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Intentional Teaching is a Taonga

An exploratory study of teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand and England

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Abstract

This qualitative research study explores early childhood teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand and England. Intentional teaching is a term in early childhood education discourse, and positions teachers to take on a more active role in children's learning which improves the quality of ECEC. This study gathered the views of a diverse range of teachers to interpret teachers' beliefs, views and use of intentional teaching to support young children. Data was gathered through an online questionnaire to which twenty-seven participants responded, 16 from Aotearoa New Zealand and 11 from England. Data was analysed using thematic analysis, adapting a reflexive approach throughout. Intentional teaching is a term in early childhood education discourse, and positions teachers to take on a more active role in children's learning. Teachers have a fundamental role to play in early educational settings. Western early childhood education typically follows a child-centred approach, where children's play is highly valued. However, evidence-based research shows there is a lack of understanding of the teachers' position within this context. Findings from this study emphasise the influential impact teachers' pedagogical beliefs have on their practice, which are grounded in sociocultural theory, children's right to play, relationships, and following a child-centred approach. These beliefs are represented through the interactive and collaborative strategies teachers purposefully enact to support children's learning. Teachers' understanding of intentional teaching was similar to literature definitions, but their understanding and beliefs highlighted variances between their espoused beliefs, practice and knowledge and their actual practice. Results suggested teachers' intentional practice can be hindered by factors such as limited staffing, resourcing and a lack of professional learning opportunities. Furthermore, the impacts of curriculum on intentional teaching are illustrated, highlighting how critical curriculum frameworks are in supporting or hindering teachers' intentionality.

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Glossary

Kaiako	Teacher
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
Whānau	Family
Tamariki	Children
Taonga	A treasure that is valued which can be applied to objects, ideas and practices
Te Whāriki	Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum
EYFS Framework	England’s Early Years Curriculum: Early Years Foundation Stage
Aotearoa NZ	New Zealand
UK	United Kingdom
Teacher	Adults who work with children in ECEC
Aroha	Love, sympathy, empathy, affection, care, compassion and consideration

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This study explores the perspectives, beliefs, and practices of intentional teaching from teachers in early educational settings in Aotearoa NZ and England. Features of intentional teaching that are deemed important and commonly used by teachers are identified, alongside teachers' understanding and knowledge of intentional teaching. It highlights the importance of teachers' pedagogical beliefs and examines the influencing factors that support and hinder teachers' intentional practice such as curriculum, qualifications, staffing, and the importance of professional learning opportunities. The qualitative study gathered responses from 27 participants (16 from Aotearoa NZ, and 11 from England) via an online questionnaire. The researcher chose to adopt an interpretivist approach guided by reflexive, thematic analysis to determine the meanings and patterns presented in the data.

The introductory chapter begins by providing information on the researcher's background, including the researcher's own pedagogical beliefs on intentional teaching in ECEC. The early childhood context in Aotearoa NZ and England is briefly outlined, along with an overview on the role of the teacher in ECEC in both countries. A rationale for the study is provided and focuses on the requirement for teachers to be intentional, knowledgeable practitioners to improve learning outcomes for children. The rationale is provided with support by evidence-based research that is explored in the literature review. The aim of this study is given and highlights the reasons behind choosing this area for research. The introduction concludes with an introduction to key terms that are pertinent to this study.

1.2 Researcher background

Aotearoa NZ is my home, first and foremost. My journey into early childhood education began in 2009, and since then I have developed my practice within a play-based, child-centred philosophy. My work with children has been diverse, working with young children from infants to six years of age. Now settled in England, I began my teaching journey here in May 2022. My interest in intentional teaching came from my deeply-rooted values of being a reflective practitioner, considering the influential role teachers have in children's learning. However, I was unsure as to how teachers can be intentional in learning environments that are entrenched in quality, play-

based learning. Gaining a new perspective from my earlier postgraduate study, alongside my own experiences and reflections, I chose to dive into the complex role of the intentional teacher in ECEC and learn about teachers' views and beliefs from a diverse group of people. I will always advocate for children's right to access meaningful play, and for viewing children as capable, competent learners who are powerful agents of their learning environment. However, it is crucial we, as kaiako, view ourselves as competent, capable agents in the learning environment too, and build the skills and knowledge through evidence-based research to intentionally guide children to reach high-quality outcomes.

1.3 The early childhood context in Aotearoa NZ and England

Early childhood in Aotearoa NZ is available for children from birth to six years old. While most children generally start school as soon as they turn five, they have the right to access ECEC services until they are six. Aotearoa NZ is rich in its cultural-historical context, which underpins the pedagogy and early childhood curriculum; *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is the treaty between Māori and the British crown, formed in 1840 and is the foundation behind the design, structure, philosophy and pedagogy of *Te Whāriki* (2017). The bi-cultural curriculum is a holistic document, with overarching principles of whakamana (empowerment), kotahitanga (holistic development), whānau tangata (family and community), and ngā hononga (relationships). The whāriki acts as a metaphor for the developing child, acknowledging the layered contexts which guide, influence and shape a child's learning and development (Ministry of Education, 2017). The vision *Te Whāriki* (2017) has for individual tamariki is to view children as "competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society", (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.5).

Early childhood is more commonly known as the early years in England and is accessible for children from birth to five years of age. There is significant diversity in ECEC provision in England, but the *EYFS Framework* (Department of Education, 2021a) covers all settings. Its mandatory status requires all providers to reach high standards of learning and welfare. The overarching principles of the framework focus on the unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments with responsive teaching, and the importance of learning and development. Three prime areas of

learning are the focus for the framework, communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development. The framework then outlines seven areas of learning and development that aim to support children's holistic development. The *EYFS Framework* (2021) clearly outlines expected learning outcomes and goals for children, including requirements for statutory summative assessments both at the commencement and completion of their reception year. While the curriculum takes a more prescriptive approach to children's learning, the revisions in the most recent version amplify holistic development, centring children's interests, and encouraging professional autonomy for teachers in creating an inclusive, broad curriculum that meets the prime areas and early learning goals of the *EYFS* (Department for Education, 2021a). Alongside the framework, the document *Development Matters* (Department for Education, 2021b), a non-statutory document outlines in-depth guidance for pedagogy and implementation of the *EYFS Framework* (Department of Education, 2021a).

1.4 The role of the teacher in Aotearoa NZ and England

How teachers perceive and enact their teaching role is highly influenced by the settings they work in, yet the role of adults within ECEC pedagogy currently remains uncertain (Grieshaber et al., 2021). However, there has been a shift in New Zealand pedagogy. The revised version of *Te Whāriki* (2017) now includes the previously absent term *teaching* and requires kaiako to be intentional within their practice and pedagogy (McLachlan, 2019). Cherrington (2018) argues that for this reconceptualization to be authentic and relevant to the Aotearoa ECEC context, reflective practice must be at the forefront of intentional teaching practice. Embracing reflective practice requires teachers to engage in "sophisticated reflective skills and knowledge and an attitude of wholeheartedness" (Cherrington, 2018, p. 13).

In New Zealand, the Education Review Office (ERO) requires ECEC services to provide a "rich and responsive curriculum" (Education Review Office, 2016, p.8). ERO identified a wide disparity in the quality of curriculum implementation in their 2016 report, with a significantly low result, as only 10% of services were "explicitly linking their curriculum to the four principles, five strands, and their associated goals" (Education Review Office, 2016, p. 8). These critical findings affirm the importance of intentional teaching in Aotearoa NZ both in terms of how ECEC services engage and

implement the curriculum, and how teachers effectively enact the curriculum to support children's learning (McLaughlin & Cherrington, 2018).

In England, there is minimal recent research investigating the teacher's positioning in ECEC. Although, it has been examined through the large-scale projects of the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study (Sylva et al., 2004) and the Researching Effective Pedagogy in Early Years (REPEY) project (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004) that teachers' active role in children's learning is critical for successful and quality learning. Within these empirical studies, the role of an effective ECEC teacher is defined as an adult who provisions an environment through meaningful planning and assessment *alongside* children's play (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). England's Department for Education clearly defines the teachers' role in children's learning by stating teaching in ECEC should not be strictly formal, and the term 'teaching' is a broad construct of the variety of specific and intentional strategies adults can support young children to learn and develop (Department for Education, 2021b).

Although intentional teaching is not a common term within UK-based early years discourse, their definition of the teachers' role clearly describes the deliberate actions to support children's learning; making a clear justification for intentional teaching within ECEC in England. Furthermore, the non-statutory document *Development Matters* (2021) outlines high-quality teaching practices to ensure children receive optimum learning experiences in ECEC settings. The suggestions of what teachers can do to support learning and development is a comprehensive list describing strategies which can be defined as intentional teaching practices (Department for Education, 2021b).

