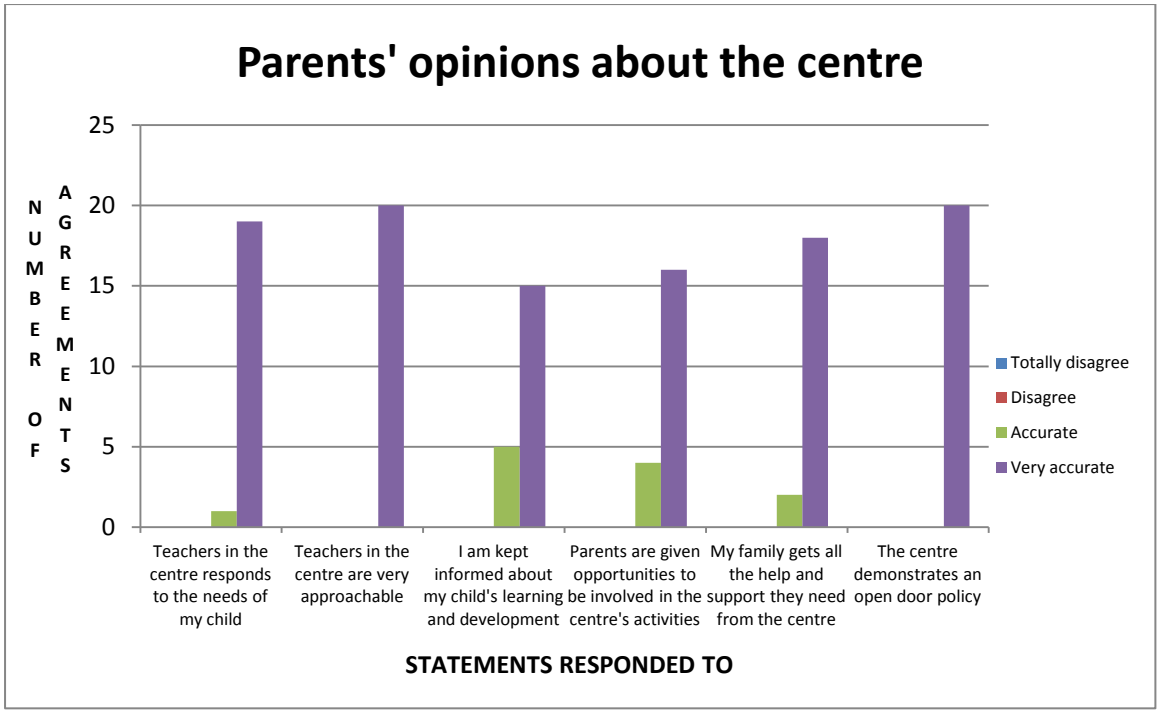

Figure 11 Parents' opinion about Muti education centre

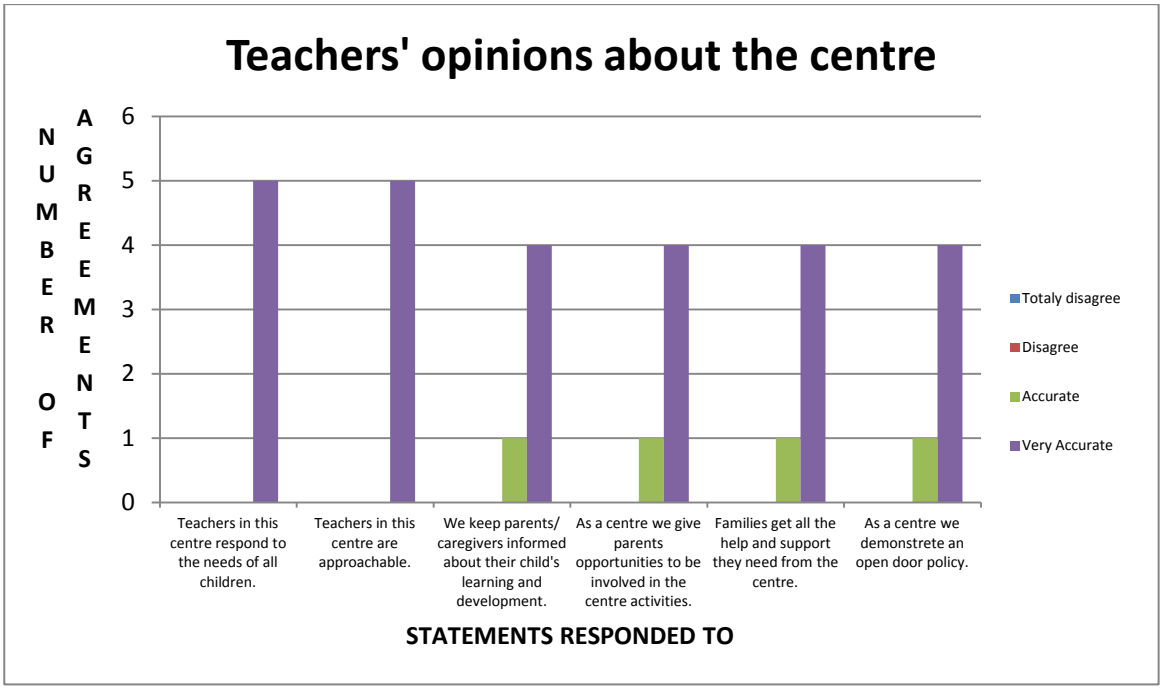

Figure 12 Teachers' opinions about Muti education centre

Teachers' and parents' opinions about values at Muti. Parents viewed the knowledge the teachers have about their child/children as *very important* while, teachers valued the knowledge that the parents have about their child/children as *important* though not essentially *very important* (see Figures 13 and 14). Parents valued feedback about their child's/children's day as *important* to *very important*. This was valued by all teachers as *very important* suggesting that teachers value the feedback aspect more than parents. While parents value discussion of any concerns they may have about the child as *important* but not necessarily *very important*, teachers valued this as *very important* suggesting that it is more important for teachers than it is for parents. Parents and teachers reported that it was *important* for parents to have a look at their child's work even though not essentially *very important* for some. *All* teachers reported that it was *very important* to be informed about a child's morning, night or weekend; however this differed with some parents who thought this was *partially important*, while some thought it was *important* but not necessarily *very important*. There were mixed feelings about teacher-parent interviews with some parents reporting that it is *important* but some thought it was *not important* and others reported it as *partially important*. Teachers' views about the interviews ranged from *partially important* to *very important*. While teachers thought it was *important* to get a parent voice a few parents viewed it as *partially important even* though the majority thought it was *important* though not necessarily *very important* to contribute a parent voice. Nonetheless, teachers and parents seemed to agree on the importance of giving each other feedback and valuing the knowledge that each one has about the child. These results seem to indicate that when teachers and parents value feedback about a child they work together to meet the child's needs.

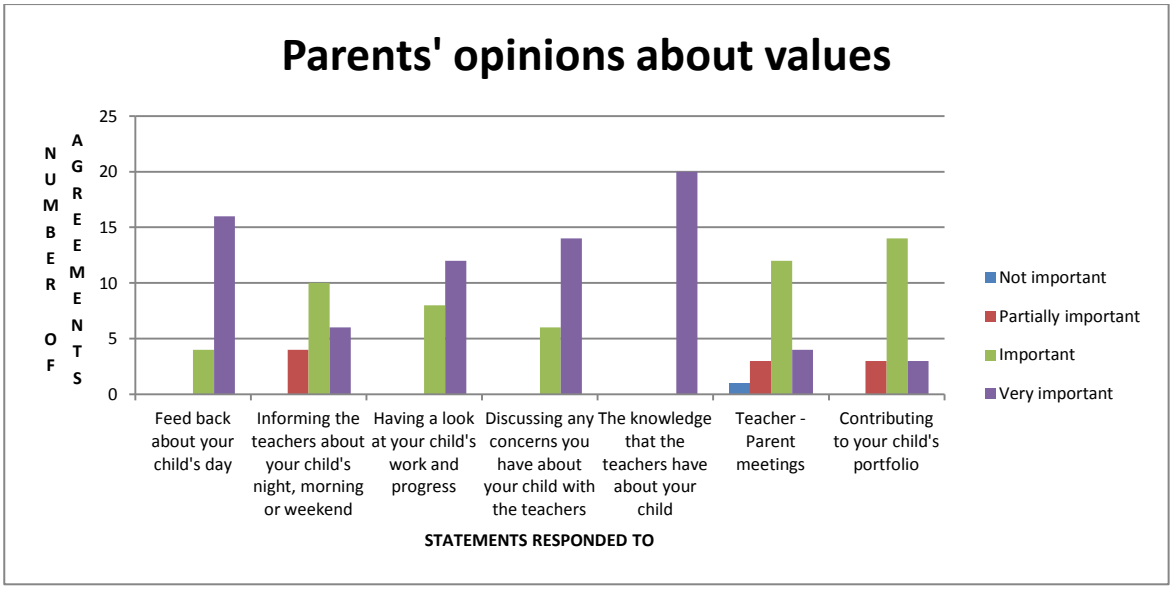

Figure 13 Parents' opinions about values at Muti

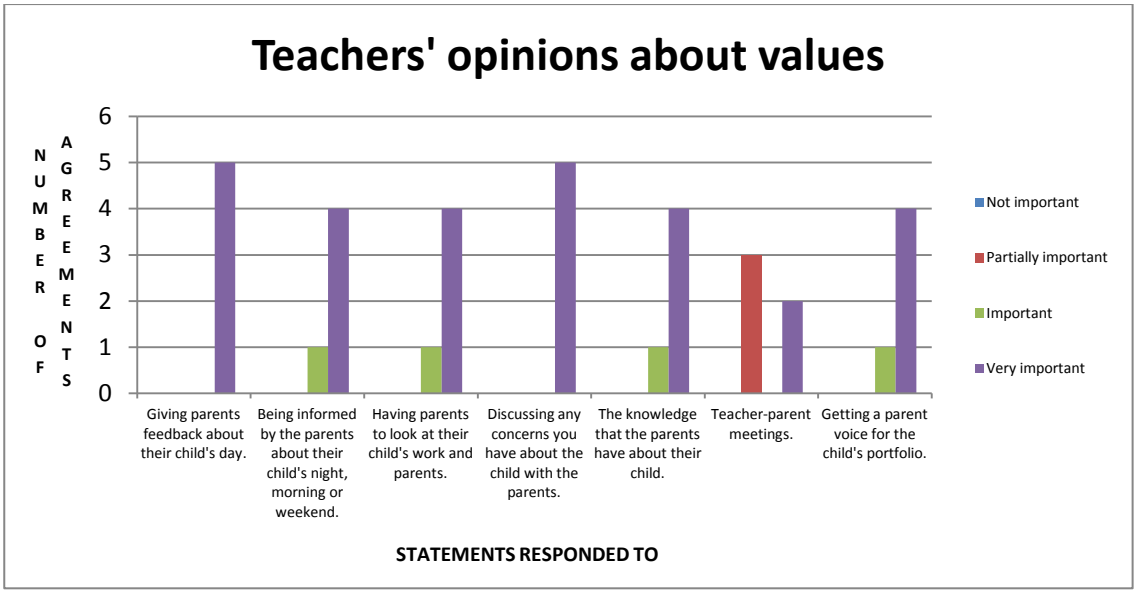

Figure 14 Teachers' opinions about values at Muti

Frequency of parents' and teachers' communication. Teachers and parents were also asked information about how often they get communication and these were their responses (see Figures 15 and 16). The findings reveal that parents and teachers have good communication with each other at Muti, suggesting that they have a remarkable reciprocal relationship. Parents and teachers indicated

that they communicate with each other about the child's day and they *often* comfortably discuss any concerns they may have even though it does not have to be always. It seemed teachers valued communication about children's extraordinary performances more than parents because all teachers indicated that they communicate about this, though not necessarily *always*. Most of the parents indicated that they communicate with teachers about extraordinary performances but 15% were not sure. There was an agreement in communication about challenging behaviour for most parents and teachers but in both cases there was a small percentage which was not sure and 5% of parents who reported that they do not communicate about challenging behaviour to teachers. Teachers reported that they communicate with parents about extraordinary performance and positive behaviour though not necessarily *always*. Most parents were in agreement with the teachers in this but, 15% indicated not sure for extraordinary performance and 5% indicated not sure for positive behaviour. Thus teachers seem to value communication about extraordinary performance and positive behaviour more than parents. Generally the overall results reveal that there is a mutual understanding about the importance of communication between parents and teachers. Effective communication seems to work as a base for making sure that every child's needs are met.