1.5 Rationale

Intentional teaching acknowledges the significant role teachers play in supporting young children's learning and development, in particular the quality and substance of the interactions between teacher and child (Epstein, 2014). Children's development and learning are supported and extended more richly when teachers, reflecting on their knowledge of the child and context, use purposeful and deliberate tools and actions to extend learning. This is evidenced in numerous studies which identify the clear and positive impacts intentional teaching has on children's learning (Chigeza et al., 2016; Fleer & Hoban, 2012; McNerney et al., 2019; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004;

Skene et al., 2022; Sylva et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2016). The surroundings in which teachers work have a large influence on how they perceive and act in their teaching roles, but the function of adults in ECEC pedagogy is still unknown (Grieshaber et al., 2021). While research identifies its importance, little research has undertaken exploring teachers' perspectives and beliefs of intentional teaching. Furthermore, no study has taken on a comparative lens between England and Aotearoa NZ in relation to intentional teaching. The rationale for choosing both countries is for their similar child-centric and play-based pedagogy, the historical relationship between the countries, and the unique position of the researcher as a New Zealand trained teacher currently working in England.

1.6 Research aims

The overarching aim of this study is to understand teachers' beliefs, perspectives, and use of intentional teaching to support young children's learning in ECEC, in the context of ECEC teaching in Aotearoa NZ and England. Teachers' beliefs and perspectives have an undeniable impact on their decisions on when, where and how to enact intentional teaching practices. Therefore, adopting a qualitative, exploratory lens, this research seeks to:

- Identify ECEC teachers' beliefs about intentional teaching
- Identify teachers' use of intentional teaching practices
- Identify and explore teachers' understanding of intentional teaching within curriculum implementation and play-based pedagogy
- Identify similarities and differences in the perspectives of ECEC teachers in Aotearoa NZ and England.

1.7 Introduction to key terms

The terms defined in this section are used throughout the different sections of the study. The definitions used are reflective of a common understanding in ECEC discourse, and amongst ECEC professionals. However, due to the comparative nature of this study, it is important to acknowledge that these definitions are not exhaustive and participants from this study may describe these terms differently, dependent on their experiences, views, and own pedagogical beliefs and practices.

Intentional teaching

For the purposes of this study, intentional teaching is defined as encompassing the purposeful, thoughtful, and planned actions of teachers intended to support the aspirations and learning objectives identified for children. It does not occur by chance, rather, "intentional teachers use their knowledge, judgement, and expertise to organise learning experiences for children" (Epstein, 2014, p. 1) including both spontaneous and planned teaching opportunities as well as adult and child-directed learning moments.

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

For this study, this term is used to encompasses all licenced, teacher-led services and settings that provide education and care to children from the age of birth to 6 years old. There is a large diversity in the types of these settings with a range of designs and approaches that are dependent on the pedagogical, cultural and political contexts they exist within.

Teacher

The term 'teacher' in this study is used to identify all adults who work directly with children. It is important to note that the term 'teacher' carries implications in terms of qualification status or accreditation, but the term teacher is chosen here to respect the position of the adult, both qualified and unqualified in ECEC.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is a broad term that includes the methods, beliefs, theory, and research-based approaches that guide and inform teaching practice. Friesen and Su (2023) describe pedagogy as an "independent, but ethically informed" (p.1) perspective on the practice of teaching.

Ako

Ako is a Māori term meaning to both teach and learn. It describes the reciprocal relationship between kaiako and ākonga (learner) where new knowledge and understanding is constructed together through shared learning experiences (Te Kite Ipurangi, 2023)

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis focuses on teachers' beliefs, perspectives, and use of intentional teaching in ECEC. The context for this study is England and Aotearoa NZ, where participants from both countries contributed to this study by responding to a questionnaire. The role of the ECEC teacher is debated within literature, yet intentional teaching positions the teacher as an active participant in children's learning. The rationale for this study is to explore how teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching can improve children's learning outcomes within play-based ECEC settings through a comparative lens of England and Aotearoa NZ teachers. Aims for this study are detailed, and key terms used throughout the research study are addressed.

The present chapter outlines the research, introducing the researcher and providing information on the research context. The literature review in chapter two examines, analyses and reviews relative literature. The literature reviewed is not limited by year of publication to allow for breadth and dimension of the literature. Literature on key components of how teachers' use intentional teaching is examined, which is followed by a review of literature that discusses the impacts of teachers' beliefs, tensions of learning, teaching and play, and external pressures on ECEC. This chapter concludes with a set of proposed research questions.

Chapter three outlines the qualitative methodology of the study, detailing methodological choices and details the data collection method. The thematic analysis is described, and detail on participants, and a reflexive research approach is defined as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter four provides a detailed description of the findings using thematic analysis. While the research study is qualitative in nature, Likert-scale questions were used to support data in the questionnaire and tables outlining these findings are included within this chapter and in the appendices section of the thesis. Participant information is provided, and findings are organised under key themes of teachers' understanding of intentional teaching, teachers' pedagogical beliefs, the strategies teachers use to be intentional practitioners, the influence of curriculum frameworks, and the supports and challenges of being an intentional teacher.

In chapter five, findings are discussed and examined in relation to literature reviewed in chapter two. The implications of teachers' beliefs on intentional teaching are highlighted, and the position of intentional teaching to work effectively in play-based pedagogy to improve the quality of ECEC is argued. Chapter six concludes the thesis, highlighting limitations and strengths of the study and outlining implications for teachers', leaders and policy makers in ECEC. Suggestions for future research are discussed, and the chapter closes with the researcher's reflections on the journey and outcome of the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Intentional teaching encompasses the purposeful, meaningful and deliberate strategies teachers enact to support children in reaching defined learning and developmental outcomes and goals (Epstein, 2014). Research indicates intentional teaching improves the quality of ECEC by increasing meaningful and purposeful interactions between children and their teachers (McLaughlin et al., 2016). The following literature review explores current literature in relation to intentional teaching in ECEC pedagogy in both Aotearoa NZ and England. It presents research evidence of the ways in which intentional teaching has been demonstrated to support young children's learning. Initially considering the ways in which intentional teaching is enacted in ECEC settings, the review then investigates the teachers' role in supporting children's learning, in particular the implications of teachers' beliefs on their teaching practice. A range of influences shape teachers' intentional teaching practices in ECEC, including their beliefs about the nature of teaching, learning and the role of the teacher, and influence of initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning and development, as well as the implications of professional status. This discussion will highlight how teachers use intentional teaching to support children's learning through sustained shared thinking, effective questioning and dialogic strategies, sociocultural theory and practices, and responsive relationships. The potential tensions between learning, play, curriculum and teaching are reviewed, in addition to the external pressures facing teachers in becoming intentional practitioners. The articulation of intentional teaching and impacts of professional knowledge is discussed. To conclude this chapter, the gaps in the existing literature are noted, in justifying the focus and contribution of the current study.

2.2 How do teachers use intentional teaching to support children's learning in ECEC?

To be an intentional teacher, practitioners must enact many strategies to meet the changing and various needs of young children (Epstein, 2014; Greishaber et al., 2021; Lewis et al., 2019; McLaughlin et al., 2015). Furthermore, it should be the goal of any intentional teacher to find suitable strategies which develop a child's intentional learning competencies (Leggett & Ford, 2013). Specific intentional teaching practices are not prescriptive or didactically applied. Rather,

they are reflective of, and responsive to, various contextual factors, curriculum beliefs, and teacher knowledge and skills (McLaughlin et al., 2015).

An effective teacher adopts a plethora of skills and strategies to engage an intentional pedagogy to support children's learning journeys through practices that are sensitive to the diversity of curriculum, and the individual strengths and needs of children (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Grieshaber et al. (2021) argues that intentional teaching allows teachers to effectively support diverse children to access knowledge, skills, and understanding. Teachers need to adapt different techniques such as "scaffolding, modelling, questioning, elaborating and drawing on different methods of inquiry" (p. 21) and foster collaborative interactions to support children making sense of their world and build upon their social, emotional and cognitive development. Intentional teachers thus enact strategies to support children in achieving individually and culturally responsive positive learning outcomes across domains of learning and social-emotional competence (Epstein, 2014).

Based in Aotearoa NZ, McLaughlin et al. (2015) identified intentional teaching practices from the findings of a collaborative research project with ECE professionals. The study involved three stages of field work. Part one involved 24 teachers in observations and interviews. Part two involved comparisons of the list and teaching practices within international and national frameworks. Part three focused on a second round of interviews with participants to support further refinements. After teachers had provided feedback, stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the devised list of teaching practices. This resulted in an in-depth list of skills and practices which are divided into six areas: relationships, environment, socio-emotional teaching, intentional teaching, and competent and confident learners. The purpose of the lists is not to add to the rhetoric of prescriptive discourse that can be found internationally for ECEC teachers but to provide understanding of the complex, pedagogical and salient practices teachers enact to support learning.

To provide an insight into evidence-based research on effective intentional teaching in ECEC settings, discussed below are specific strategies and features which have been identified to be key factors of effective intentional teaching practice. The four areas discussed are sustained-shared

thinking, effective questioning and dialogic strategies, sociocultural theory and practices, and responsive relationships.