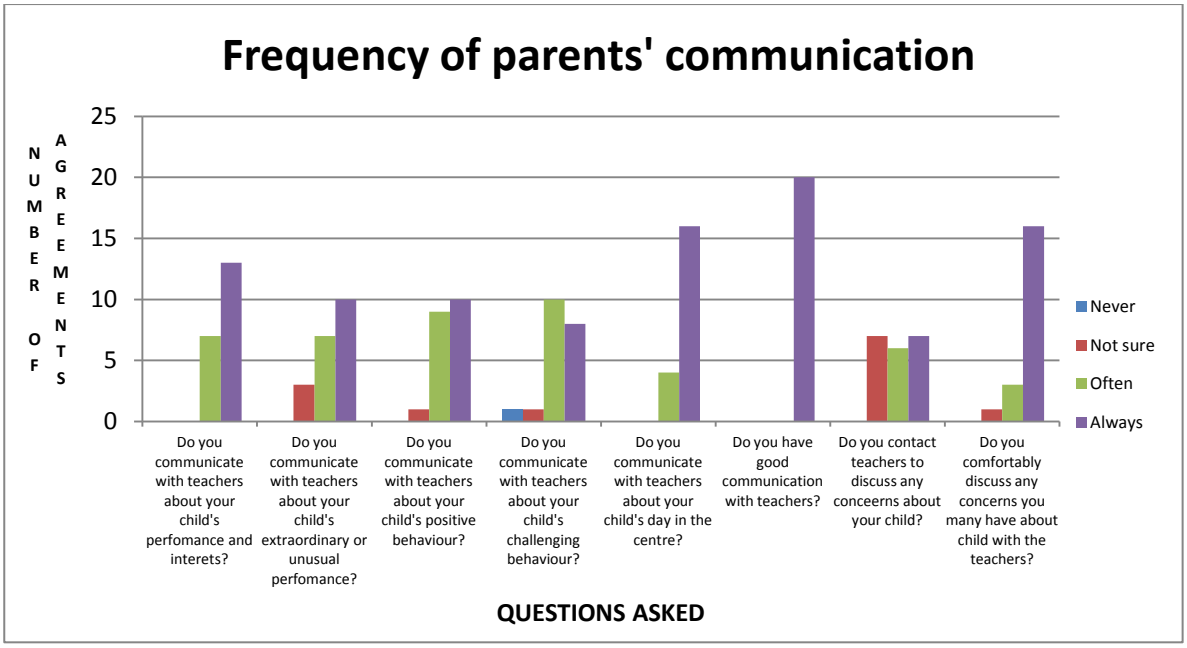

Figure 15 Frequency of parents' communication

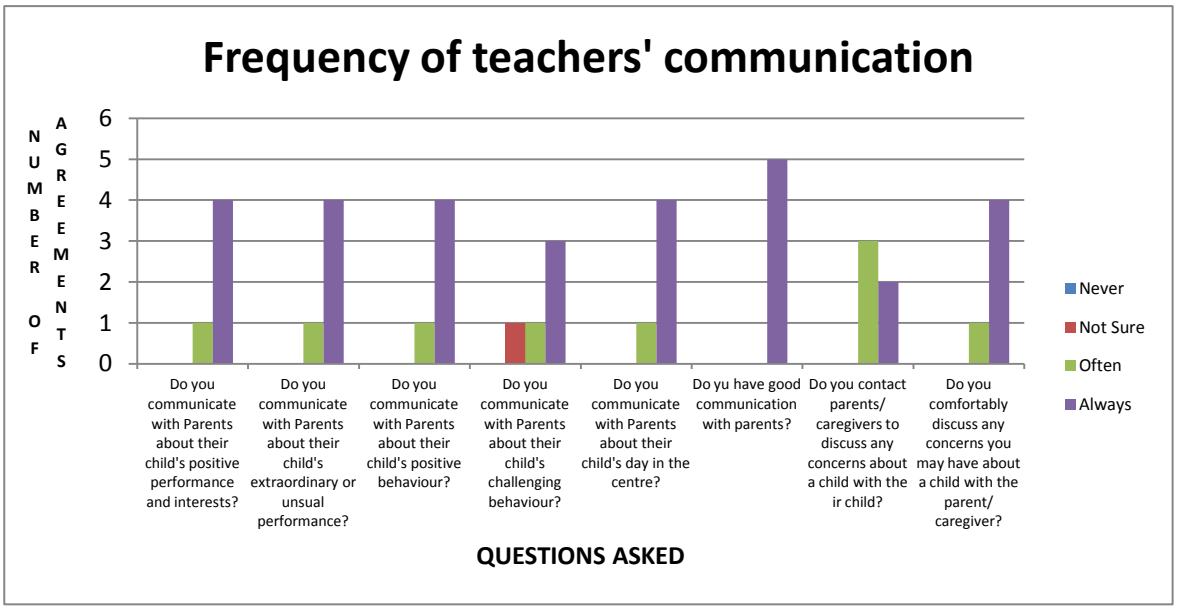

Figure 16 Frequency of teachers' communication

Parents' and teachers' feelings about inclusion at Muti: Parents and teachers indicated how they feel about certain issues of inclusion in the centre (see Figures 17 and 18). From the results, it seems parents and teachers are *comfortable* with children with diverse needs socialising together, though not

essentially *very comfortable* for some. These results suggest a mutual understanding between parents and teachers. While all teachers are *very comfortable* with the mixed age setting, parents indicated that they are *comfortable* with the mixed age setting but some were not necessarily *very comfortable.* There appeared to be an agreement between parent and teachers on the way all children are treated in the centre as they all indicated that they are *comfortable* though not always *very comfortable*. Parents and teachers reported that they are comfortably confident that the teachers at Muti have the abilities to work with children with special needs. There seemed to be an implicit agreement between parents and teachers that teachers at Muti can work well with children and families from diverse backgrounds even though the range of agreement varied from *comfortable* to very *comfortable*. It seems both teachers and parents at Muti trust each other and they are positive about inclusion which gives a strong foundation for inclusive settings.

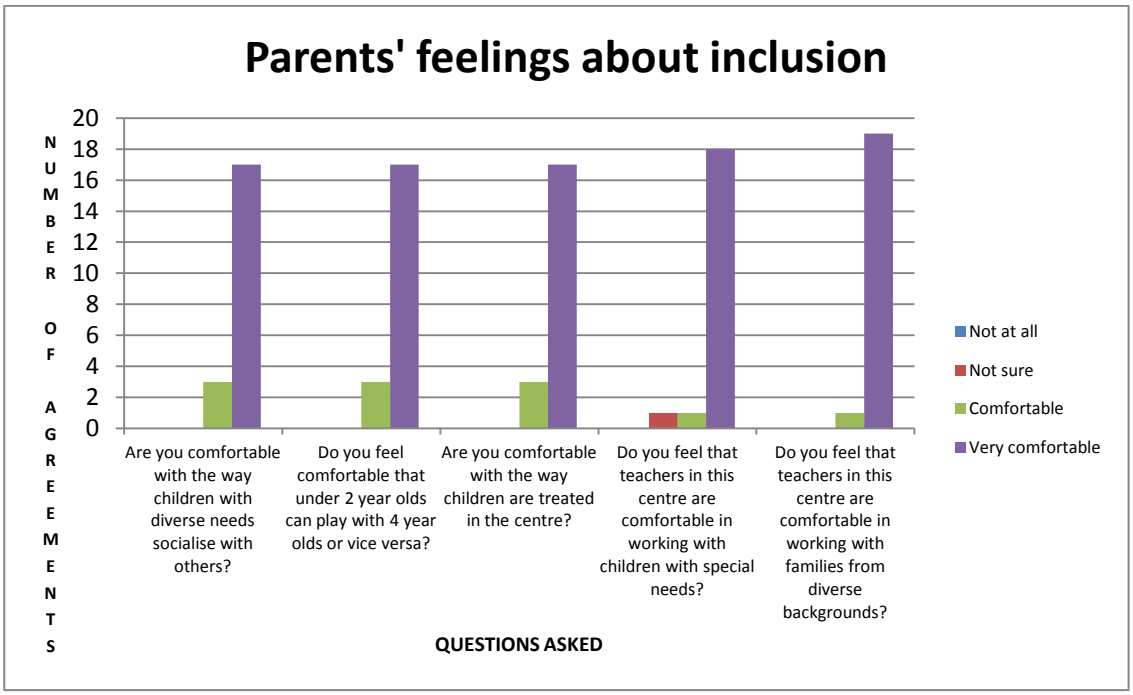

Figure 17 Parents' feelings about inclusion

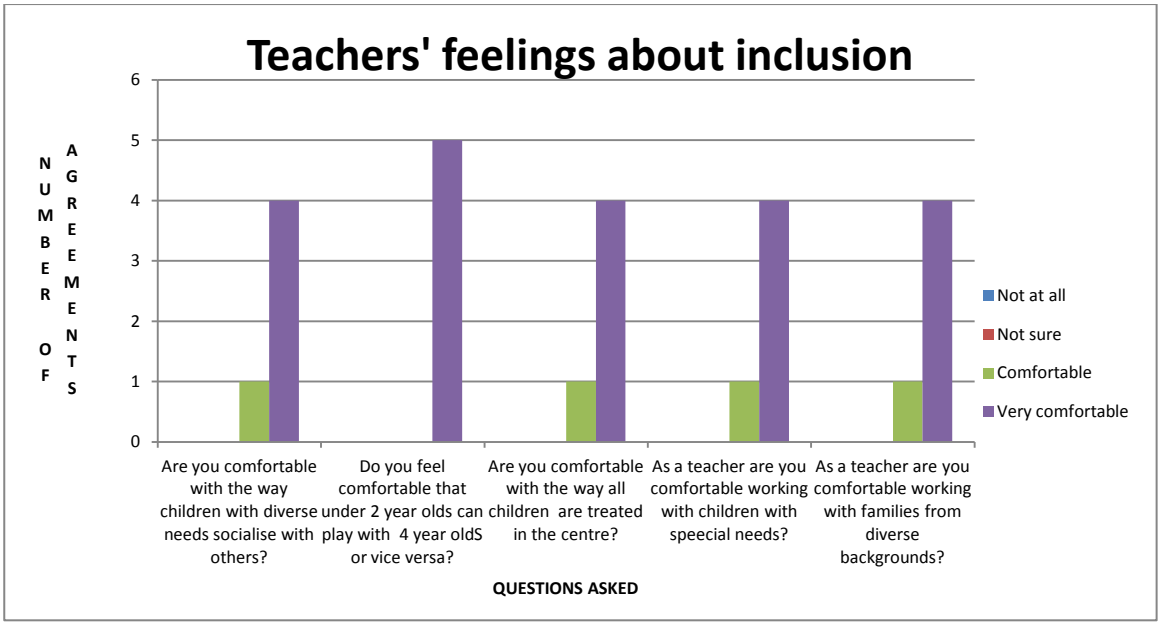

Figure 18 Teachers' feelings about inclusion

Parents' and teachers' opinions about the quality of help for teachers. Both parents and teachers were also asked about their opinions on the type of help teachers receive from parents, families, the community and the Ministry of Education Special Education and these results are shown in Figures 19 and 20. Teachers indicated that they received adequate professional development and parents seemed to agree with this view. There was also a mutual understanding on the adequacy of help received by teachers for challenging behaviour. 40% of teachers reported that the help from the Ministry of Education Special Education was very inadequate while 60% reported it to be adequate. Thus it seems there is a demand for more help from the Ministry of Education by the teachers. Both teachers and parents believe that teachers at Muti are adequately equipped to work with diverse children. Therefore, there is agreement about the ability of the teachers to work with children from diverse backgrounds and their families. Parents seem to have a positive belief in the ability of their teachers to help children with special needs. Some differences emerged regarding the support teachers get from families

of diverse students. While most parents reported that teachers get adequate to very adequate help, 20% of teachers reported the help as inadequate while the rest agreed with the parents rating the help from *adequate* to *very adequate*. Despite the minor differences teachers and parents seem to agree that children are given adequate help by teachers, teachers receive adequate professional development and the community is relatively supportive. The results seem to suggest that teachers and parents give each other *adequate* support but they feel that they should get more help from the Ministry of Education to enhance inclusion in their setting.