2.2.1 Sustained-shared thinking

Sustained-shared thinking (SST) highlights intentional teaching in meaningful interactions between children and teachers. SST describes an episode between two or more individuals as they "work together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative" (Sylva et al., 2004, p. 36). It is particularly effective when working within a child's zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Purdon, 2016). SST recognises the quality and depth of conversation can either hinder or promote learning opportunities for children. It highlights the important role of the adult in children's learning and is a valuable "pedagogical concept" (Siraj & Asani, 2015, p. 412).

The term 'sustained-shared thinking' emerged from the UK-based, *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education* project (EPPE) (Sylva et al., 2004). The EPPE study is a longitudinal research project founded in 2000 and is the largest of its kind. The study found that where children's learning progressed most, teachers used intentional practices of effective questioning, formative feedback and modelling. The report established a strong link between these deliberate practises and children's cognitive abilities. However, it was discovered that the frequency of these SST episodes occurring was low (Sylva et al, 2004).

In similar results to the EPPE study, an Aotearoa study found a low occurrence of SST episodes; with less than 10% of all observed adult-child interactions meeting the criteria (Meade et al., 2013). They suggest that the low occurrence of SST episodes may reflect that teachers need further knowledge of pedagogical practices to more frequently and effectively engage in intentional pedagogical strategies. SST requires a deep theoretical understanding of the underpinning strategies used to support children's conceptual development, social competencies, and scientific concepts. This signifies the links between teacher qualifications and professional knowledge in children's learning (Meade et al., 2013).

Comparable findings of the benefits of SST were found in Hackling and Barratt-Pugh (2012) who investigated how intentional teaching can support science in ECEC. Hackling and Barrett-Pugh emphasise that children need dialogue and scaffolding to develop early scientific concepts. Furthermore, developing a child's critical thinking skills is central to the concept of SST (Brodie, 2014), as it provisions possibilities for metacognition (Siraj & Asani, 2015), language development (Boyd, 2014) and socio-emotional competencies (Brodie, 2014).

In a UK-based qualitative study researching teachers' perspectives on SST, Purdon (2016) highlights significant attributes SST has for children's learning through a sociocultural lens. However, they note that teachers' ability to effectively engage in SST is reliant on their skills to support thinking capabilities, training, access to resources, and their qualification (Purdon, 2016). High ratios and busy environments limited potential opportunities for SST with children, alongside housekeeping expectations of teachers as well as a lack of understanding of SST within a teaching team. According to Grieshaber et al. (2021), there is little attention given to how teachers find purposeful time for SST when working within diverse and large groups of children and that maintaining SST with individuals or small groups is challenging.

2.2.2 Effective questioning and dialogic strategies

A key element of SST episodes is the meaningful interactive dialogue teachers engage in with children, and in particular, effective questioning (Lewis et al., 2019) to encourage critical, abstract and creative cognitive thinking processes (Hackling & Barrett-Pugh, 2012; MacNaughton & Williams, 2008; McNerney et al., 2019; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2008). Effective and intentional teachers are purposeful in their design of questions which relate to children's interests and learning needs (Salmon & Barrera, 2021). Findings from the UK based REPEY study (Sylva et al., 2004) indicated that in high-quality ECEC settings, teachers regularly engaged in pedagogic strategies to challenge children's cognitive abilities.

However, evidence-based research illustrates the missed opportunities children have in developing their cognitive skills and gaining a deeper understanding of the learning objectives. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of open-ended questioning to prompt critical thought, metacognition, and creative thinking (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009). Using data from the REPEY study, Siraj-

Blatchford and Manni (2008) looked into the questioning types teachers used to promote quality learning. They found that 94% of questions teachers used were closed-ended which focused on recall-type information and were based upon a limited selection of choices.

Furthermore, a UK-based study engaged teachers in a collaborative research project to engage teachers in research and a professional learning opportunity. While focusing on the powerful position teachers have in conversations with children, Boyd (2014) identified intentional teaching strategies within teachers' conversations in supporting children's language development. Boyd observed tension of power in the dialogues between teachers and children, as findings demonstrated teachers were the dominant party. Children's contributions were often responses to questions rather than contributing new ideas.

Research illustrates when teachers use effective dialogic strategies like open-ended questioning, narration and repetition promotes child-led and co-constructed learning, and stimulates children's critical thinking (Boyd, 2014; MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; McNerney et al., 2019).

2.2.3 Sociocultural theory and practices

Sociocultural theory has provisioned the reconceptualization of the teacher within early years, enabling space for teachers to be active and intentional within children's learning. To examine the role of intentional teaching for young children, Grieshaber et al. (2021) conducted a scoping literature review. They analysed relevant literature that demonstrates the key ideas, theoretical foundations, as well as identifying possible gaps. According to their research, most of the theoretical foundations of sociocultural theory, particularly Vygotsky, were heavily cited in the research literature on intentional teaching.

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky essentially believed that learning was an intricate social process (Vygotsky, 1978). Intentional teaching through the lens of Vygotsky's theory can be illustrated by supporting children's learning within their ZPD and positioning the teacher as the 'more knowledgeable other'.

Scaffolding is the practice of working with children's ZPD to move them from what they are currently capable of achieving to an extension of the skill or gaining new knowledge with the guidance of a more knowledgeable other (Bruner, 1977). Scaffolding requires intentional teaching techniques such as demonstrating, modelling, instruction, feedback, and questioning (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990) to nurture and extend learning (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009).

A United States study investigating intentional teaching and purposeful learning environments suggest scaffolding is an essential skill to develop children's literacy skills. According to Bahlmann-Bollinger and Myers (2019), provisioning purposeful learning areas is insufficient for children to develop writing skills effectively alone. Their findings argue teachers' use of intentional scaffolding is required for early literacy skills, and the level of support provided by the teacher as a significant impact on children's literacy success.

Scaffolding is an intentional teaching tool in which adults and children should be equal contributors to the conversation and experience (Epstein, 2014). However, as ECEC theory has evolved, the term 'scaffolding' has become "contentious amongst neo-Vygotskians" (McLachlan et al., 2018a, p. 102) due to possible power imbalances. Preference is given to the terms "guided participation" and "co-construction," which represent an improved balance of power and enables children to be leaders in their learning (McLachlan, et al., 2018a). Co-construction exists within a social-constructivist theoretical framework. It integrates Piagetian constructivist theory with the learner as an active contributor of knowledge, as well as cultural and social influences on children's development and learning (Verba, 1994). The primary distinction between scaffolding and co-construction is the collaborative development of shared meaning and understanding (Hedges, 2000; Krieg, 2018). The teacher, on the other hand, has control over the direction of learning in scaffolding.

Repositioning the teacher as a co-constructor alongside the learning child enables improved power balance. It situates children as agents of their own learning whilst advocating for their inherent and political rights to participate dynamically within their learning and play (Boyd, 2014; Leggett & Ford, 2013). Krieg (2018) suggests intentional co-construction can "invite children into the conversation" (p. 7) through empowering children's contributions to learning by promoting their

own knowledge and working theories. Essentially, co-construction provides space for intentional teaching to occur, and situates both the child and teacher as powerful influences on the learning environment (Boyd, 2014; Krieg, 2018).

2.2.4 Responsive relationships

Relationships between teachers and children are an important aspect of the learning environment. According to McLaughlin et al. (2019), relational pedagogy allows teachers to collaborate with families and whānau to better understand children. This deep knowledge of children's identity enables intentional teaching to occur in a meaningful and responsive way.

McLaughlin et al. (2019) affirm the way in which intentional teaching practices effectively met the complex social and emotional needs of young children during times of transition. They highlight the importance of relational pedagogy as a critical component of intentional teaching, and suggest relationships provide the space for teachers to work in partnership with family and whānau to deepen their understanding of children. For intentional teaching to occur, it needs to be meaningful and purposeful and this only can arrive from knowledge of children and their individual needs. Relational pedagogy allows for greater sensitivity and attunement to children's communicative efforts, and the ability to be more responsive in teaching and learning moments. The findings of their study show that providing reassurance to children through nurturing, responsive, and trusting relationships with young children and their families was a key intentional strategy.

2.3 How do teachers' pedagogical beliefs impact intentional teaching?

Individual belief systems have a strong influence on how teachers perceive their role in children's learning. Professional, personal and practical knowledge combine to form teachers' beliefs, which influence curriculum implementation and as a result, children's learning. Teachers' beliefs are precursors to professional behaviours (Buel & Beck, 2015) which "filter, frame and guide" (Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 249) pedagogical practices.

In a multiple case study in the United States, Friesen and Butera (2012) suggest that teachers' beliefs implicate teachers' decision-making in implementing curricula framework. Their research

found teachers' pedagogical beliefs impacted how they taught early literacy skills. Friesen and Butera argue it is the teacher who makes instructional determinations in the learning environment to help children in the acquisition of literacy skills. Because these teachers believed most learning effectively occurs within spontaneous play, Friesen and Butera argue their beliefs hindered children's learning, and suggest understanding teachers' beliefs should be "the first step in bringing about change" (p. 361).

2.3.1 Tensions of learning, play, and teaching

ECEC has struggled to navigate the tensions between promoting child-led approaches and delivering academic learning outcomes. Recognising the tension between child-directed and adult-directed approaches, Epstein (2014) suggests the label of *intentional teaching* because it illustrates how adults play a purposeful role in children's learning. Intentional teaching highlights the importance of teachers within play in supporting young children's learning and development, in particular the quality and substance of the interactions between teacher and child (McLaughlin et al. 2016). When teachers are aware of the pertinent role they play, children's development and learning is guided intentionally, and high-quality learning occurs. This is evidenced in numerous studies which identify the clear and positive impacts intentional teaching has on children's learning (Chigeza et al., 2016; Fleer & Hoban, 2012; McNerney et al., 2019; Skene et al., 2022, Sylva et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2020).

Research identifies the challenges and tensions ECEC professionals face as they attempt to weave child-centred beliefs and values with outcome-based academic content, especially when externally mandated (Edwards, 2017; Leggett & Ford, 2013; McDonald, 2018; Ofsted, 2015; Robinson & Bartlett, 2011; Shin & Patyka, 2017; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Whilst acknowledging the vital place play has in children's learning and development, teachers have expressed difficulty in trying to ensure the academic success of young children while still upholding a child-centred approach where play and children's agency in their learning are essential (McDonald, 2018).

UK's Ofsted (2015) reports teachers in ECEC may show a reluctance to the term 'teaching', arguing it constructs power imbalances. Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) argue that didactic teaching in ECEC is unnecessary and can cause negative consequences for a child's stress level. Teachers'

beliefs were observed to impact the positioning of the teacher and how teachers interact. The report illustrates that pedagogical beliefs were found to be "deeply rooted in their own personal beliefs" and experiences (Ofsted, 2015, p. 6). Similarly, in an Aotearoa NZ-based study, Foote et al. (2004) discovered teachers' beliefs are formed from their own early educational experiences.

The child-centred philosophies and sociocultural frameworks which dominate western ECEC (Farquhar & White, 2014) promote a constructivist approach to learning rather than a transmission model (Fives & Gill, 2015). So, it is not surprising that teachers may display an aversion to didactic forms of teaching, fearing that it may reduce children's agency in their learning, and steer away from play-based pedagogy (Batchelor, 2016; Cherrington, 2018; Fisher & Wood, 2012; Kilderry, 2015; Stephen, 2010).

Understanding this tension is complex. Kilderry (2015) argues teachers' beliefs, attitudes and perspectives toward intentional teaching are problematic and fall under traditional views of early learning such as developmentally appropriate practice. Traditionally, ECEC has been primarily influenced by Piagetian principles; a constructivist lens which positions learning as a transferrable equity given to the 'becoming' child. Piaget's constructivist theory still can be heard in pedagogical discussions with teachers in western ECEC settings (Lewis et al., 2019). Fleer (2010) argues the resistance to teaching comes from a long history of focusing on developmental outcomes, suggesting a new model of teaching and a refreshed perspective on the role of the teacher in ECEC.

Pyle and Danniels (2017) conducted a qualitative study in fifteen public kindergartens in Canada, observing practice and interviewing teachers to examine the use of play-based learning. Findings from the study indicated conflicting pedagogical beliefs between teachers, demonstrating tensions between play and learning. They argue this tension stems from traditional perspectives that play is solely a child-led activity, and learning is the result of knowledge transmission that occurs primarily through adult-directed learning experiences. With play being a core value of teachers who adopt a child-centred philosophy, it is not unexpected that teachers are hesitant to become active and functioning members of children's play. Pyle and Danniels describe this tension as fear of teachers 'hijacking' (p. 274) children's play. Some teachers shared the view that learning and play are

"dichotomous constructs" (p. 285), yet others perceived play and learning as cohesive entities (dependent on the play type) which aligns with findings of Ofsted (2015).
However, the views informing the findings of Ofsted's (2015) report, *Teaching and Play in the Early Years – A Balancing Act* are conflicting; illustrating a lack of cohesion in UK-based ECEC teachers' perspectives of what teaching means, and what their role is within children's play and learning. Ofsted stated that ECEC teachers from their study saw play and teaching through a complex and flexible lens and did not view teaching as a separate entity from play. Yet, in the report there were contradicting statements on how ECEC professionals define teaching, highlighting the significant impact of teachers' beliefs on play, teaching and learning:

> "We believe teaching is about adult-led activities, where the adult has a pre-defined purpose in mind they know what they want the children to learn and have selected the specific individual or who will benefit the most. The adult decides everything; the most productive environment to work in and the range of materials they want children to use so that the activity addresses a specific gap in learning" (Ofsted, 2015, p. 10).

Wood (2019) argues this Ofsted (2015) report provides substance to UK's political narrative, criticising the lack of reference given to the content and contexts of the data gathered, and no account given to the experience or qualifications of the participants. Furthermore, Wood (2019) contends that because Ofsted is a government-run establishment, its reports have the power in producing "conformity to standards, and to position children and practitioners in particular ways" (p. 790). This essentially places the problem and solution of the tension of teaching and play in the hands of ECEC professionals; ignoring the heavy influence policy has on pedagogical practices (Stephen, 2010). Although these critiques highlight important implications for these tensions, Ofsted (2015) acknowledge that if ECEC professionals continue to view play and teaching as separate dichotomies, "our future generations will continue to fall at the first hurdle" (p. 5).

Leggett and Ford (2013) analysed the tensions between teaching and play through a naturalistic case study. Focusing their data collection on the interactions of children and teachers, Leggett and Ford (2013) examined tensions between the role of teachers and curriculum demands. They defined the tension between learning, teaching and play as a relationship of power. Leggett and

Ford recommend ECEC settings adopt an intentional curriculum; emphasising the importance of teachers possessing rich content knowledge in addition to empowering children as competent, intentional learners within play. Leggett and Ford define four components which are integral to the intentional learner - engagement, commitment and persistence in learning, the implementation of cognitive skills to achieve learning outcomes, and the ownership of one's own learning as an "autonomous learner" (p. 44). Creating an intentional curriculum requires a co-constructed approach, which is built upon sociocultural theory and relational pedagogy where teachers' and children's ideas are meaningfully and collaboratively constructed.

Embracing an intentional curriculum aligns with the requirement for ECEC settings in Aotearoa NZ to enact a local curriculum, as set out in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). An intentional curriculum can also be positioned within the *EYFS framework* (2021), which states that enabling learning environments that respond to children's individual interests and skills is an overarching principle of the UK-based curriculum (Department for Education, 2021a).

Previous definitions of the ECEC teachers' role as *guide, facilitator, scaffolder, carer* and *role model* have minimised and suppressed the term 'teaching' within early years discourse and practice (Fleer, 2010; Leggett & Ford, 2013; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Leggett and Ford (2013) argue that intentional teaching is a changing force in the reconceptualization of the ECEC teacher. The term reinforces the professionalisation of teachers and recognises teachers' critical involvement in the learning environment. Intentional teaching and a child-centred approach are both significant for children's learning, yet teachers find blending these approaches challenging. McLaughlin and Cherrington (2018) suggest teachers can overcome this challenge by embracing a "broader construct of pedagogy" (p. 36) into their everyday practice.

2.3.2 Schoolification and the pressures of outcome-based learning

A contributing factor to the tensions between teaching, learning, and play is the academic pressure put on children and their teachers. The term 'schoolification' can be defined as the increasing performative pressure put on children, their families, teachers, communities, and ECEC settings to prepare children for formal learning through prescribed curriculum outcomes (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013). Schoolification demands a heavy focus on literacy and mathematical education, and results

in the reduction of learning through play (Bradbury, 2019; Greishaber et al., 2021; Ring & O'Sullivan, 2018).

ECEC professionals have shown resistance to intentional teaching because of its assumed adult-led and didactic tendencies which they may interpret as reflective of the pressures and characteristics of schoolification. Kilderry (2015) discusses "insights from the past" (p.20) to build a critical discourse analysis about intentional pedagogies and why there is tension and difficulty in implementing intentional teaching. The study's findings illustrate that teacher-directed practice was shown to be both "legitimated, marginalised, and silenced" (p. 26) by teachers. This highlights the hesitation and complexity ECEC teachers possess in embracing intentional teaching. The child-centred approach seen in western ECEC pedagogy (Farquahar & White, 2014; Grieshaber et al., 2021; Krieg 2018) makes play the primary focus of a child's time in ECEC, and situates teachers in a passive role (Cherrington, 2018; Fleer, 2010). Child-centred approaches value children's own knowledge, contributions, and free-play whereas the characteristics of schoolification amplify prescribed formal knowledge (Barblett et al., 2016; McNerney, 2016). As a result, the impacts of schoolification can be seen as influencing ECEC teachers' reluctance towards intentional teaching, as it may elicit concerns about ways of teaching that do not feel appropriate in the context of play-based ECE settings.