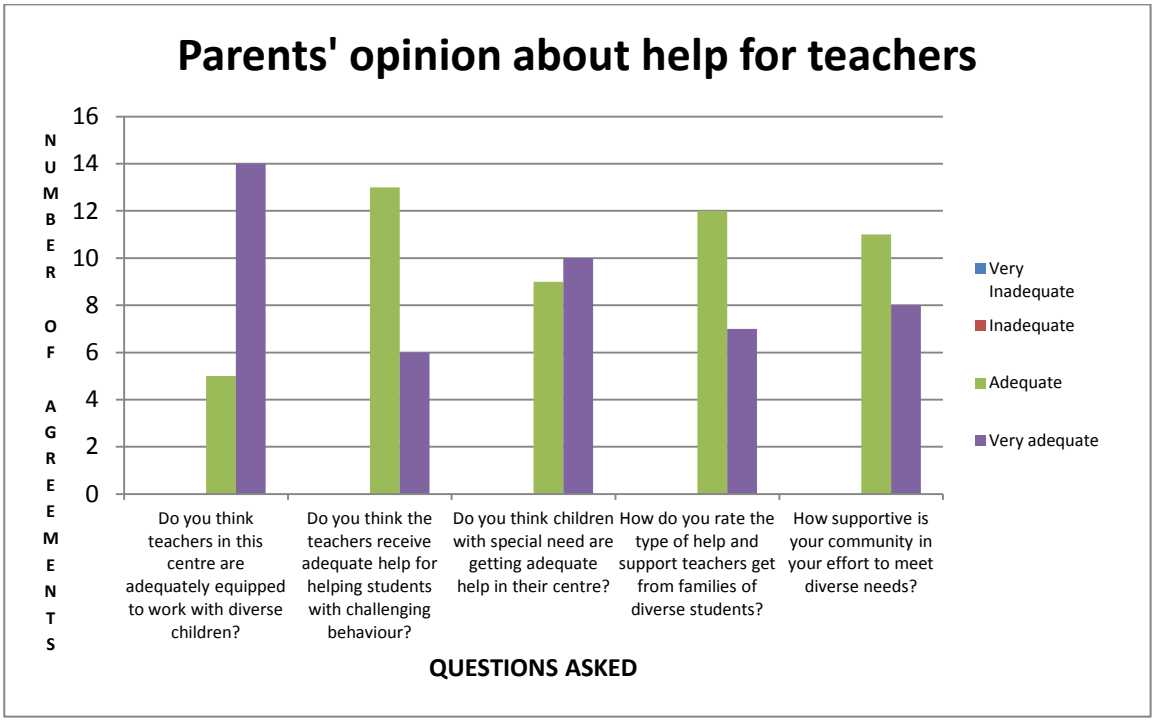

Figure 19 Parents' opinions about help for teachers

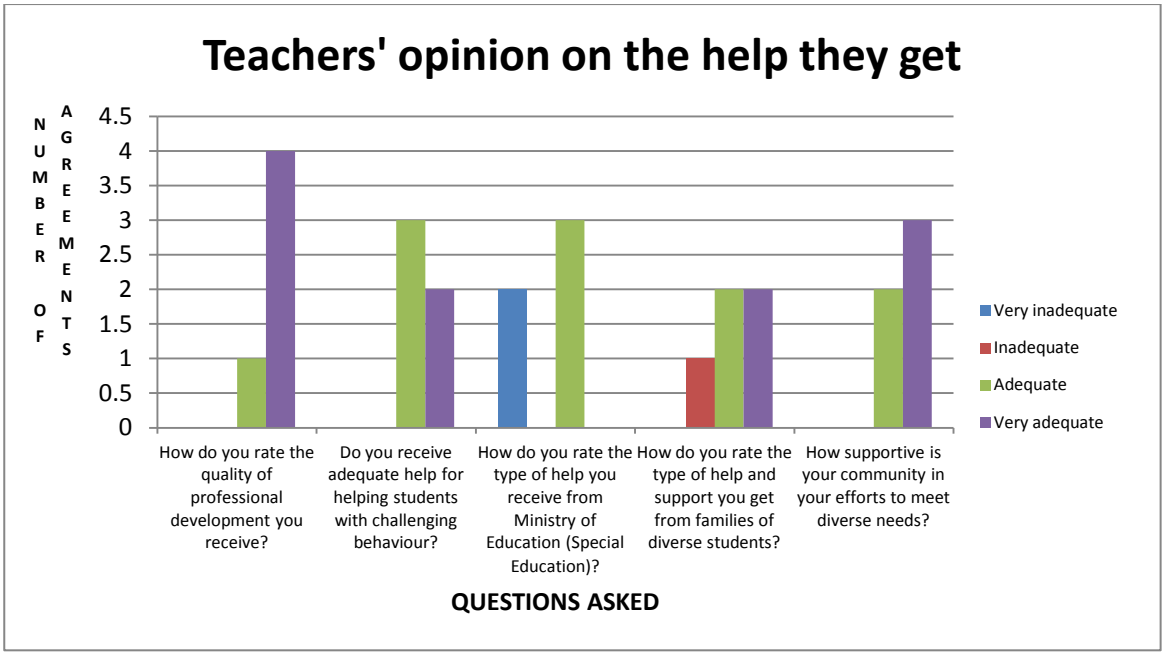

Figure 20 Teachers' opinions about the quality of help they get

Focus group interviews and additional comments on questionnaires

Results from the focus group interviews and additional comments on questionnaires were classified under themes and reported below. Similarities and differences were noted. The focus group were interviewed after analysing the questionnaires to explore their attitudes, perceptions, feelings and ideas about specific topics. These also helped in formulating the themes.

Perspectives on inclusion and belonging at Muti. Participants at Muti held similar views to each other about inclusion but expressed it in different ways. These are some of the expressions given about inclusion by some teachers:

> Inclusion in the centre is like, including everyone no matter age, stage where they are at, and that, they can't be excluded in participating in an activity because of the way they are. We have to find ways to include them.
>
> I believe that inclusion is our whānau [families], working with our whānau because we need to be able to have a relationship with them before we can work with their tamariki [children]. Inclusion is our whānau, our teachers, our tamariki all working together.

Another teacher expressed that:

> We look at individual interest.

To this teacher, looking at individual interests is a way of including everyone. Another teacher expressed that:

> We include whānau on our trips and policy reviews.

Thus for this teacher, making sure that parents/families/whānau are included in centre activities and policy making is part of inclusion. Getting to know the children and their families well was one view that was expressed as part of inclusion by another teacher who said:

> Our centre is whānau oriented. We treat all our whānau, tamariki and teachers with respect. We get to know all our whānau really well and have close friendships and work in partnership with them all. Whānau are all welcomed in and made to feel at home at all times. There is a special "wairua" [spirit] about our centre. We are friendly, approachable and hold an open door policy.

Parents held similar views to their teachers about inclusion at Muti. One parent argued that:

> Inclusion means everyone getting equal opportunities to participate in this setting as a day care.

Another parent expressed her views about inclusion based on how she feels in the centre and about the centre and this is what she had to say:

> We feel that our centre is run with a philosophy of whānau involvement, and this is evident each day in terms of staff/parent interactions, and in the inclusive, warm atmosphere at the centre.

She went further to express that:

> Everyone is welcome here, any race and any gender.

Parents seemed satisfied that their centre is inclusive and they feel included. One parent expressed that:

> They include us in policy making, ethos of the centre and certainly include us in our particular child involvement through their learning stories and just everyday communicating and telling us how the children are doing.

Thus teachers and parents at Muti seem to have one common word to express inclusion and that is ‘everyone’. Teachers and parents at Muti both expressed their sense of belonging in the centre in different ways. One teacher credited it to the centre philosophy and said:

> Our philosophy reflects how we as a teaching team approach any given situation. Families and their children come first. We are part of their extended whānau.

Another teacher said:

> I feel like, this is my home, the children, the teachers and the families are all my family.

Expressing her sense of belonging to the centre another teacher said:

> For me this is my home ... I treat it as how I treat my home. I respect everyone in it, everything in it and I want to be treated this way, so that’s what I do. Everyone is treated how I would want to be treated.

The teachers also talked about what they do to make the parents feel welcome and have a sense of belonging as they come in part of it making sure that everyone is seen, greeted and taken care of as one of them expressed:

> Everyone who walks through that door, is acknowledged, is welcomed, is always greeted, they always come in through the door and someone is always there.

Parents also expressed their sense of belonging at Muti in different ways. One parent said:

> They are very welcoming. They are very family oriented. It feels like a second home kind of and it’s a nice setting.

Confirming the teachers' assertion that there is always someone to greet the parents, one parent says:

> They always communicate every time you come in and drop your child off and every time you pick them up so at least one person always talk to me. They make a point of making sure that you feel like a part of the centre as opposed to just dropping off and picking up.

In reference to the sense of belonging one parent said:

> All the teachers are aunties and they all look like they love all the kids.

Another parent stated that what make her feel that she belongs is:

> Being included in everything, being involved in what happens with the children and what happens with the curriculum and the centre policies and things like that.

Another referred to her child's happiness as a sign that the parents and the children belong to the centre by saying:

> I find this centre and its staff welcoming to the children and whānau. My child is always happy there. I feel comfortable about leaving her there, as I know they care deeply about all tamariki [children] there.

Partnership at Muti. Communication and collaboration was expressed by both teachers and parents at Muti as part of their daily routines. One teacher argued that:

> You wouldn't be able to know a child if you do not collaborate with the family. It's through the families that we know the children.

Similarly another teacher said:

> The families know their children and we learn from them, we share what we found out.

That way the teachers are looking at it as a two way process. They see communication as part of their daily activities. Another teacher expressed it this way:

> We constantly communicate with our whānau about everything, positive, extraordinary, behaviour, challenges, day to day concerns, basically everything. And if we need, we will make contact with whānau to discuss any concerns.

There is a belief that even communication with children is very important for their successful inclusion as one teacher says:

> We spend a lot of time explaining to children what things mean and why things are happening so that they go away with an understanding.

Like their teachers parents at Muti expressed satisfaction with the level of collaboration and communication in their centre as well. This is some of what the parents had to say:

> There is always someone available to talk to you ... Nothing is hidden, it's just very, very open and everyone is willing to help you with anything.

Another parent said,

> Being aware of any developmental milestones is helped by communication. Communication is the biggest.

Thus this parent was suggesting that if there is no ongoing communication between teachers and parents helping the child will be difficult. It seemed all parents were free to communicate with their teachers anytime as one parents says:

> We rarely have any concerns, but certainly feel free to discuss these with centre staff when required.

Therefore generally all parties to the centre seem free to communicate with each other about anything. Both teachers and parents at Muti expressed their views on working in partnership. One teacher revealed that they:

> Work in partnership with them all.

One teacher gave an example of children with challenging behaviour and how they all communicate about it and work as a team by saying:

> We take it to the staff meeting and discuss as a team, as to how we can work with that whānau or those particular children. I take on the role or Meg (pseudonym) takes on the role and have a whānau hui [family meeting] if we think that is necessary and then also we always communicate.

The parents and the teachers will both work together and implement their behaviour plans for the benefit of everyone. As if confirming the teachers' views on implementing a plan together, one parent said:

> Staff tries to cater for the needs of my child. They can be very accommodating if your child has special needs, and try to implement a plan of steps to prevent that sort of behaviour.

One of the teachers described communication as a two way process between the families and teachers and she expressed it this way:

> We want to know what's happening, where the child is at, what's going on and it's on a daily to daily basis. That whole communication is open and it's vice versa. The whānau are happy to come on board and help support what we are wanting to do and they are also wanting help. So we are helping them, they are helping us and we are working together.

In the teachers' views this two way communication works for them because they are then able to help the child fully. One parent with a child with challenging behaviour expressed her satisfaction with working in partnership on a daily basis by saying:

> I find, the staff keeps me informed on a daily basis, especially with my child being one of the most challenging ones.

Thus both teachers and parents are positive about working together to meet the needs of the child. However, the teachers expressed concern with the way Ministry of Education Special Education dealt with one of the files of their child. Prior to the file closure, the EI teacher, the psychologist and the teachers were working together to minimise the child's challenging behaviour. Conversely, it seemed the decision to close the file was reached at, by the 'specialists' without consulting the

teachers and/or centre management. The manager felt that the decision to close the file was not handled fairly. She said that:

> We have worked with Special Education and currently we have had one of our children's file closed. This was not properly dealt with as I felt they could not adequately justify why the file should have been closed.

The manager went on to say that they have continued to work with this child and the family on their own. This probably explains why some teachers indicated that the help from the Ministry of Education was inadequate in the questionnaires.

Contributing to the child's portfolio at Muti. Every child at Muti education centre had a learning stories portfolio. In these portfolios, the child's voice, the parent voice and the teachers' voices were evident. Some parents expressed concern that they were not contributing enough by saying:

> Our involvement in our child's learning and development is limited more by us as parents, than by any lack of opportunity offered by the centre. We tend to trust that all is well, and don't ask many questions.

It seems the opportunities are offered and it is up to individual families to take the opportunities and contribute to the child/children's portfolio. Another parent expressed that she makes her contributions to the portfolio through telling the teachers her stories and the teachers writes them down for her. This is what she said:

> Teachers tell me about his interests at day care and I tell them what I see at home. They put these conversations in his portfolio.

Similarly another parent expressed it this way:

> We do converse about the weekend and what me and my child did.

This view was reinforced by one teacher who wrote that:

> We always talk to our parents and get whānau [family] voice/ input for their child's learning. This is evident on our planning walls and our daily notice board.

There are also some parents who contribute in different ways, for example, one parent said,

> I always contribute to the little homework tasks, the nursery rhymes they send home, the karakia [prayers] they send home and the Māori phrases they send home.

It therefore seems learning stories are important for both teachers and parents at Muti in regards to a child's learning.

Summary

The combination of finding out what teachers and families at Muti believe in and what they say during focus groups, revealed rich and abundant data. The results serve to showcase opinions about inclusion at Muti regarding inclusion. It seemed that both teachers and parents at Muti had positive beliefs about inclusion. In this case it is the beliefs of the teachers and management that lay the foundation of an inclusive setting. The beliefs seem to be grounded in the rights discourse and to some extend the charity discourse which emphasise the need to help those with special needs. The results gave a basis for my observations and documents analysis in which I analyse to see if what they believe in is what they do.

Chapter Six: Observations and document analysis

Introduction

In this chapter I present the results from my observations and document analysis from both Bako and Muti case studies. I classify the results under propositions. Through the transcript of recorded events I developed propositions resulting from the findings. Guided by Jordan (2003), I formulated themes from these propositions. Propositions are questions developed from research findings and have been extensively used in summarising research in education (Jordan, 2003). These helped me in identifying themes as I manually sorted and coded this data. I determined categories and relationship in the data. I then coded the data into categories and/or subcategories which emerged from the findings. I came up with four main propositions which I derived from a combination of literature review and the data. Because of the many similarities in the two case studies I used the same propositions for both case studies. As anticipated, themes emerged regarding the culture of the centres, the values of teachers and parents, the quality of teacher-child interaction, and how teachers respond to individual needs.

Table 1 *Propositions*

Proposition 1	The culture of the setting determines the relationships between children, whānau/families and their teachers.
Proposition 2	Quality of teacher-child interaction and the learning experiences help in building inclusive settings.
Proposition 3	Teachers' responsiveness contributes to meeting the children's individual needs.
Proposition 4	The concept of tuakana-teina promotes inclusive education.