The schoolification pressure from England's Ofsted requirements to provide data-driven results has profoundly impacted teachers' pedagogical practice. Boyd (2014) asserts that teachers feel the pressure to be directors in children's learning to meet the demands of formal assessment and prescribed learning outcomes. Robert-Holmes (2015) argues the English government has brought on schoolification through the 'datafication' (p. 302) of young children's education, resulting in performative pressure on the work of ECEC teachers to produce appropriate levels of student success measured by governing data.

The pressure of outcome-based learning in ECEC is evident through the requirement of formal assessment in England. Reception-aged children (four to five-year-olds) are assessed by definitive criteria when they commence and complete their early year's foundation stage through the standardised testing of baseline assessment and the EYFS profile (Department for Education,

2021). Robert-Holmes (2015) argues this is responsible for directing ECE teachers' pedagogical beliefs away from "deeply held child-centred pedagogical values" (p. 302).

In Aotearoa NZ, the 2008 National party government introduced National Education Standards in 2008, designed to measure primary and secondary student academic achievement against universal standards. When the Labour government took power in 2018, National Standards were abolished because they were too narrow and "little more than a compliance exercise" (Hipkins, 2017, para. 4) which failed to meet student and whānau needs. ECEC in Aotearoa NZ has resisted the pressures of schoolification, celebrating early childhood as its own important period of learning and development rather than a period of preparation for primary schooling (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013). Although the National Standards were implemented in the primary and secondary schooling sector, Alcock and Haggerty (2013) assert that ECEC was at risk of the gains and movement it had created in its sociocultural curriculum and pedagogy. The implications of government policy demonstrates how vulnerable ECEC is to policy, and as a result, schoolification and the implications for teachers' perspectives on intentional teaching.

2.4 Articulation, qualifications, and professional learning opportunities

In combating the pressures of schoolification, Barblett et al. (2016) suggest teachers develop a deeper understanding and articulation of their intentional practices *within* play-based ECEC. This Australian based study involved 200 participants, who participated in 14 focus groups. Findings indicated that teachers were concerned about the erosion of play due to curriculum demands. Barblett et al. suggests teachers improve their ability to articulate the significance of their role within play-based pedagogy in order to make the reasons behind pedagogical practices more visible, as well as heightening teachers voice in the broader "ongoing debate about whose knowledge counts" (p. 42) when it comes to deciding what to teach young children.

Children's learning may be improved if ECEC teachers have a deeper understanding of the epistemology which underpins their practice (Krieg, 2018; Stephen, 2010). Teachers' preliminary understanding of intentional teaching is varied, with many teachers considering it to be a didactic approach that doesn't fit well with play-based and child-centred pedagogies (Batchelor, 2016; Krieg, 2018; Leggett & Ford, 2013). In a qualitative study, Batchelor (2016) highlights the

importance of articulation. Using constructivist grounded theory, Batchelor found that teachers built a clear understanding of intentional teaching through engaging in reflective practice. Teachers' views changed when they came to recognise that their current practice could be identified as effective, intentional teaching. Furthermore, Batchelor (2016) discovered that when teachers were able to better articulate their practices, they were empowered and their confidence improved.

Kilderry (2015) suggests teachers increase their awareness of how dominant perspectives and discourse can influence their own pedagogy. Additionally, if teachers develop a deep understanding of specific teaching strategies, they "might have more confidence to be able to articulate intentionality and provide a rationale" (p. 21) about their teaching practices.

Professional learning opportunities are critical components of developing teachers' pedagogy and practice. McLaughlin et al. (2016) argue that previous ECEC discourse in Aotearoa NZ has lacked pedagogical guidance for teachers and suggests this may be a reason for ECEC teachers' passive positioning in the Aotearoa NZ ECEC context. Cherrington (2011) conducted a multiple case study, investigating teachers thinking and reflection on their interactions with children. The study found teachers held extensive knowledge about children, relational pedagogy, and the curriculum. However, the study also indicated "teachers were less able to articulate their thinking and reflections about their own teaching intentions, use of teaching strategies, and the theories and principles influencing their practice" (Cherrington, 2011, p. i). Such findings emphasises the necessity for policymakers to address the need for a "fully qualified workforce who have ready access to targeted professional development opportunities" (McLachlan et al., 2018b, p. 117). In doing so, aspirations for high quality teaching in ECEC can be achieved.

Beginning teachers also need to have adequate initial teacher education to develop and refine their intentional practice. Research consistently shows teachers' qualification level and training directly influence the quality of teaching, interactions, and learning provision available for young children (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2008). Meade et al., (2013) New Zealand study found increasing prevalence of teachers engaging in SST episodes with children when teachers were degree-level qualified, however clear links between intentional teaching and teacher qualification

levels. The EPPE study in the UK also highlights teachers with high-level qualifications had a positive impact on the quality of the ECEC setting, and subsequently learning progression improved (Sylva et al., 2004). Wood and Nuttall (2019) conducted an analysis of *Te Whāriki* (2017) as well as the *EYFS framework* (2021). Their research revealed that different countries have different compositions of their ECEC workforce. According to the findings of their research, even though there is a wide variety of certification levels available in the UK, the vast majority of ECEC teachers in Aotearoa NZ hold relevant teaching degrees.

Teachers' qualification levels has been directly linked to professional status. Traditionally, ECEC has been undervalued and ECEC teachers have continuously fought to have their status as professionals valued (Tesar et al., 2017; Warren, 2014; Wingrave & McMahon, 2016). A study by Dalli (2008) evaluated what constitutes professional status for ECEC teachers. Findings indicated that a teachers' pedagogy, professional knowledge and practice are key elements to attaining professionalism. The recognition of ECEC teachers as professional educators can be improved by increasing their understanding, knowledge and articulation of intentional teaching. Dalli and Thornton (2013) state that professional teachers "are knowledgeable and able to articulate that knowledge. You know what to teach, you acknowledge diversity in learners, you are inclusive, and you lead learning" (p. 309). Essentially, professional teachers engage in well-informed, intentional teaching practice.

2.5 Research questions

Although literature informs us of the positive use of intentional teaching in both ECEC contexts, evidence shows there is still tension within teachers' perceptions, ideas, and beliefs on their role to support children's learning. These tensions of intentional teaching within inherently play-based learning environments have been explored through literature. Yet, there is a lack of research which examines teachers' perspectives and beliefs of intentional teaching. Furthermore, no studies have undertaken this research focus with a comparative lens between England and Aotearoa NZ despite their similar play-based pedagogy. To address gaps in the literature, this research study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are ECEC teachers' beliefs about intentional teaching for children aged 3-5 years old?
2. How do ECEC teachers understand intentional teaching in the context of curriculum implementation and pedagogy?
3. In what ways do ECEC teachers enact intentional teaching?
   Sub question: what supports and barriers do teachers find in being an intentional practitioner?
4. What are the significant similarities and differences in the perspectives of ECEC teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand and England?

2.6 Summary

This review has examined literature to provide an in-depth look into intentional teaching in ECEC. *Te Whāriki* requires teachers to embrace intentional teaching strategies and play an active role in children's learnings, whilst the *EYFS Framework* highlights the important active role teachers have in children's learning. Evidence-based research illustrates how intentional teaching practices in ECEC environments deepen the quality of children's learning experiences, as teachers extend children's knowledge through active, purposeful, and deliberate actions. The literature review affirmed that the teachers' role in children's learning is impacted by belief systems, and emphasised how the tensions between learning, teaching and play impact teachers' pedagogical practice. Furthermore, it is argued that teacher qualification, professional development, and the difficulty of effectively articulating pedagogy and practice impact on ECEC teachers' ability to implement quality intentional teaching.

The following chapter will provide detail on the methodology of the study, outlining the choices behind its qualitative, exploratory design. It will describe the data collection; participant information and how thematic analysis was used. Ethical considerations are discussed, and a reflexivity approach to the research is described.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the qualitative methodological approach used to explore early years teachers' beliefs, perceptions and use of intentional teaching practices to support children's learning within early childhood education. A comparative approach is adopted in a drawing upon a sample of teachers from both Aotearoa New Zealand and England, to highlight areas of similarity and differences in teachers' beliefs, perspectives and practice. The following chapter examines the key features of the research design and methodology used, providing a rationale for the study focus, alongside a brief discussion on the purpose of the study, and the worldviews which informed the research approach. The latter part of the chapter will describe the data collection methods, population sampling and participant information, and data analysis processes. Validity and reliability are discussed, in addition to the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

The study seeks to provide insight into the research questions which investigate what teachers believe about intentional teaching, how they understand intentional teaching, and how they use intentional teaching in their practice.

3.1.1. Research questions:

1. What are ECEC teachers' beliefs about intentional teaching for children aged 3-5 years old?

2. How do ECEC teachers understand intentional teaching in the context of curriculum implementation and pedagogy?

3. In what ways do ECEC teachers enact intentional teaching?

   Sub question: what supports and barriers do teachers find in being an intentional practitioner?

4. What are the significant similarities and differences in the perspectives of ECEC teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand and England?

3.2 Methodology

This research study aims to investigate ECEC teachers' beliefs, perspectives and use of intentional teaching practices to support young children's learning in early childhood education. Because the study sought to understand and interpret teachers' perspectives, beliefs and experiences, it was

decided that a qualitative research design was the most suitable approach. Qualitative research explores the meaning, behaviours and experiences of theories, ideas and phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It enables researchers to gain insight into participants' experiences to determine how meanings are formed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As qualitative research involves the gathering of rich and meaningful data, implementing this design enabled a deep insight into the reasoning behind teachers' beliefs, perspectives, and use of intentional teaching practices (Schraw & Olafson, 2015).

The study followed an exploratory comparative design, allowing for consideration of the ways in which teachers in two different countries understand and enact intentional teaching within their curricular and pedagogical contexts. For this research, England and Aotearoa NZ were chosen to provide comparison and contrast in the research findings. Exploratory research is a methodological approach that explores ideas and questions which have not yet been studied in-depth (George, 2022). Additionally, no studies have investigated the beliefs and perspectives of teachers in Aotearoa NZ and England regarding intentional teaching practices. Moreover, comparative research seeks to identify differences and similarities between groups as well as to compare social constructs. In this research, understanding the differences and similarities between ECEC in Aotearoa NZ and England will provide a comparative context.

Through this qualitative research, the researcher was guided by an interpretivist paradigm to support deep understanding of ECEC teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and use of intentional teaching practices. Interpretivism empowers researchers to focus on individuals and groups of people and the complexities behind their experiences, histories and interactions (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Interpretivism is concerned with the study of how individuals and groups of people define their experiences and reality and, more importantly, how they behave in relation to their sets of beliefs (O'Donoghue, 2018), which was deemed important in attending to the research questions of this study.

3.3 Data collection

The data which forms this study was collected through an online questionnaire using a mix of both open and closed-framed questions. Closed-framed questions were designed using Likert-scales.

The data from these questions are presented in Appendixes five, six and seven. Data collection took place between August and September 2022. The following sections will discuss the data collection processes, the tool utilised and the rationale.

3.3.1 Questionnaire design

The objective of collecting data through a comprehensive questionnaire was to get insight into a diverse group of ECEC teachers' beliefs, perspectives, and use of intentional teaching. Questionnaires are a useful tool for collecting data as it allows participants to give more detailed and refined responses (Kay & Wainwright, 2018). Questionnaires have been a common data-gathering strategy used in understanding teachers' beliefs and perspectives of their practice and children's learning (Schraw & Olafson, 2015) because they provide non-invasive, autonomous opportunities for teachers to express their opinions. Questionnaires typically use a range of question types aim to invite detailed and non-restrictive responses, which help participants to liberally share their views, understandings and experiences, giving a personal narrative to the data. This then enables the data to be explored in-depth through thematic analysis (Allen, 2017).

The questionnaire was developed using the online research tool Qualtrics, which is designed to support researchers using data collection through surveys. Qualtrics can ensure participants anonymity by not collecting identifying information and providing the researcher with robust reporting software to support the analysis of data. Massey University provides students with access to this software and approves its use to support their students undertaking research.

The questionnaire was designed in consultation with the thesis supervisors, and consistent referral back to the research questions occurred to ensure the questionnaire was appropriately targeted to answer the research questions The questionnaire was piloted to two individuals who work in the education sector. The purpose of this pilot was to trial the questionnaire to ensure reliability, clear questioning, and ease of access. The questionnaire was designed using closed-ended questions to gather participant information, open-ended questions to gather rich data, and Likert-scale questions to support analysis (see Appendix 1). The study's research questions were used to inform the design of the questionnaire to ensure goodness of fit. In the questions which provided

participants with the opportunity to write a response, no text limit was implemented to ensure participants could respond as in-depth as they preferred.

The first five questions were designed to gather general demographic information about the participants including their role, experience and qualifications in ECEC. Question six and seven sought to gather information on teachers' understanding of intentional teaching and what teachers believed their role is in young children's learning. Question eight provided participants with thirteen statements that relate to intentional teaching in ECEC. Using a Likert-scale, participants responded to these statements by selecting either strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree. Questions nine to eleven sought to gather examples of intentional teaching in practice. Participants were asked to give examples of supporting children's learning within individual and group play. In question eleven, participants gave examples of when intentional teaching had a positive impact on a child's learning. Question twelve sought to understand the frequency of intentional teaching strategies using a Likert scale. The twenty-seven intentional teaching strategies in this question are not exhaustive, but they were chosen based on literature and research. Participants answered this question using a scale between daily, two-three times a week, once a week, one-two times a month or never. Question thirteen asked participants if they used any other intentional teaching strategies not mentioned on the list. Question fourteen sought to gather information on the theoretical influences on teachers' intentional teaching practice, while also asking participants to share their key beliefs about how children learn. Question fifteen used another Likert-scale using the same strategies listed in question twelve with a shift in focus to identify the value participants placed on each strategy. Participants were asked to select how valuable they felt each strategy was in supporting children's learning from a scale of no value, little value, some value, valuable, and great value. Question sixteen asked participants how the curriculum framework and supporting documents they work with support their teaching practices. Participants were also asked to identify which curriculum they use. Question seventeen and eighteen asked participants to describe the factors which either support or inhibit their intentional teaching practices. Question nineteen sought to identify where teachers had gained their knowledge about intentional teaching. The questionnaire ended with question twenty, which allowed participants to provide any further responses or information around their perspectives,

beliefs and use of intentional teaching in ECEC.

3.3.2 Dissemination of questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed using posts in online forums in Facebook with a basic description of the research project, participant eligibility requirements and a direct link to the questionnaire (Appendix 2). This allowed for convenience as participants were based in different countries, and it allowed participants to complete it in their own time (Minnaar & Heystek, 2016). During the data collection phase, there were initially low responses from participants from Aotearoa NZ. To enable a larger sample, an invitation and information sheet was additionally sent out to the Northland Kindergarten Association, the Ruahine Association, and BestStart Educare (Appendix 3).

3.4 Data analysis

Data was thematically analysed, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure to thematically analyse qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a flexible, yet specific method to analyse rich qualitative data text such as transcripts to identify common themes, patterns, ideas and issues which regularly present themselves within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data analysis followed an inductive approach, in which the data itself forms the themes in the analysis.

3.4.1 Familiarisation of the data

To start the process of thematic analysis, the researcher immersed themselves into the data to build a preliminary analysis of the patterns, ideas, and pertinent information arising from the data. This involved printing out the data and reading it thoroughly several times. The researcher then began to highlight specific areas, write down notes, and reflect on repeating messages that were emerging. It was important that the researcher critically engaged in the data because of its small scale, allowing for depth of analysis where breadth was not possible. By critically engaging in the data, the researcher was able to "make meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 42) of the data by referring to reflective questions during this phase. The questions the researcher asked were based on previous understanding of intentional teaching, engagement with literature, and from conversations with supervisors.

3.4.2 The coding process

Braun and Clarke (2022) describe the coding process as an analytic phase of thematic analysis. It involves closely reading each piece of data and labelling distinct parts of the text that are relevant to the research question, provide context, or give significant meaning. To code the data from the questionnaire, the researcher used an inductive approach and input all the data into tables in Microsoft Word (see Figure 3.1). Meticulously, each response was latently coded using a word label. After the whole data set was completely coded, the researcher went back and re-coded twice to ensure rigour of coding and to ensure code labels were appropriately used. An example of this coding process is provided in Figure 1.

QUESTION 6	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE	CODE
Can you please tell me about your understanding of the term 'intentional teaching'?	1	Teaching that has purposeful outcome, one that is defined to provoke thoughtful questioning and leads into deeper explorations of the activity.	Learning outcomes, acting with intent, effective questioning, SST, critical thinking skills
	2	Being deliberate with my intentions and actions, being actively engaged, involved, purposeful and thoughtful.	Acting with intent, partnering with children.
	3	To be able to assess children's learning through interests and extend on it.	Assessment, interest-informed curriculum, scaffolding
	4	Planed, purposeful, has meaning behind it.	Planned and prepared,
	5	Where the adult really understands how children learn and provide appropriate opportunities to support them	Knowledge, educational theory, provision of environment
	6	An intentional teacher is purposeful and plans to extend children's learning through thoughtful and intentional teaching practices. Intentional teachers draw from their experience and knowledge of children to guide their interactions.	Acting with intent, planned and preparedness, scaffold, thoughtful actions, evidence-informed practice. Teaching experience

Figure 1: Coding table

3.4.3 Generation of initial themes

To generate themes from the codes, the researcher took a practical approach and printed out the list of codes and arranged the codes into groups of similar attributes. Using this method enabled the researcher to move codes around and use reflexive analysis throughout the process. Once these codes were grouped, they were categorized as sub-themes. From these sub-themes, larger provisional themes were devised. Using a question posed by Braun and Clarke (2022), “Does this provisional theme capture something meaningful?” (p.84), allowed the researcher to build a robust understanding of the emergent patterns in the data.