Proposition 1: The culture of the setting determines the relationships between children, whānau/families and their teachers

Respecting all cultures and belonging: On my arrival at Bako, I observed that all children and adults who attend the centre are respected. As you enter through the main entrance door, the teaching team has a big chart with greetings from all the cultures who attend the centre. I observed that all the children are treated with respect regardless of their race, colour, or abilities and equity was encouraged and enhanced. As parents arrive with their children in the morning, they are greeted in their languages by the teachers. This seemed to give them a sense of belonging. Supporting other cultures was documented in Bako biculturalism policy as well which states that:

> The curriculum will support the cultural identity of all children and aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures.

In their philosophy at Bako, they mentioned that their programme is based on *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a) which also places emphasis on supporting children's cultural identities, saying, "The early childhood curriculum supports the cultural identity of all children, affirms and celebrates cultural differences, and aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures" (p. 18).

Similarly at Muti education centre the first thing I observed is that everyone is greeted and farewelled. There is always someone to greet people entering through the door and when they are leaving there is always someone to farewell them. The teachers see themselves as part of the children's extended families and this is reflected in their philosophy statement which states that "We see ourselves as an extension of the child's parents/whānau and wider community, offering and working in partnership together." This was seen in practice at Muti as all the children call the

teachers aunties. The teachers treat all the children equitably and with respect. In view of belonging and partnership, teachers and children were also occasionally observed working in partnership during tidy up times. The teachers never commanded the children to tidy up, they naturally did it together and the teachers and children conversed in friendly voices while they tidied up. The children and their families all seem happy in the centre. Parents showed their sense of belonging in different ways, for example, the two scenarios below:

> A parent came to pick up his child. The child is playing outside with other boys. The parent joins them in and started playing 'peek-a-boo' with all the children interested. Laughter is heard from the children as they have fun with the parent. The game continues for about 10minutes then the parent says good bye to all the children and he goes with his son.
>
> A grandparent came in and had a play with her 1year old granddaughter. She talks to the other children too as she interacts with her granddaughter. The atmosphere is friendly and the teachers and children all chat to the grandparent. After a while she says goodbye to everyone and she leaves.

On different occasions, parents were heard talking to teachers about what they have been doing with their child/children at home or what they did during the weekend. Children and their families at Muti seemed to, "...experience an environment where they know that they have a place" (Ministry of Education, 1996a p. 15). I also observed that all the cultures present in the centre were respected and acknowledged. Teachers made an effort to get to know each child and their family in order to meet their individual needs. This was also clear in their centre staff guidelines which read:

> Teachers have the responsibility as professionals to ensure that all cultures present in the centre are acknowledged.

It was therefore part of both Bako and Muti centre cultures to respect all children and their families regardless of their cultures or differences. This was evident in

practice as all children and their families were treated with respect, and equity seemed a natural occurrence.

Involving everyone and partnership: Bako's mission statement clearly states that:

> Teachers focus on a holistic approach, extending the children's interests and presenting a challenging and stimulating programme **appropriate** to **each** individual child's progress [note emphasis I put in bold].

It further states that:

> It is important that parents and whānau have a sense of belonging within the centre environment. The teaching team welcome parents spending time in the centre, values their contribution in all aspects of their children's learning journey.

The philosophy statement reads:

> We believe in working in partnership with parents, whānau and the community, respecting the Treaty of Waitangi and all other cultures.

There was documented evidence in the learning stories that the children had a say in their learning. There was evidence of parents' contributions as well in these stories.

The parents/whānau conversed with the teachers before leaving for work, home and/or study. I observed that keeping each other informed was part of daily life at Bako, for example, I heard parents communicating to teachers about who will be picking up the child/children at the end of the day. They also talked about how they were and how the child/children were. If the child was on medication during the day, this was also communicated to teachers and recorded in the medication register. I observed that introductions were also important to Bako. The teachers introduced me to the children on my first day at the centre. They told them the reason I was in their centre. The older children were asked to introduce themselves to me while the teachers told me their names and the names of the babies.

I also observed that at Muti the concept of involving everyone and working in partnership is just as important as it is at Bako. Teachers and families/whānau working in partnership were also seen as part of the setting culture at Muti education centre. This was spelt out clearly in their centre philosophy which states that:

> We offer experienced, trained and dedicated teachers who work as a team to foster **respectful**, **equitable** and **reciprocal relationships** with children and their whānau/parents in our centre. We implement this by showing and building whakawhanaungatanga/kotahitanga/manākitanga. [Note, emphasis added].

In the early childhood curriculum, kotahitanga is achieved when the programme offered reflects the holistic way children learn and grow while whanaungatanga is when the wider world of family and community is acknowledged and forms the important part of the centre curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996a). The aim to reflect the holistic way children grow, and acknowledge the contributions of families and the wider community, was observed as part of daily life at Muti as parents who had time came and went as they pleased, and the nature of their planning reflected an aim to nurture the holistic development of all children. The behaviour management policy at Muti stated that the teachers will work together with the families/whānau to meet the needs of each child:

> We believe that we need to work together in partnership to achieve the best possible outcome for the child concerned by working together with child's parents and whānau.

The statement reflects what I saw in practice. It went further to say:

> Teachers will work together with parents, whānau, extended whānau to individualise behaviour management plans were appropriate (Muti behaviour management policy).

These plans were available in the concerned children's portfolios and reflected that teachers were working in partnership with families/whānau to meet individual needs

of children. At Muti the teachers did not see themselves as the 'experts'; they valued the parents' knowledge and worked together for the benefit of the child.

I also observed that when they plan their excursions, they involve their families/whānau in the planning and the actual excursion. One documented example was when they went on a farm excursion. The parents helped out in lots of different ways including organising food for the day and looking after the children as well. There was documented evidence of the parents' stories about the excursion, the children's stories and the teachers' stories which linked the learning to the curriculum. In the learning that happens at Muti everyone who is involved has a voice and it is documented.

Routines as part of centre culture: There are routines within Bako education centre which are carried out through the day. I observed that babies' routines are clearly written down on a white board for all the teachers to see. They also have their centre daily routines printed and put on the wall for all teachers, parents and families/whānau. The routines observed included a morning mat time, followed by morning tea time, play time, nappy changing, another mat time followed by lunch time, sleep time and quiet time for the older children. I noted that teachers are not rigid on these written routines though. They look for signs of tiredness or being hungry in children and respond to what is needed at the time, for instance:

> I observed a one year old asking for his bottle through signing; the teacher understood that he wanted his bottle. She went and made the bottle and gave it to him but it was not the time recorded on the chart for his bottle.

On a separate occasion:

> At 4pm a four year old told the teacher that she was hungry. The teacher cuts a banana, gives to the child and tells her to sit down on a chair and eat but it was not afternoon tea time.

The atmosphere of the setting seemed to be a happy and friendly one. During the times I observed, parents and others from the community walked into the centre and were involved in centre activities as and when they pleased, for example:

> A parent walked in and said, “I just need to use your toilet.” She used the toilet then she came out of the toilet and played a game of cards with the children. After a while she then said goodbye to her daughter and the rest of the children. She told her daughter and the teachers that she would pick her up in an hour’s time.

On a different occasion:

> A parent of a seven month old baby came for a ten minute visit and play with her daughter. A teacher asked her if she wanted a cup of tea and she said she didn’t. She then played with her daughter, while she interacted with the teachers. She talked about the different foods she is trying her daughter at home. They laugh and chat. After 10 minutes she went back to work.

People came in and out throughout the day, including even those who were not current parents or families/whānau. On two separate occasions:

> Prospective parents came in to enrol their children. They were welcomed into the centre and shown around. One of the parents explained that her daughter whom she intended to enrol had special needs and was in a wheel chair. She was told that it was not a problem; as soon as the vacancy is available someone will telephone her to let her know that her daughter could come. She was put on the waiting list.

A different scenario was observed when:

> Two girls from the secondary school also came in once with their guitar. They sat on the deck and played some songs for the children.

The atmosphere was open, friendly and welcoming to everyone. I also observed from stories on the wall that they have had students from the intermediate school (Years 7 and 8) coming in to perform kapa haka [Māori performing arts] for the children, and the secondary school students came there on a daily basis.

Equally, routines also formed part of the cultural setting at Muti education centre. The first routine observed was that on arrival every child picks a card with

their photograph and name on it. Those under two years of age will have their parents/families to help them and they will stick the name card up where it shows they are in the centre. I observed that the older children would write/copy their name on a piece of paper first before sticking it up. They did not have to copy it perfectly well but just writing anything on that paper was recognised as their name written. At 9 o'clock they had mat time which began with a karakia timatanga (prayer for the beginning of the day). This practice, the centre manager said was in respect of the Māori kaupapa (culture/norm) that start the day with a karakia (prayer). The karakia was recited in Te reo Māori (Māori language) and it was followed by a song in Te reo Māori.

During morning tea time and afternoon tea time children were encouraged to go and eat if they are hungry but if they are not hungry they continue playing. The lunch time routines for the under two years of age was seen slightly different form the over two years old. Over two year olds had their lunch time at 12 o'clock. The babies had individual routines which were clearly written down in individual daily routine books. These routines were observed to be followed throughout the day and teachers recorded what they did in these books. This linked in well with the requirement in *Te Whāriki* that infants need, "Individualised programmes that can adjust to the infant's own rhythms" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). At the end of the day these routine books went home with the parents who were verbally told during pick up about the child's day in the centre. They would bring the book back in the morning with recordings of when the child got up, whether s/he had breakfast and even things like whether the child was teething, were recorded. These would guide the teachers on how to start the day. The parents/families were also heard verbally communicating with the teachers about the child's morning or night. This

also reflected, “Partnership between parents and the other adults involved in caring for the infant” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22). It also reflected that the teachers were keen to meet the individual needs of the children, as reflected in their philosophy.

Tidy up routines were also part of daily activities. Children and their teachers cooperatively worked together to tidy up before lunch and at the end of the day. The teachers are heard using very calm and persuasive language to encourage the children to tidy up with them, for example, on occasions this song was sang;

Tune (Brother John or Frère Jacques)

Are you helping? ×2
Pick up toys × 2
Let’s all help each other. ×2
Boys and girls ×2

The children and the teachers would both sing together and tidy up in a nice friendly environment. In this case the teachers were using the tidy up time as an opportunity to use language to direct thinking and learning tasks through music (Ministry of Education, 1996a). This also made that part of the routine fun and exciting for the children. During some of these routines children were encouraged to take some responsibilities, make choices, work cooperatively and also do things independently.

Proposition 2: The quality of teacher-child interaction and learning experiences help in building inclusive settings

Emergent curriculum and quality of learning opportunities*:* I compared what I observed at Bako education, with documentation. The Bako philosophy statement states that:

> Children learn best when they have a sense of belonging in an environment where safety is paramount and where adults respond to their strengths and extend their interests.

It even goes further to say that the teachers are committed to providing education and care of the highest quality. During my observations, attention was also given to the quality of teacher child interaction and the outcome. Emergent curriculum where teachers planned their next step or got opportunities to develop a concept further from what the child has done on the spot was seen as part of their daily practice at Bako. This had documentary evidence in the children's portfolios and their programme planning displays. In one child's portfolio it showed a child's interest in trains and building the train tracks. This led on to reading the stories about the trains and constructing trains at the carpentry table. This was communicated to parents who then took the child on a train ride and came back to share the story with the teachers.

I observed this practice of following through with emergent curriculum at Bako education centre, for example:

> A teacher puts a big pirate puzzle on the table. Seven boys are interested in doing the puzzle. The teacher encourages them to work together to complete the puzzle. When they were finished, the teacher asked them to find different things on the puzzle. The children who spotted what they were asked to find first were praised for their efforts. The teacher scans around and comments on the other children who are playing individually. The teacher then extends on the children's learning from the pirate puzzle to reading the story, "How I learn to become a pirate?" to the children. The teacher captured every child's attention by prompting those who were going off task.

In a different scenario:

> As I sat watching under two year olds playing outside a bus drove past. The children stopped their play and started yelling out, "Bus, bus." The teacher stopped what she was doing and talked about the bus with the children. They then ended up singing, "The wheels on the bus go round and round."

Responding to children's needs in this manner was also spelt out in their programme planning, evaluation and assessment procedure which states that:

> Assessment shall be credit based and focus on children's strengths and interests.

It was evident that the children in most cases dictated what they wanted to learn. The teachers followed and responded to children's interests. I observed from the documented learning stories that teachers followed through with children's interests. There were stories of what children have done and these were written in a credit based model focusing on the children's strengths. I took particular interest in the learning stories of Tom who had been diagnosed with global developmental delay at age two. I looked at both his IEP and learning stories. The learning stories shared his success stories from when he started feeding himself pureed food, trying his first apple, eating more solids, toileting, reading books with particular interest in transport, visiting the airport and finally being independent. The IEP meetings records showed that parents, teachers, the EI teacher and the speech language therapist all attended the meetings and they all had a voice in planning for Tom. Tom attended the final IEP meeting in which he told everyone that he was a clever boy. All the parties involved in Tom's life contributed to his learning stories.