3.4.4 Developing and reviewing themes

Once a preliminary group of initial themes were designed, the researcher used reflexive analysis to ensure the themes possessed a central concept, were rich in data, conveyed important messages, and had defined boundaries (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researcher used the software, MindNode to create mind maps of the main themes (see Figure 3.2). Using the mind map prompted further revision of codes and sub-themes. This allowed the researcher to develop and revise the main themes until they represented central ideas that related to the research study's questions.

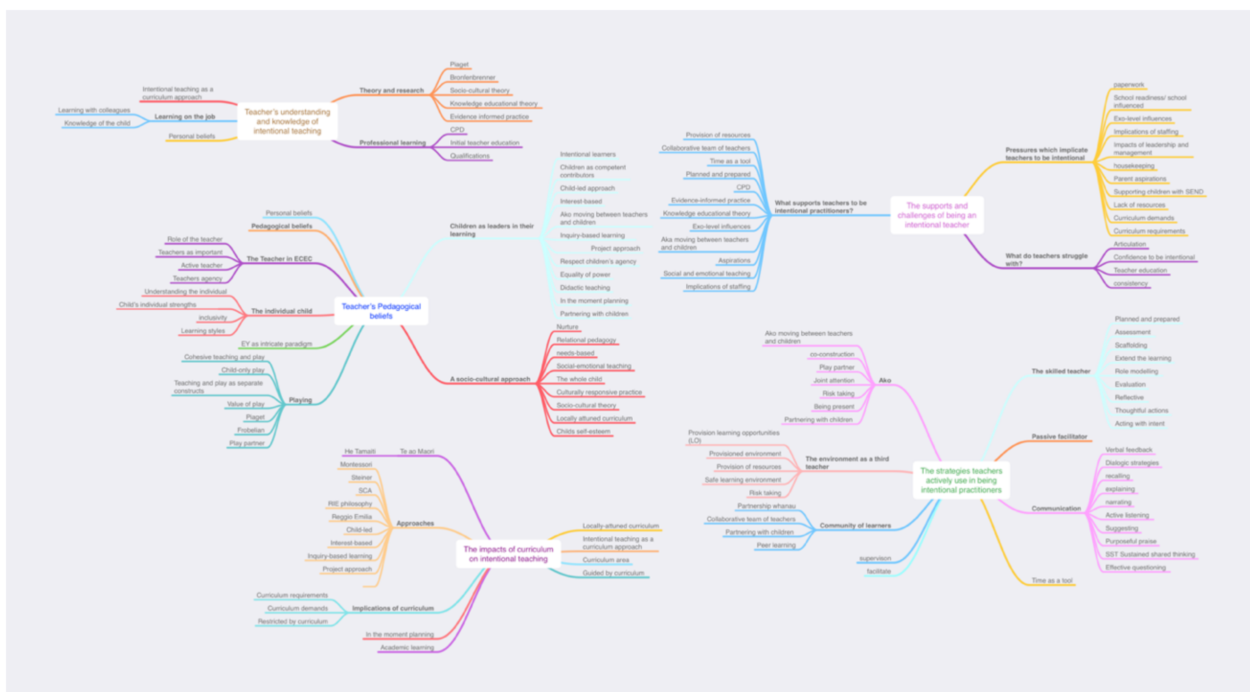

Figure 2: Mind map of developing sub and main themes.

3.4.5 Defining themes

Once the data had been formed into themes, reflexive analysis was further used to analyse what each theme represented. Using reflective questions by Braun and Clarke (2022), the researcher engaged in conversations with supervisors, preliminary notes from the first phase of analysis, and re-engaging with the data set to ensure the themes were substantial representations of ideas and patterns that clearly related to the research aim and questions. Resulting from this process, theme descriptions were written. Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest theme descriptions act as an abstract, in illustrating the key messages that are delivered in the themes, and "supports the overall story your analysis builds" (p.110). Theme descriptions were then shared with supervisors and helped form the outline of the findings section.

3.4.6 Presenting the findings

Once the key themes were reviewed and decided upon, the researcher used the theme descriptions to help outline the written findings. The findings were thematically organised to present the key ideas and concepts. Tables and models are used where relevant, but due to the qualitative nature of the study, most of the findings are presented through a narrative format with an emphasis on participant voice.

In the findings, participants' responses are coded to identify the country they reside in as well as their respondent number. These codes are P (participant), followed by the respondent number, and E (England) or NZ (Aotearoa New Zealand).

3.5 Participants and context

Due to the comparative element of the research design, it was decided to use social media as a tool to gain interest. Potential participants who were invited to participate in the online questionnaire were early years professionals who currently worked in an early childhood educational setting within Aotearoa NZ or England with children aged 3-5 years old. The decision to provide a parameter of working with a particular age group is because of the specialised pedagogies teachers may adapt with younger children. Any individual who met the above requirements was able to participate in the questionnaire by following a secure link to the Qualtrics document which was at the bottom of the post shared in professional groups on social media platforms.

The reasoning behind using the two distinct countries for sampling is due to the researcher's professional experience in both countries, along with highlighted similarities and differences acknowledged in the literature review chapter. The researcher completed her training in ECE in New Zealand, gaining eight years of experience working in the New Zealand Aotearoa ECE sector. Since 2017, the researcher has been living in England and working as an early year's teacher in a school setting.

3.6 Validity

The validity of qualitative research centres on ensuring the data is sound, trustworthy, and reliable. It is concerned with whether the findings that are presented in the research are reflective of the data collected (Punch & Oancea, 2014). This study sought to enhance validity through piloting the questionnaire to ensure clarity, understanding and aptness of the questions. Furthermore, using reflexive thematic analysis the researcher was encouraged to continuously refer to the data when analysing findings. This process ensured the findings produced were reflective of participants views, beliefs, and experiences documented in the questionnaire.

3.7 Reflexivity

Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that researchers need to explicitly identify their own beliefs, judgements, experiences, values, culture and socioeconomic status to ensure the researcher's bias remains at a minimum when conducting, analysing and evaluating their research. To enact this, adapting a reflexive approach is crucial at all levels of the research process, especially during thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Embracing a reflexive attitude can facilitate researchers to become sensitive to and prepare for possible issues that arise whilst promoting awareness of ethical concerns during the different stages of research (Carter, 2018). To embrace a reflexive approach, reflective notes were written and shared with the research supervisors. Regular meetings between the supervisors and researcher involved reflective discussion to ensure the researcher was enacting reflexivity. During analysis, the researcher enacted "qualitative sensibility" (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This fostered an interest in process and meaning rather than cause and effect, as well as the ability to reflect and understand that knowledge is about "nuance, complexity, and even contradiction" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 7) rather than a simple explanation of findings. Reflective practice was used throughout the analysis, using questions from Braun and Clarke (2022), conversations with supervisors, and written reflective notes. Thematic analysis facilitated the researcher to produce findings that which are rich in complexity, detail, and meaning.

3.8 Ethical considerations

To ensure participants were not subjected to any possibility of harm from engaging in this research project, strict adherence to the Massey Code of Ethical Conduct for Research was followed (Massey University, 2017). Consent for the research was received from the Massey University

Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC). After completion of the screening questionnaire and application, the research project was deemed low-risk and approval was given on the 16th of August 2022 (see Appendix 4). Transparency and clarity of the intentions, processes, analysis and evaluation of the research were able to be achieved as the topic was not of a sensitive nature. Ethical considerations for this research were predominantly based on achieving voluntary informed consent, respect for protecting participants' anonymity, and providing beneficence for the participants involved. Additionally, adherence to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is considered, as will be discussed below.

Informed consent is defined by participants freely agreeing to participate in the research, understanding their role in the study and how their ideas and opinions will be recorded and presented, as well as knowing they are able to withdraw from the study at any time during the research process (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Information regarding the research topic included the study's intentions, it's ethical priorities and guidelines, and contact details for the researcher and the research supervisors were provided. To ensure informed consent from the participants of the questionnaire was achieved, a disclaimer was provided on the first page of the questionnaire instructing participants that by completing the questionnaire, and they were informed the data gathered was only use for the purpose of this research project.

Ensuring participants' confidentiality and anonymity was a key priority for this research. The questionnaire was designed to keep participants' identities anonymous by providing a direct link to the questionnaire from the invitation posts on Facebook and invitation emails. Additionally, Qualtrics allows researchers to select whether IP addresses are collected. The 'anonymize responses' option was selected to ensure the questionnaire did not track participants IP addresses, further assuring anonymity.

The research study sought to offer some beneficence to the participants (Massey University, 2017) by providing an opportunity for early years teachers to employ reflective thinking through participating in open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Additionally, consideration has been made to become aware of any potential power imbalances. Possible participants who maintain a position of leadership may have strongly encouraged teachers who are under their management to

participate in the study. It is possible that some teachers may feel pressured by their employers or leaders to participate in research studies (Ferguson, et al., 2004) To combat this, information detailing the study in the questionnaire and on email invitations explicitly states that there is no pressure to participate in the research.