Similar to Bako, learning opportunities offered at Muti were often child initiated. The teachers set out the environment for the children to explore and at times children ask the teachers for help. At one time the children wanted a challenging obstacle course and they asked the teachers for help. They made the obstacle course together and then played on the obstacle course. Usually outside, the children were seen busy engaged in different activities such as, the carpentry table, spray painting, drawing, colouring, slide, sandpit play, water play, bikes and

family play among others. Children initiated their own play and learning activities. The teachers interacted with the children when needed during these learning experiences while at the same time empowering them for example:

> While the boys were playing another boy (Chepi) starts poking his tongue at another (Manu). Manu tells Chepi to stop but he does not stop. Manu goes to the teacher and tells the teacher that Chepi was poking his tongue at him. The teacher said to him, “Did you talk to him?” Manu said, “Yes, I said, stop it I don’t like it.” The teacher said, “Did he stop?” Manu said, “No.” The teacher then asked Manu to come with him to go and talk to Chepi. The teacher explained to Chepi that he needed to listen to Manu’s words. The boys then talked to each other nicely and gave each other a hug. (Note pseudonyms used)

In this scenario the teacher intervened because there was a need to but she also made sure she empowered the children with problem solving techniques and helped them resolve the conflict. Not only did the teachers empower children, they also extended on children’s interests as evident in children’s portfolios and planning walls. Muti’s assessment policy states:

> All children’s strengths and interests will be identified and form the basis of programme planning. Assessment is, the way in which in our everyday practice we observe children’s learning, strive to understand it, and then put our understanding to good use.

The teachers had some structures in place to make sure that children’s strengths and interests are met. The teachers took notes of their observations on a daily basis. They communicated with the children’s parents, family/whānau about their child’s strengths and interests. The parents, families/whānau also contributed what they have seen or what they have been doing at home. The teachers then plan for an extension of the child’s interests and strengths. After a month this was evaluated and the cycle continued. The assessment policy also states that:

> The information gathered and recorded on children for their assessment will be credit based.

This seems to imply that the teachers will endeavour to find the positives in all children and write their success stories. For the few activities that were teacher initiated such as mat time, the teachers involved the children in the activities and at times got them to take the lead in doing mat time activities, for example, at one mat time;

> The teacher talks about fire safety. She interacts with the children. They talk about what they do in case of a fire at Muti. They then went on to practise the earthquake drill. They asked the teacher for the fire safety story. They know the story very well so the teacher lets them finish most of the sentences.

Even though it was a teacher initiated mat time, children had a voice. They were given the opportunity to share their knowledge about fire safety and earthquake drill. They also had the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the story.

I also observed at Muti that there were bikes for all age groups and sizes. These were always accessible to children and the children and their teachers made bike tracks for riding the bikes. It was positive that the older children were seen to be very careful while on these bikes. They would put their emergency brakes on quickly if a baby crawls onto the bike track. It showed that the children and their teachers cared for each other and they knew their rules well. It also revealed the quality of teaching and learning that goes on at Muti which involves caring for one another, having the older children looking out for the younger ones and being good role models. The positive outlook for the children was also spelt out in the centre philosophy which states that:

> We use positive guidance strategies to role model and guide children in making good choices regarding appropriate behaviour, we believe that if children feel good about themselves and their ability to make good choices it will encourage them to recognise positive outcomes for themselves and others.

This was evident in the centre practice throughout the day. The teachers were role models but they also constantly reminded the older children that they were the role models for the younger children. It was not common for children to misbehave but if they did the concerned children were talked to nicely and if there was need for consequences, these were given immediately following the unwanted behaviour, for example:

> Another child came to tell the teacher that T was bleeding. The teacher goes to T. She asked what happened and T tells her Manu punched him on the nose. One teacher cleaned the blood on the floor while the other stops the bleeding. While stopping the bleeding the teacher talks to Manu and explained to him that it was not acceptable. She explained to Manu that he should use his words instead. She turned around and praised the punched child for not punching back. Manu is given consequences of sitting on the 'thinking chair' for three minutes. When his three minutes is over he is told to go and play. He goes and apologies to the other child. The teacher praised him for apologising and realising his mistake.

Praising the child for realising his/her faults and apologising reinforces their behaviour management policy which states that:

> We believe that the most effective way of managing children's behaviour is with the use of positive role modelling, and giving children lots of encouragement and reinforcement for acceptable behaviour.

Praise, encouragement and reinforcement statements for positive behaviour were heard all the time in the playground. The teachers were also positive in their speech and always got down to the children's level when talking to them. Giving the child consequences linked with one of the goals in the Belonging strand which states that, "Children and their families experience an environment where, they know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour" (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 62).

Respect: Children at Bako education centre were treated with respect as evidence from observations reveals. In one scenario, teachers were seen to join in the children's play, but made sure they asked for the children's permission first. For example:

> A teacher asked the children who were playing with the swing ball if she could join in. The children agreed. They played happily taking turns with the swing ball.

Respecting the children and asking for their permission was seen as part of their teaching philosophy at Bako. I observed that even if a child was upset, the teacher would get down to the child's level and ask, "Would you like a cuddle?" If the child agreed, the teacher would then give the child a cuddle. This in a way was also empowering the child. The teachers also gave children responsibilities which made them feel good about themselves for example:

> During mat time a child was asked to take the teacher's role and read a story to the other children. After that the children were asked to choose whom they wanted to go and wash hands with, two at a time.

The learning occasions were made fun and interesting for the children. The timing of some discussions was also seen as capturing the learning opportunity. On one occasion, for example:

> The children were sitting at the table having their afternoon tea. The teacher took this opportunity to sit down with them and talk about table manners.

I observed that the teachers did not appear to view themselves as knowing everything. Children were given choices and opportunities to develop themselves while teachers responded to the needs of each and every one of them. This aspect of respect is also documented at Muti and observed in practice. It is stated in the centre staff guidelines procedures that:

> Individual differences of children/parents/whānau need to be **respected**. If some families choose not to participate in a celebration planned in the curriculum, alternative arrangements may be made. However, an environment of inclusion **must** prevail. [Note emphasis added]

At Muti, I observed that the interaction between teachers and parents, and between teachers and children, was full of respect for one another. This respect was evident in practice every time, for example, toddlers were often asked if they wanted to go to the toilet and the teacher would only take them if they agreed. In their interactions with the children the teachers were calm and would get down to the children's level. The following scenarios show how the teachers respected the children in the interaction:

> In the sleep room, a child is lying down all curled up with his head on the wall. The teacher goes to him and ask if she could move him down a little bit. The child says, "Yes" and the teacher moves him.

The teacher had to ask for the child's permission to move him even after she had observed that the child was not sleeping comfortably. Some teachers may have just moved the child without asking for their permission. On a different occasion outside this was witnessed:

> Three girls are at the table drawing. A teacher asks them if they want her to put names on their pictures. When they said, "Yes," she asked them where exactly they wanted their names written. The children showed her each where they wanted their names written. She then asks them if they wanted their pictures to be put on the wall for display or if they wanted to put them in their bags to take home. The children expressed their different preferences.

This was seen as part of everyday interaction at Muti. The teachers and children respected each other and they always communicated well.

Proposition 3: The teachers' responsiveness contribute to meeting the children's individual needs

During my observations the teachers at Bako were seen to be responsive to children's educational needs. This was observed for example:

> At mat time a child with Down syndrome chose to play out on the deck by herself. The teacher noticed her and encouraged her to join in. When she came she fidgeted. The teacher responded by asking her if she would like to be the teacher's helper and hold the book for her. She agreed, and went and held the book whilst the teacher read the story.

Afterwards I asked the teacher why she got her to hold her book and she said:

> I know she loves books and she likes to be the teacher's helper.

On a similar occasion:

> A boy Manu, who was diagnosed with partial hearing impairment, started fidgeting on the mat. The teacher explained her story using visual pictures and Manu sat still and listened. (Pseudonym used)

The observations reflected that the teachers responded to individual needs inclusively during their practice. This is also documented in their programme planning, evaluation and assessment at Bako, which states that:

> The curriculum shall reflect equitable and inclusive practice.

I observed that when the two year olds showed signs of discomfort with the older children, they were given the opportunity to move into their own separate area especially during busy mornings. In catering for individual needs I observed that the teachers looked for signs of tiredness in children especially those under two years old, to put them to bed. At one time two children were put to bed just after 9:30am. Three under two year olds stayed up and went to bed at separate times. I observed that even during the times different age groups played in the same area, teachers were also aware of the different age groups they had in the playground at any given

time, for example, there were always toys relevant for each age group and teachers monitor the toys which were not as safe for babies such as marbles. They also had five teachers in ratio at all times even though with their roll, following the government's recommended ratios would require only three teachers on at all times.

At Muti the teachers were seen to be responsive to children's needs as well. The teachers always made sure that they were there for anyone who needed them and even in case of emergencies they were seen to be quite responsive. This was observed at Muti:

> A boy is sitting on the deck and is running short of breath. The teacher notices that he is having an asthma attack. The teacher rushes inside, got his puffer and administered the asthma relief medication to him.

The teacher noticed the need for immediate help and acted spontaneously. This was part of how the teachers at Muti operated. Another occasion was observed:

> A one year old put her hands up asking for a cuddle. Teacher picks her up and cuddles her. After a while she asks the child if she would like to go on the swing. The child shook her head for a 'no,' the teacher took her to the obstacle course and asked her if she would like to hope on the obstacle course. She shook her head for a 'no' again. The teacher then asked her if she would like to go inside. She nodded her head for a /yes/. The teacher put her down and she went inside.

In this scenario the teacher did not only respond to the child's need of a cuddle but, she went further to investigate what the child would like to do. Teacher responsiveness was seen in many aspects of the centre such as nappy change and bottle time as well. Teachers were quick to respond to a child who needed a nappy change and they were quick in responding to those asking for the milk as well. Even for the sleep routines teachers were quite responsive to children's needs.

They did not set their minds stuck on the routines. They followed the children's lead in some cases and in some instances chose to monitor the situation, for example

> A 19 month old baby woke up after 45 minutes sleep. Two teachers discuss the short sleep the child had. They agreed that they will let her play but monitor her if she shows signs of tiredness they will put her back to sleep. After nearly two hours this child was grumpy and she was put back to sleep.

The teachers demonstrated that they know their children well and they strive to meet their individual needs. It was apparent how they responded to the needs on time and even if the child makes a mistake, they viewed it as a learning opportunity and talked nicely with the children. A different occasion was observed where a teacher noticed that a child was desperate to go to the toilet whilst in the sleep room.

> The teacher came out of the sleep room with him to go to the toilet and she asked another teacher to look after the sleep room for her. When they got to the toilet, it was already too late. The boy managed to pull his pants down but urinated on the floor before reaching for the toilet bowl. The child looked upset. The teacher talked to him nicely and explained to him that it was just an accident. The teacher helped the child to dress and he went off to play.

The teacher responded quickly by helping the child to get out of bed to go to the toilet. Even though he still had an accident, it was not on his bed or in his pants. The teacher in this case did not leave the child to feel bad about himself.

Occasions where children were made to feel good about themselves were observed at different times. Children were made to see themselves as capable individuals even after making mistakes. During one mat time a child was wriggling, but the teacher did not respond to this behaviour by telling the child off. Instead the response was to get that child to help the teacher with holding her big book. This stopped the child from distracting mat time and included her as well. During the same mat time the teacher praised another boy who usually has attention problems

for sitting nicely and participating. The teacher saw the need to act instantly by giving the wriggling child something to do and it worked. She also saw the opportunity to praise a wanted behaviour which needs to be encouraged and responded with praise.

Teacher responsiveness did not only end with the children. The teachers were responsive to the needs of the parents as well. This gave the parents a sense of belonging as well. A good example was noted when a deaf parent walked in:

> I was ready to greet this parent in everyday language but this teacher quickly saw it and alerted me. She then greeted the parent in sign language. The parent communicated back. What the parent did not understand the teacher wrote it on a piece of paper and the parent wrote back in response. The teacher then helped the children to get their belongings to go home with their mother.

I later asked if all the teachers are able to communicate with this parent. I was informed that they all had learnt basic sign language so that they could communicate well with this family because both parents were deaf. The centre responded to the needs of the family so that they could communicate and the family has a sense of belonging in the centre. The two children from this family who attended this centre can now talk even though when they started, the oldest at 30 months and the younger one at 12 months, they had no expressive language.

Proposition 4: The concept of tuakana-teina promotes inclusive education

Tuakana–teina relationship is an important part of traditional Māori society: an older or more competent [tuakana] (older, brother, sister or cousin) helps and teaches a younger or less competent [teina] (Royal-Tangaere, 1997). The concept was derived from the principle of whanaungatanga (inter-relationships) and ako (to learn as well as to teach) (Barrett-Aranui, 1999; Royal-Tangaere, 1997), and in

education contexts apply to relationships between peers rather than family. In a learning environment that recognises the value of ako, the tuakana–teina roles may be reversed at any time (Ministry of Education, 2005; Ministry of Education 2011b). According to Macfarlane (2003) this is a cultural concept used in educating Māori and it has a lot of success with Māori children. It is important to note that in daily lives at home and in the community this concept is a natural occurrence.

Children of different age groups, different stages of development and different abilities were seen playing together and helping each other on a daily basis at Bako. This was a natural phenomenon. At one time I observed the following scenario:

> Children of different age groups were playing together in the sandpit. The three and four year olds were seen helping the younger children for instance one asked, “Do you want a spoon?” The younger one responded by nodding her head. The older child went and got her a spoon.

Another scenario was observed inside:

> A toddler and a four year old girl came to play with a baby who is learning to crawl. They put toys in front of the baby to reach. They then talked to the baby encouraging her to crawl and reach for the toys. They went away and left the baby. After a few seconds the toddler came back and gave the baby a kiss and a cuddle. She then left her and went to play somewhere else.

Though the concept of tuakana-teina was not documented visibly anywhere at Bako it appeared to be evident in practice. Peer support and interaction is encouraged in Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996a) through Contribution strand which states that, “Children experience an environment where they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others” (p.70).

Unlike at Bako where the concept is not documented in the philosophy or policy documents, at Muti the concept of tuakana-teina is spelt out in their philosophy statement which reads:

> We support and acknowledge Te Tiriti O Waitangi [The Treaty of Waitangi] through promoting the use of te Reo Māori [Māori language], striving towards biculturalism within the centre, using the tuakana-teina philosophy, showing manaakitanga [Māori hospitality], incorporating Te Ao Māori [the Māori world view] and Tikanga Māori [Māori customs and culture].

At Muti this concept was encouraged in practice. Teachers constantly reminded the older children that they were role models for the younger ones. The older ones were often seen helping the young ones for example, putting their shoes on or even getting a tissue to wipe their nose. However at times the younger ones who were more competent than the older ones were also seen helping the older ones for example:

> It is mat time and a four year old boy Tom is playing and not participating. His young brother Jack (two years) says to him, “Tom, sit down, sing.” Jack walks to Tom and grabbed his hand and brought him on the mat. The teacher praised Jack, “Well done Jack for helping your brother to join in our mat time. (Note: pseudonyms used)

These examples were constant occurrences at Muti and the teachers encouraged it. In some cases the teachers had to initiate the tuakana-teina, for instance:

> A teacher is playing ball games outside with a group of children. She encourages the less able children to participate and ask the more able to help them. The teacher also role models by helping the less able herself at times.

Even when the older or more able showed resistance to helping the teachers always find ways to get to them, for example:

> A teacher asks children to put their shoes on to go for a walk. She then asks Mike (four years) to help his brother, Tim (22 months) to put his shoes on. Mike says, “He is not going.” The teachers ask Mike, “why?” Mike says, “Because he is small, he doesn’t like walks.” The teacher says, “Oh! He is going, everyone is going. He will learn to walk with us. You and I can teach him.” Mike then helped his brother to put his shoes on and everyone went for a walk. (pseudonyms used)

In this scenario the teacher even managed to show Mike that there are ways to include everyone regardless of their abilities. Even though both centres practised the tuakana-teina concept it had more meaning at Muti as it was clearly spelt in their documents.

Summary

Results from observations of the two settings and an analysis of their documents, reveal the similarities in practise in the two settings. They serve to high light that both Bako and Muti education centres have practices that promote inclusion. The practice in the two settings seemed to be dominated by the rights discourse which promotes equity and the right of every child. However, the charity discourse seemed to have played a role too in instances where it was felt these children need help. They also show the importance of ECE centres having inclusive philosophies and policies. In these cases Bako and Muti education centres seemed to practise what was spelt in their documentation and the practice seemed to confirm their feelings about inclusion.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

Introduction

In the introduction to this study I stated that I sought to find out how two early childhood centres with children from birth to five years meet the children's diverse learning needs. In this chapter I discuss what the present research may tell us about inclusion in early childhood education. Factors that make inclusive education a success in these case studies are examined. Consideration is given to the results from the questionnaires, focus group interviews, document analysis and observations. I highlight the dynamics that makes inclusive education a success story in the two case studies presented. In this final section of the report, I integrate the findings of the study with literature and make connections between the cases. I draw attention to how the two settings are meeting the needs of individual children.

Positive attitude makes inclusive education happen

From my observations, focus group interviews with teachers and parents, questionnaires and document analysis, I concluded that there are teachers and parents/whānau who are dedicated to make inclusive education happen in ECE. Most of the teachers included in this study were qualified registered teachers who all seemed to have a positive attitude toward all children and their families regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or capabilities. I felt that their positive attitude played a key role in building inclusive settings, for example, in both cases teachers had positive attitudes towards all children and their families regardless of their differences and they were all welcomed. The rights discourse seemed dominant in both settings. In Bako case study this was evident even in the different cultures and abilities that attended the centre and how they were all acknowledged and treated with respect. In Muti case study it was also evident in their ability and

willingness to provide equitable education to all learners regardless of their differences, and welcoming even the families with hearing impairments. These results validate what earlier researchers argued, that positive attitudes are essential in building inclusive settings (Lieber et al. 2002; MacArthur et al. 2003; Purdue, 2004). The results confirm long established evidence that ECE settings whose teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion, place emphasis on equal rights and equal opportunities for all children, accept and include all children and their families making sure that individual educational needs are met (Cullen & Carroll-Lind, 2005; MacArthur et al, 2003; Purdue, 2004).

In these settings a rights discourse and social theory are dominant and this is evident in the attitude of the teachers who advocate for the rights of the child and equity (Ainscow & Moss, 2002; Ballard, 2003; MacArthur et al. 2005). For most of these teachers inclusion meant that all children were treated equitably and with respect. It also meant that they were given equal opportunities to participate in the settings. As research evidence shows, these teachers were welcoming, approachable and they made sure that parents/families/whānau and their children had a sense of belonging in the centre. Therefore, the results authenticate earlier findings that in settings where the rights discourse is dominant, equity and respect is paramount and children and their families feel that they have a place (MacArthur, 2009; MacArthur, et al. 2003; Purdue, 2004; Stoneman, 2001). Having a sense of belonging made children and their families feel included and therefore comfortable to participate in centre activities. When children and their families have a sense of belonging they know that they have a place (Ministry of Education, 1996a) and as a result they feel free to participate. Parents' attitudes influence their choice of an ECE centre; those parents who believed in inclusion chose these centres for their

inclusive policies and they expressed their satisfaction with their choice of ECE setting, as evidenced in this study. In both case studies parents revealed that if the centres were not welcoming, their children would not be there. The parents were positive about inclusion just like their teachers and they shared a similar definition of inclusion.

The case studies confirm what research says, that parents/families who have positive attitudes towards inclusion enrol their children in inclusive settings (MacArthur, 2009; MacArthur, et al. 2003; Nichols, 2010; Purdue, 2004; Stoneman, 2001). Parents in these case studies were positive about children with diverse needs learning together and socialising together; they also revealed their satisfaction with different age groups learning in the same setting. Most parents revealed that having children with different learning needs and different abilities learning together will teach their children to have empathy and to be tolerant of others, confirming earlier research (MacArthur, et al. 2003; Stoneman, 2001). This showed that to some extent the charity discourse had a role to play in inclusive settings. I also observed in these settings that children learned to care for each other and help each other.

Communication and collaboration help build inclusive settings

Based on the results from this study, I concluded that when adults work together as a team and provide each other with valuable information about a child they enhance successful inclusion substantiating earlier findings, and that when teachers, families, specialists and children work together, inclusion is enhanced (Dunn, 2008; Lieber et al. 2002; Mentis et al. 2005). Results from the case studies show that both parents and teachers value communication about children. They communicated and worked together as a team, for example, with children with

challenging behaviour. The IEP meetings showed that they planned together for the children who needed extra attention and they agreed on their plan. Effective collaborative relationships enhanced the participation and inclusion of children and their families (Dunn, 2008; Mentis et al. 2005). In these cases the social and ecological theories were used while equity was enhanced.

An inclusive early childhood education system would be more meaningful and valuable if the inclusive position is clearly stated in the policy and curriculum documents (MacArthur, 2009; Mentis, Quinn & Ryba, 2005; Purdue, 2004). This was evident in this study. In Bako case study, inclusion was clearly stated in their philosophy and all their policies. In Muti case study, even though the philosophy did not clearly state the inclusive position of the centre this was clearly stated in their policies. Both centres use *Te Whāriki* as their curriculum document and it clearly states that, "*Te Whāriki* is designed to be inclusive and appropriate for all children and anticipate that special needs will be met as children learn together in all kinds of early childhood settings" (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 11). I therefore concluded that inclusion is enhanced when the inclusive position is clearly stated in the policy and curriculum documents of a setting.

The culture of the setting and the attitude of staff determine the policies and practices that will be put in place (Mentis et al., 2005). In these case studies the teachers were all positive about inclusion, they were welcoming and approachable. The rights discourse was seen to dominate their beliefs and practice. They therefore worked together with their parents in formulating inclusive policies and this was reflected in the day to day culture of the setting. The atmosphere was friendly, welcoming and both had an open door policy. The behaviour of the members and their actions modified the culture of their setting as reflected in their

values and beliefs (Gibbons 2004; MacArthur, 2009; Mentis et al, 2005; Nichols, 2010; Purdue, 2004). This was evident in activities, relationships and documentation at Bako and Muti. It is the behaviour and actions of participants in a setting that give children and their families a sense of belonging. Results from these case studies show that parents and teachers felt a sense of belonging. Therefore the second strand in *Te Whāriki*, Belonging was achieved as, children and their families felt they belonged to the setting and they were comfortable with their teachers, customs and routines (Ministry of Education, 1996a). This in turn contributed to the successful inclusion of all children and their families in these settings.

Quality learning experiences enhance successful inclusion

In the present study the inclusion of children and their families was enhanced by the quality of adult-child interaction and the provision of child-centred teaching/learning techniques. Teachers used child centred techniques and in most cases they followed children's interests. Child-centred teaching techniques resulted in greater gains in communication skills for children with special needs (Mahoney et al. 1992; O'Brien, 2001; Yoder et al. 1991). In this particular study the results validates that research, for example; Tom ended up a confident communicator even though when he started at Bako education centre at age three he had no expressive language. Even children who started in these settings with challenging behaviours, one could not tell who they were during the course of the study because their behaviour had improved because of the quality of interaction and the learning experiences provided. In both cases teachers respected the children and gave them self worth. I noticed also that the use of positive language such as praising children for doing what was required, made the children feel good about

themselves and enhanced learning and inclusion (Moffat, 2011). Teachers catered for every learner's needs and this was probably enhanced by the provision of ratios above the minimum requirements: Bako and Muti had adult-child ratios of 1-5 and 1-7 respectively. Inclusive education requires enough teachers to be able to cater for every learner's needs; if there are fewer than three adults to monitor children and manage their needs, quality is affected (ECE Taskforce, 2011; O'Brien, 2001). Bako and Muti both provided ratios which improved the quality of learning and enhanced inclusion. I concluded that having lower teacher-child ratios promotes successful inclusion in ECE.

In this study, teachers used the learning stories assessment approach. This meant that all children were assessed individually and at Muti in particular they planned for each individual child. This enhanced inclusion and confirmed earlier findings that, if used effectively, learning stories can be an all inclusive assessment method and they enable everyone to celebrate success (Cullen & Carroll-Lind, 2005; Dunn 2004; Macartney, 2008; Williamson, 2006). In these case studies, learning stories assessment was used as an all inclusive assessment method. The parents contributed their own stories, and in some cases told teachers their stories and teachers recorded them. The child's voice was also evident in these learning stories and it was encouraging to see. These case studies showed that teachers and parents in these settings were committed to the holistic learning and development of all children which is encouraged in *Te Whāriki (*Ministry of Education, 1996a). In the IEP meetings and plans, everyone who was involved had a voice. As Dunn (2004) noted, the EI teachers focused on developmental needs however, as evidenced in this study the EI teachers agreed with the teachers and families on inclusive ways to meet these individual needs, and this was reflected in

the IEP. Activity based intervention was used (Mallory, 1998) when implementing these IEP by the teachers. The teachers made sure these children were their responsibility and their activities based interventions minimised barriers to learning and participation for children who needed extra help. The teachers worked closely with the families to meet their needs.

In this study teachers rated the professional development they receive as adequate to very *adequate*. In my discussions with the teachers they also professed that the professional development they receive is relevant for inclusive education and they choose that which is relevant to their needs. Providing professional development which is in line with current thinking is helpful in promoting inclusion (Purdue, 2004). The professional development received by these teachers was in line with what the centres needed to improve on in terms of providing quality and inclusive education.

The tuakana-teina concept was not part of my literature review as enhancing inclusion. However, results from this study showed that the concept of tuakana-teina played a role in building inclusive environments in settings with children from birth to five (Barrett-Aranui, 1999; Royal-Tangaere, 1997). It was a natural occurrence in both settings so that competent children would help the less competent ones, thus the charity discourse in action. This in turn gave the children a sense of togetherness. The teachers also encouraged this concept especially in the Muti education centre case study where the teachers were heard telling the older children that they are role models. The children and their teachers viewed the ECE setting as their home. They therefore had love and they cared for each other in their family/whānau in the settings. This essence of love and care for one another in the whānau reinforces the principles of whanaungatanga [togetherness] (Ministry

of Education, 2011b). Considering that both settings have higher percentages of Māori children on their roll, encouraging tuakana-teina reflected the teachers' willingness to promote Maori cultural heritage as, the curriculum supports cultural identity of all children, and affirms and celebrates cultural diversity (Ministry of Education, 1996a). This promoted the successful inclusion for Māori children and their families and it seemed effective with all children.

On the negative side, teachers at Muti expressed dissatisfaction with the EI team who were working with one of their child for the decision to close the file. It seemed there was communication breakdown and the teachers did not agree with the file being closed. The teachers in both cases felt that the help they get from Ministry of Education Special Education could be improved. They agreed that they were getting some help but the help was not satisfactory. They felt that more could be done. However, at Bako the teachers shared that they were all going to be doing the Incredible Years Teacher Series course in 2012 through the Ministry of Education. It is a professional development course to help teachers manage inclusively children with challenging behaviours.

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Chapter Eight: Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter provides an overall view of the study linking it back to my research question. I also provide recommendations for future research ending with some limitations to the study and make concluding remarks.

Review of the study

In both case studies the evidence is overwhelming that children's needs were being met. The positive attitude of the teachers, working together with their families and providing quality learning experiences contributed to the success of meeting every child's needs. Children were treated with respect and equity was always promoted. Children and their families know that they have a place in these settings. Individual children's needs were met through quality teaching and learning. Individual successes are celebrated by children and their families thus, answering my research question: *How do two early childhood centres with children from birth to five years meet the children's diverse learning needs?* A combination of positive attitudes towards all children, offering quality learning experiences, treating children with respect, practising equity and working in partnership all contributed to meeting the needs of all children. I found that the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods contributed to the richness of this study as it enabled me to gather opinions, observe practice and analyse whether what is in the documentation is practised, thus, confirming research that mixed methods contribute to the wealth of the study in ECE (Liberty, 2001). It enabled me to do a comparative and in depth analysis.

Recommendations

Transforming the culture of education takes time and in most cases it can be met with challenges and resistance. New Zealand has seen a shift in legislation and policies to assert that all children have the right to enrol and to receive quality ECE in a setting of their choice (Education Act 1989; Ministry of Education, 1996a; Ministry of Education, 1996b; SR 2008/204). In the Disability Strategy which was launched in 2001 it was stated that, “All children, youth and adult learners will have equal opportunities to learn and develop in their local educational centres” (Minister of Disability Issues, 2001, p.11). I recommend that the government through the Ministry of Education monitor ECE settings and their operations to ensure that no child is excluded or denied the right to participate in an ECE setting of their choice. The results of this study , across two settings, shows that it is important that teachers and their families in all settings work in partnership for the successful inclusion of all children (Dunn, 2008; Mentis et al. 2005; Moffat, 2011).

I recommend that the EI teachers join the ECE teachers in using narrative assessment in the form of learning stories. Rather than just writing their contributions to the IEP meeting, they should also find ways of assessing the child with an open mind, without trying to find deficits. This will further enhance the successful inclusion of all children. I recommend that when they are making the decision of closing files the EI teachers should consult with the teachers and parents/families before making the final decision and making sure that all parties agree.

The provision of lower teacher-child ratios in ECE is an area which the government should consider changing. Considering how well lower ratios worked in these two case studies, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education seriously

consider some changes in the current ratios of 1-5 for children under two years old and 1-10 for children over two years old in ECE. O'Brien (2001) asserts that quality is affected when there are fewer adults to monitor and educate children. Therefore there is need to seriously consider the quality of education and care we want to provide for the children. Taking into consideration recommendations from the Children's Commission (2010) findings would be a starting point. It would be ideal to have 100% qualified teachers and low teacher-child ratios in ECE.

Finally I recommend that future research should focus on the barriers to successful inclusion. The researchers should concentrate on finding the reasons why some settings are not inclusive and what could be done to make inclusion work. If such research is done in ECE settings it will enable teachers and families/whānau to reflect on their practice and seek ways of changing it to make sure that all children and their families are included and they have opportunities to participate in their ECE settings. Answers will be found as to why there are still barriers to inclusion when we have inclusive legislation and policies.

Limitations of the study

There were some limitations to the present study which could not be overlooked. Even though I had an overwhelming number of parents who wanted to participate in the focus group, it was very difficult to find a time that suited most of them due to their busy lives. As a result, many parents who wanted to participate in the focus group were left out and only a few who had a common free time participated in the focus group. The study was limited to two settings only and therefore the results cannot be necessarily generalised because it represents a small population. The observations made in this study were carried out over a period of four weeks; the results could have been more authentic if observation

were carried over a long period of time. This study researched the teachers' and the parents' opinions about inclusion and did not overtly seek the voice of the child. If the three and four year olds had been given the opportunity to give their views about inclusion it would have probably enhanced the richness of the study.

Conclusion

Over the past two decades, Aotearoa/New Zealand has seen a change in thinking about the rights of the child, and the rights of people with special educational needs in general. This has resulted in the reforms in educational policies to suit the dominant thinking of the current decades (Ballard, 2003; MacArthur et al., 2003; MacArthur, 2009). The present research shows that some ECE settings in Aotearoa/New Zealand have also shifted their thinking to do what is best for every child. From this research it is evident that there are some ECE teachers who understand the meaning of inclusion. These teachers in turn pass it on to the parents/families/whānau through their daily actions in their settings. They model and promote equity, they respect individual differences, and they welcome all cultures and give everyone a sense of belonging.

If this culture of including everyone and giving everyone the opportunity to participate in their regular ECE setting is encouraged, New Zealand will be able "...to achieve a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all children and school students" (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 5). Thus, teachers in all settings should be encouraged to work within the rights discourse and social theory, taking what is valuable in other discourses and critically analysing the pros and cons for the benefit of young children and their families. The teachers in the present study have found ways of removing barriers to participation and inclusion for all children and their families. If

all ECE settings could be encouraged to do the same in their practice we may end up with fair, equitable and democratic early childhood education for all.

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Appendices

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

2 August 2011

Thecla Moffat
1465 Rewi Street
TE AWAMUTU

Dear Thecla

Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 11/44
Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

Thank you for your letter dated 6 July 2011.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc Dr Angela Ward
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
PN900

Dr Valerie Margrain
School of Arts, Development & Health Education
PN900

Dr Alison Kearney, HoS
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
PN900

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
Graduate School of Education
PN900

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TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

Appendix: A

Management letter/ information sheet

5th August 2011

Dear Centre Manager/Owner

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

As one of the centres whose recent ERO reports identify as using inclusive practices, I am requesting permission to enter your centre and carryout my study.

My name is Thecla Moffat and I have been teaching in early childhood for the past 16 years. I am currently studying towards a Masters Degree in Education at Massey University. As part of my studies I am required to carry out a research thesis. I am passionate about early childhood and inclusive education. I am going to carry out a case study in this area, entitled;

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

My area of interest in this project is to find out how centres licensed for children from birth to five years respond to the wider age range, and the needs of all the children. In particular I would like to gather teachers' and parents' opinions about inclusive education, find out your centre policy on inclusion and also to observe what you do in your setting to support diversity.

I would like to visit your centre between August and November 2011. The research plan is to visit twice initially to familiarise myself with centre routines. I will then visit the centre five days in succession to carry out observations. This would be followed by a one day exit visit later on. I would also like to review documents including the centre policies and children's portfolios.

My research involves:

- Questionnaires for parents/ families and teachers.
- Observing inclusive practices in the centre.
- Reviewing documents, such as; the centre curriculum document, centre philosophy, centres policies, procedures, Individual Educational Plans and children's portfolios
- Two focus group discussion interviews, one for teachers and one for parents, where I can get participants to clarify some ideas that may have emerged from the questionnaires. The parent focus group will consist of between 5 to 10 participants while the teacher focus group will consist of between 2 and 5 participants.
- Audio taping the focus group interviews

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3472 www.massey.ac.nz

If you give me permission, I will give questionnaires to the centre manager for distribution to the teachers and parents. Please notify me of the children whose parents do not give consent to their child being observed and included on the study, and/or who do not wish me to access their child's IEP and/learning portfolios/stories; and the teachers who do not give consent to be observed. **Consent forms from parents and teachers will be given to the centre managers and I will collect these from them.** However, in order to ensure that parents and teachers are fully informed, in addition to providing information sheets, I offer to attend a staff meeting, post a wall notice, and ask management to include information in a news letter. Included with the questionnaire will be an additional sheet in which respondents may indicate by providing their details if they wish to participate in the focus group. **After completion the questionnaires will be given to the centre management and I will collect these from them. However the separate sheets for details for those who wish to participate in the focus group will be posted back to me in an enclosed postage paid envelope. If more than 5 participants express their wish to participate in the teacher focus group and if more than 10 express their wish to participate in the parent focus group then names will be randomly selected from a box.**

What I will do

I will observe routines and practices in the centre for examples of inclusive practice. I will have focus group interviews with those teachers and parents who wish to participate in focus groups. These will be an hour long at the centre from 5:30pm to 6:30pm or the time and dates agreed on by participants. At each focus group discussion an agreement will be made with those present regarding confidentiality of all information given. I would find it valuable to be able to review relevant centre documents such as; centre policies, centre philosophy and Individual Educational Plan documents. I will analyse the results from the findings. All data will be kept in a locked cabinet and in a password safe computer. These will be destroyed by Massey University after 5 years.

It is not foreseen that there are any potential risks to the centre and all participants in this research. **However, if anything negative arises, I will, within an ethic of care, seek to minimise harm through sensitive reporting and maintenance of confidentiality. I also hope** that the knowledge gained will add to our understanding of young children and their learning, and the ways in which early childhood centres meet the needs of the children in their care.

All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and will only be used for this research and any publications or presentations resulting from it. **The researcher will endeavour to maintain the confidentiality of participants, with pseudonyms used in the reporting. However, this cannot be assured.** There will be no coding or reference that can link the centre or any individual to the results. A summary of my findings will be made available to parents and teachers.

Participants have the right to:

- Decline to participate;

- Refuse to answer any questions;
- Withdraw from the study at any time;
- Ask questions about the study at anytime during the study;
- Provide information on the understanding that their name will not be used unless they give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the findings when the study is concluded;
- Retain confidentiality

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 11/44. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

My supervisors are Dr Angela Ward and Dr Valerie Margrain. They can both be contacted on 0800Massey. You can also contact them at anytime if you have any concerns regarding the way in which the research is being conducted.

If you agree to your centre's participation in my research study, please complete the consent form and return in the supplied envelope.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or want any further information. My contact details are listed below.

Yours faithfully

Thecla K. Moffat

Email: theclamoffat@xtra.co.nz

Phone: 07 8714393

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

Appendix: B

Information sheet for teachers

5th August 2011

Dear Teachers

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

You are invited to participate in this study as a teacher in a centre whose recent ERO report identify as using inclusive practices.

My name is Thecla Moffat and I have been teaching in early childhood for the past 16 years. I am currently studying towards a Masters Degree in Education with Massey University. As part of my studies I am required to carry out a research thesis. I am passionate about early childhood and inclusive education. I am going to carry out a case study in this area, entitled:

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

My area of interest in this project is to find out how centres licensed for children from birth to five years respond to the wider age range, and the needs of all the children. In particular I would like to gather your opinions about inclusive education, find out your centre policy on inclusion and also to observe what you do in your settings to support diversity.

I wish to visit your centre between August and November 2011. The research plan is to visit twice initially to familiarise myself with your routines. I will then visit the centre five days in succession to carryout observations. This will be followed by a one day exit visit later on. I would also like review documents including the centre policies and children's portfolios/learning stories.

The research involves:

- Questionnaires for parents/families and teachers.
- Observing inclusive practices in the centre.
- Reviewing documents, such as, the centre curriculum document, centre philosophy, centre policies, procedures, Individual Educational Plans and children's portfolios/learning stories.
- Two focus group discussion interviews, one for teachers and one for parents, where I can get participants to clarify some ideas that may have emerged from the questionnaires. The teacher focus group will consist of between 2 to 5 participants.
- Audio taping the focus group interviews

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3472 www.massey.ac.nz

Permission for me to research in the centre has been provided by centre management and the management will distribute questionnaires to the teachers and parents.

What will I have to do?

I will observe you as you interact with the children and their families and carry out your daily routines. I will also review centre policies, children's portfolios/ learning stories and IEPs. If you do not wish me to observe you, or examine any particular documentation such as learning stories that you have written, please advise the centre manager. Completion of questionnaires or attendance at a later focus group is entirely voluntary. Please indicate on the separate sheet provided with the questionnaires if you wish to participate in the focus group and return in the provided envelope. The focus group interviews will be scheduled for one hour in the centre at a time that is agreed on by participants. In the event that there are more than 5 participants who expressed the wish to participate in the focus group, participant names will be put in a box and randomly picked out. If you are randomly selected then you will be informed of your participation. However, if your name is not selected then you will be informed of this as well so that you know why you are not participating.

Please indicate by filling in the consent form if you wish to be observed in this study and return to your centre management. All data will be kept in a locked cabinet and in a password safe computer. These will be destroyed by Massey University after 5 years.

It is not foreseen that there are any potential risks to the centre and/or participants in this research. However, if anything negative arises, I will, within an ethic of care, seek to minimise harm through sensitive reporting and maintenance of confidentiality. It is hoped that the knowledge gained will add to our understanding of young children and their learning, and the ways in which early childhood centres meet the needs of the children in their care.

All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and will only be used for this research and any publications or presentations resulting from it. The researcher will endeavour to maintain the confidentiality of participants, with pseudonyms used in the reporting. However, this cannot be assured. There will be no coding or reference that can link the centre or any individual to the results. A summary of my findings will be made available to parents and teachers.

The rights of participants in any research are as follows. The right to:

- Decline to participate;
- Refuse to answer any questions;
- Withdraw from the study at any time;

- Ask questions about the study at anytime during the study;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the findings when the study is concluded;
- Retain confidentiality.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 11/44. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

My supervisors are Dr Angela Ward and Dr Valerie Margrain. They can also both be contacted on 0800Massey. You can contact them at anytime if you have any concerns regarding the way in which the research is being conducted.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or want any further information. My contact details are listed below.

Yours faithfully

Thecla K. Moffat

Email: theclamoffat@xtra.co.nz

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TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

Appendix: C

Information sheet parents

5th August 2011

Dear Parents/ Whānau/ Caregivers

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

You are invited to participate in this study as one of the parent/s/whānau who have a child/children in a centre whose recent ERO report identify as using inclusive practices.

My name is Thecla Moffat and I have been teaching in early childhood for the past 16 years. I am currently studying towards a Masters Degree in Education with Massey University. As part of my studies I am required to carry out a research thesis. I am passionate about early childhood and inclusive education. I am going to carry out a case study in this area, entitled: *Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand*

My area of interest in this project is to find out how centres licensed for children from birth to five years respond to the wider age range, and the needs of all the children. In particular I would like to gather your opinions about inclusive education, review your child/children's learning stories, and also to observe how you relate to your centre.

I wish to visit your centre between August and November 2011. The research plan is to visit twice initially to familiarise myself with the centre routines. I will then visit the centre five days in succession to carry out observations. This will be followed by a one day exit visit later on.

My research involves:

- Questionnaires for parents/ families and teachers.
- Observing inclusive practices in the centre.
- Reviewing documents such as; the centre curriculum document, centre philosophy, centres policies, procedures, Individual Educational Plans and children's portfolios.
- Two focus group discussion interviews, one for teachers and one for parents, where I can get participants to clarify some ideas that may have emerged from the questionnaires. The parent focus group will consist of between 5 to 10 participants.
- Audio taping the focus group interviews

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3472 www.massey.ac.nz

Permission for me to research in the centre has been provided by centre management and the management will distribute questionnaires to teachers and parents. Completion of questionnaires or attendance at later focus groups is entirely voluntary.

What will I have to do?

I will observe examples of inclusive practices in the centre. I will review children's learning stories for examples of inclusive practices. I will have one focus group interview session with the parents who wish to participate in the focus group. I will give out questionnaires to management to distribute to you. Enclosed with the questionnaire is a separate sheet for you to indicate whether you wish to participate in the focus group at a later date. After completing your questionnaires please return them to your centre management. If you wish to participate in the focus group please fill in the separate sheet provided with the questionnaire and post it to me in the enclosed pre-paid postage envelope. In the event that there are more than 10 participants who expressed the wish to participate in the focus group, participant names will be put in a box and randomly picked out. If you are randomly selected then you will be informed of your participation. However, if your name is not selected then you will be informed of this as well so that you know why you are not participating. If you wish that you or your child/children be observed and your child's/children's portfolio be read, please fill in the consent form provided indicating your preferences, and return to the centre management. If you do not wish me to observe you and/or your child/children, or read your child/children's learning stories, please advise the centre management.

All data will be kept in a locked cabinet and in a password safe computer. These will be destroyed by Massey University after 5 years.

It is not foreseen that there are any potential risks to the centre and all participants in this research. However, if anything negative arises, I will, within an ethic of care, seek to minimise harm through sensitive reporting and maintenance of confidentiality. It is hoped that the knowledge gained will add to our understanding of young children and their learning, and the ways in which early childhood centres meet the needs of the children in their care.

All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and will only be used for this research and any publications or presentations resulting from it. The researcher will endeavour to maintain the confidentiality of participants, with pseudonyms used in the reporting. However, this cannot be assured. There will be no coding or reference that can link the centre or any individual to the results. A summary of my findings will be made available to parents and teachers.

The rights of participants in any research are as follows.

The right to:

- Decline to participate;
- Refuse to answer any questions;
- Withdraw from the study at any time;
- Ask questions about the study at anytime during the study;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the findings when the study is concluded;
- Retain confidentiality.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 11/44. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

My supervisors are Dr Angela Ward and Dr Valerie Margrain. They can both be contacted on 0800Massey. You can also contact them at anytime if you have any concerns regarding the way in which the research is being conducted.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or want any further information. My contact details are listed below.

Yours faithfully

Thecla K. Moffat

Email: theclamoffat@xtra.co.nz

Appendix: D

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

Questionnaire for teachers

This questionnaire is part of a research study by Thecla Moffat through Massey University. An information sheet has been provided, and additional copies are available from your centre managers.

Section 1

This part of the questionnaire seeks your opinions about the early childhood centre you work in. Please circle the responds that represents how accurately each statement is to your opinion.

1=totally disagree, 2=disagree, 3=accurate, 4=very accurate

1.1	Teachers in this centre respond to the needs of all children	1	2	3	4
1.2	Teachers in this centre are approachable	1	2	3	4
1.3	We keep parents/whaanau/caregivers informed about their child/children's learning and development.	1	2	3	4
1.4	As a centre we give parents opportunities to be involved in the centre activities.	1	2	3	4
1.5	Families get all the help and support they need from the centre	1	2	3	4
1.6	As a centre we demonstrate an open door policy	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments:

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Section 2

The following section is about how you value different aspects of the centre. Please circle the responds that best represent how important each of the following value is for you in your relationship with the families.

1=not important, 2=partially important, 3=important, 4=very important

2.1	Giving parents feedback about their child's day	1	2	3	4
2.2	Being informed by the parents about their child's night, morning or weekend	1	2	3	4
2.3	Having parents to look at their child's work and progress	1	2	3	4
2.4	Discussing any concerns you have about the child with the parent/s	1	2	3	4
2.5	The knowledge that the parents have about their child	1	2	3	4
2.6	Teacher-parent meetings	1	2	3	4
2.7	Getting a parent voice for the child's portfolio	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments:

Section 3

This section seeks information about how often you communicate to parents/families about matters relating to their child's learning in the centre.

1=never. 2=not sure, 3=often, 4=always

3.1	Do you communicate with parents about their child's positive performance and interests?	1	2	4	5
3.2	Do you communicate with parents their child's extraordinary or unusual performance?	1	2	4	5
3.3	Do you communicate with parents about their child's positive behaviour?	1	2	4	5
3.4	Do you communicate with parents about their child's challenging behaviour?	1	2	4	5
3.5	Do you communicate with parents about their child's day in the centre?	1	2	4	5
3.6	Do you have good communication with the parents?	1	2	3	4
3.7	Do you contact parents/caregivers to discuss any concerns about their child?	1	2	3	4
3.8	Do you comfortably discuss any concerns you may have about a child with the parent/caregiver?	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments:

Section 4

This section seeks to know your feelings about having diverse students and their families including those with special needs. Indicate how comfortable you are with such situations.

1=not at all, 2=not sure, 3= comfortable, 4=very comfortable

4.1	Are you comfortable with the way children with diverse needs socialise with others?	1	2	3	4
4.2	Do you feel comfortable that under 2 year olds can play with 4 year olds or vice versa?	1	2	3	4
4.3	Are you comfortable with the way all children are treated in the centre?	1	2	3	4
4.4	As a teacher, are you comfortable working with children with special needs?	1	2	3	4
4.5	As a teacher, are you comfortable working with families from diverse backgrounds?	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments:

Section 5

This section seeks your opinions on the quality of help teachers receive for diverse children in their centres.

1=very inadequate, 2=inadequate, 3=adequate, 4=very adequate

5.1	How do you rate the quality of professional development you receive?	1	2	3	4
5.2	Do you receive adequate help for helping students with challenging behaviour?	1	2	3	4
5.3	How do you rate the quality of help you receive from the Ministry of Education (Special Education)?	1	2	3	4
5.4	How do you rate the type of help and support you get from families of diverse students?	1	2	3	4
5.5	How supportive is your community in your efforts to meet diverse needs?	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return the completed questionnaire to the centre Management, in the supplied envelope, by Friday 29th July 2011. Completion of the questionnaire is deemed to provide consent for inclusion in the research.

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

Please complete this section if you are willing to be invited to a one hour focus group later in the research. I will contact you to arrange a date, time and place.

Name: _____

Contact details: _____

_____

Signature:

Appendix: E

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

Questionnaire for parents

This questionnaire is part of a research study by Thecla Moffat through Massey University. An information sheet has been provided, and additional copies are available from your centre managers.

Section 1

This part of the questionnaire seeks your opinions about your child's early childhood centre. Please circle the responds that represents how accurately each statement is to your opinion.

1 =totally disagree, 2=disagree, 3= accurate, 4= very accurate.

1.1	Teachers in this centre responds to the needs of my child	1	2	3	4
1.2	The teachers in this centre are very approachable	1	2	3	4
1.3	I am kept informed about my child's learning and development	1	2	3	4
1.4	Parents are given opportunities to be involved in the centre activities	1	2	3	4
1.5	My family gets all the help and support they need from the centre	1	2	3	4
1.6	The centre demonstrates an open door policy	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments

Section 2

This section seeks your opinions how you value different aspects of the centre. Please circle the number that best represents how important each of the following value is for you in your relationship with the centre.

1=not important, 2=partially important, 3 =important, 4=very important

2.1	Feedback about your child's day	1	2	3	4
2.2	Informing the teachers about your child's night, morning and/or weekend	1	2	3	4
2.3	Having a look at your child's work and progress	1	2	3	4
2.4	Discussing any concerns you have about your child with the teachers	1	2	3	4
2.5	The knowledge that the teachers have about your child	1	2	3	4
2.6	Teacher-parent meetings	1	2	3	4
2.7	Contributing to your child's portfolio	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments

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Section 3

This section seeks information about how often you get communication about matters relating to your child in the centre.

1=never, 2=not sure, 3=often, 4=always

3.1	Do you communicate with teachers about your child's positive performance and interests?	1	2	3	4
3.2	Do you communicate with teachers about your child's extraordinary or unusual performance?	1	2	3	4
3.3	Do you communicate with teachers about your child's positive behaviour?	1	2	3	4
3.4	Do you communicate with teachers about your child's challenging behaviour?	1	2	3	4
3.5	Do you communicate with teachers about your child's day in the centre?	1	2	3	4
3.6	Do you have good communication with the teachers?	1	2	3	4
3.7	Do you contact teachers to discuss any concerns about your child?	1	2	3	4
3.8	Do you comfortably discuss any concerns you may have about a child with the teachers?	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments

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Section 4

This section seeks to know your feelings about you and your child being included with diverse students and their families including those with special needs. Indicate how comfortable you are with such situations.

1=not at all, 2=not sure, 3= comfortable, 4=very comfortable

4.1	Are you comfortable with the way children with diverse needs socialise with others?	1	2	3	4
4.2	Do you feel comfortable that under 2 year olds can play with 4 year olds or vice versa?	1	2	3	4
4.3	Are you comfortable with the way all children are treated in the centre?	1	2	3	4
4.4	Do you feel that teachers in this centre are comfortable in working with children with special needs?	1	2	3	4
4.5	Do you feel that teachers in this centre are comfortable working with families from diverse backgrounds?	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments:

Section 5

This section seeks your opinions on the quality of help teachers receive for diverse children in their centres.

1=very inadequate, 2=inadequate, 3=adequate, 4=very adequate

5.1	Do you think teachers in this centre are adequately equipped to work with diverse children?	1	2	3	4
5.2	Do you think teachers receive adequate help for helping students with challenging behaviour?	1	2	3	4
5.3	Do you think children with special needs are getting adequate help in this centre?	1	2	3	4
5.4	How do you rate the type of help and support teachers get from families of diverse students?	1	2	3	4
5.5	How supportive is your community in your efforts to meet diverse needs?	1	2	3	4

Any additional comments:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return the completed questionnaire to the centre Management, in the supplied envelope, by Friday 29th July 2011. Completion of the questionnaire is deemed to provide consent for inclusion in the research.

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

Please complete this section if you are willing to be invited to a one hour focus group later in the research. I will contact you to arrange a date, time and place.

Name:

_____

Contact details: -

_____

_____

_

Signature:

Appendix: F

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - MANAGEMENT

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I do/ do not agree that my centre be included in this study.

I do/ do not agree that you make observations in the centre.

I agree/do not agree that you review pedagogical documents in this centre.

I agree/do not agree to collect any requests from teachers or parents to be excluded from the study.

I agree/do not agree that you have focus group meetings in this centre.

I wish/do not wish to have a summary of the findings given to me at the end of the study.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Full Name - printed .....

Appendix G

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT/CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUP

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I do/ do not agree to participate in this study.

I agree/do not agree to the focus group interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree not to disclose anything discussed during the focus group.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I .....

agree to keep confidential all information concerning this project:

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Appendix: H

Focus group draft questions

Everyone

- What does inclusion mean to you?
- Can you give examples of experiences of inclusion?
- In what ways does this centre make you feel a sense of belonging?
- What are the social or developmental gains you have seen in a child in this centre (if any) because of inclusion?
- In what ways do you think collaboration between teachers and parents contribute to the child's learning and development?
- In what ways does your centre demonstrate an open door policy?
- What do you do to support inclusion?

Parents only

- How much and/or in what ways do you contribute to your child's education programme?

Teachers only

In what ways do you help parents and children with challenging behaviour and in what ways do you think they should help you?

Appendix J

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

Consent form for parents

Please circle your preference.

Participant name: _____

I have read and understood the requirements of this study Yes/ No

I understand that if I have any questions I can ask at any time during the duration of the study. Yes/ No

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and by consent and that I may withdraw my participation at any time. Yes /No

I do/ do not agree to be observed in the centre.

I do/ do not agree that my child be observed in the centre

I do/ do not agree that you read my child's portfolio for this study.

Parent/whānau: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix K

Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand

Consent form for teachers

Participant name: _____

I have read and understood the requirements of this study Yes/ No

I understand that if I have any questions I can ask at any time during the duration of the study. Yes/ No

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and by consent and that I may withdraw my participation at any time. Yes /No

I do/ do not agree to be included in this study.

I do/ do not agree that you observe me in the centre.

Teacher's name _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____