Lastly, to ensure adherence to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the research is guided by the principles of the Treaty; participation, partnership and protection (Hudson & Russell, 2009). To support and protect Māori participants, voluntary informed consent and confidentiality have been prioritised as discussed in the above sections (Massey University, 2017).

3.9 Summary

This chapter discusses the research methodology and design and provides information to support the validity of the research. Using qualitative methodology, this exploratory comparative design features the data collection method of an online questionnaire to explore and interpret early year's teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching to support children's learning in ECEC. Using thematic analysis, data was organised and coded into themes to build a rich and complex analysis. These findings were produced to deliver rich responses to the research questions. Ethical considerations of confidentiality and consent were described to ensure there was minimal potential for harm to participants. Reflexivity was discussed to be an integral principle for the researcher and supported the validity of the data collection, analysis, and evaluation of the findings.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

The findings reported in this chapter are based upon the results of the questionnaire. The questionnaire used purposefully framed open-ended questions, with the addition of Likert-scale questions to foster breadth and depth of response. Using thematic analysis, five themes surfaced from the data gathered in the online questionnaire. The first theme; teachers' understanding and knowledge of intentional teaching gives a descriptive account of participant's knowledge about intentional teaching, including where their knowledge came from. The second theme; teachers' pedagogical beliefs, examines the key concepts and values that guide teaching practice, referencing key subthemes including intentional teaching and play, theoretical influences, relational pedagogy, and working in partnership with children. The third theme examines the intentional teaching practices participants use and value when supporting children's learning. These are also broken into subthemes; provisioning the learning environment, active teaching practices, and the co-construction of knowledge. The fourth theme examines how the two curriculums position intentional teaching, with specific reference to the *EYFS framework* (2021) in England and *Te Whāriki* (2021) in Aotearoa NZ. Lastly, the fifth theme discusses the different factors which were reported to support or hinder participants' use of intentional teaching in ECEC.

4.2 Participant information

Information regarding participants experience, qualifications and place of residence is outlined in Table 4. The number of respondents from Aotearoa NZ was 27, with 11 participants from England. 81% of all participants held a qualification at degree-level or higher, with 78% of all participants having over 6 years of experience in ECEC.

Table 1: Participant's qualifications and experience in ECEC

		Number of participants	
		UK **n=11**	Aotearoa NZ **N=27**
Qualification	Bachelor of Arts in Childhood Studies	1	
	Diploma in Early Childhood Education		3
	Bachelor of Education (Early Years)	2	3
	Bachelor of Teaching (Early Years)	2	6
	Postgraduate Certificate in Early Childhood Education		1
	Master of Education (Early Childhood Education)	1	1
	Doctorate	1	
	PDA in Childhood Studies (level 8)	1	
	SVQ Level 4 (working towards Bachelor of Arts in Childhood Practice)	1	
	Level 5 Early Years qualification	1	
	Montessori Diploma		1
	No formal qualification	1	
Experience	0-2 years	1	1
	3-5 years		4
	6-9 years	2	3
	10-15 years	3	1
	16 years or more	5	7

England

Seventy-two percent (72%) of participants from England held degree-level or higher qualifications. Only 1 participant did not hold a formal qualification in ECEC. Ninety-one percent (91%) of participants from England have had over 6 years' experience working in ECEC, and 72% had over 10 years' experience. Three out of the five participants from England maintained QTS status, acknowledging their qualified teacher positions. Three participants were employed in teaching assistant roles, while the remaining five held leadership roles in ECEC.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of Aotearoa NZ based participants held a recognised ECEC teaching qualification. Only one participant did not have a formal qualification in ECEC, and the other held a Montessori diploma. Eight out of the 16 participants in Aotearoa NZ were fully certificated teachers, 7 held leadership positions in ECEC, and 1 was employed in an unqualified teaching assistant role.

4.3 Teachers' understanding and knowledge of intentional teaching

Participants were asked to describe their understanding of the term, 'intentional teaching' and provide examples of intentional teaching moments which positively impacted young children's learning. 85% of all participants agreed that they had a good understanding of intentional teaching and most responses included a reference to teachers making purposeful and deliberate actions to support children's learning. Key words that participants used to describe their understanding of intentional teaching were analysed using Tagul (http://tagul.com) which is an online word-cloud generator. This is displayed in figure 4.1 which provides an illustration of the most frequent terms used in bigger text.

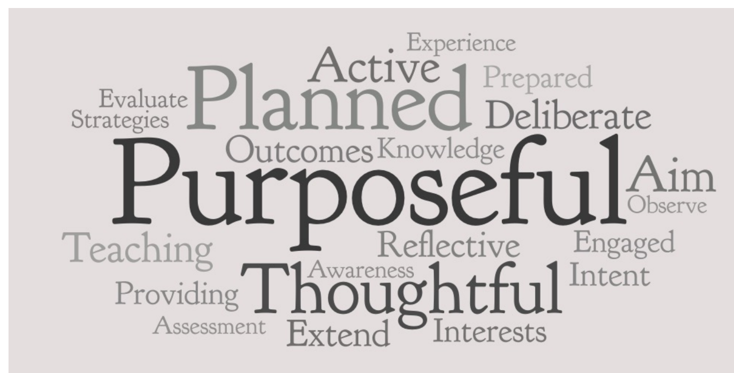

Figure 3: Word cloud describing participant's understanding of intentional teaching

Findings suggest teachers from England and Aotearoa NZ have a similar understanding of intentional teaching as purposeful and planned practice. Teachers' understanding of intentional teaching is to teach *"with a set purpose"* (P17/E) with intended learning outcomes. Participant 26/NZ defined intentional teaching as a *"proactive, planned and considered approach to teaching".* Participant 7/E suggested intentional teaching is *"reflecting and evaluating how your actions can influence the way in which children learn".*

Findings illustrate that a combination of factors influence and build teachers' understanding of intentional teaching. As shown in Table 2, professional learning opportunities were the most commonly reported factor contributing to participants' understanding and knowledge of intentional teaching. A further 27.3% of England participants and 31.25% of Aotearoa NZ participants stated intentional teaching was introduced to them during their initial teacher education.

Additionally, professional relationships with colleagues have supported teachers' understanding of intentional teaching. Participants have learnt about intentional teaching through *"meetings"* (P15/NZ), *"professional discussions with colleagues"* (P13/NZ) and *"working alongside like-minded colleagues"* (P8/NZ). Interestingly, participant 11/NZ shared that they felt intentional teaching had always been a part of their 16 year-long teaching career, stating *"I think I always have had this aspect before it has the name of intentional teaching".*

Research was reported to be a contributing factor to teachers' understanding of intentional teaching. Some participants shared they have learnt about intentional teaching by reading relevant research and literature. Participants believed that good theoretical knowledge of learning and development are important components of intentional teaching. Participant 8/NZ expressed an understanding that intentional teachers require a *"good understanding of child development, so that the appropriate supports can be put in place".*

Table 2: Contributions to teachers' understanding of intentional thinking	**Number of participants**	
	England	Aotearoa NZ
Continuous professional development	45.5%	50%
Initial teacher education	27.3%	31.25%
Professional discussions with colleagues	36.3%	43.7%
Professional self-directed learning	9%	12.5%

4.4 Teachers' pedagogical beliefs

Findings illustrate how teachers' pedagogical beliefs may influence their understanding of the teachers' role in teaching and learning and inform how they intentionally support children's learning. These beliefs are captured in the following sub-themes: intentional teaching and play, theoretical influences, relational pedagogy, and working in partnership with children.

4.4.1 Intentional teaching and play

Findings indicate participants hold strong beliefs about the value of play; *"I believe that play is the best way to engage a child to learn"* (P22/E) and that *"children need active, hands-on, play*

experiences that enable them to develop attitudes and skills" (P7/E). In providing examples of intentional teaching, most participants described intentional teaching moments occurring within the context of children's play. 88% of all participants agreed that intentional teaching can occur within a play-based pedagogy. As Participant 2/NZ described, stating, *"While children were painting, I asked them what they think would happen if we mixed x and x colours together and seeing their reactions and experiments of mixing colours to create new colours. They learnt a base of the colour wheel, primary and secondary colours"*

Similar language-based and co-constructive strategies were given in the examples from Aotearoa NZ participants. One teacher from Aotearoa NZ shared:

> *"A child is currently very interested in animals and reading/literacy. Book brought out specifically highlighting his interest with lots of visuals and words (child also researching at home). Child sounding out phonetics of words, teacher spending time, actively listening to child read, encouraging, challenging and together researching some quite obscure animals"* (P26/NZ).

Findings revealed potentially conflicting perspectives when participants were asked if intentional teaching can exist within a play-based pedagogy. Whilst no participants disagreed with this statement, written responses indicated the possibility of some tensions. Participant 6/NZ shared *"intentional teaching is an integral part of teaching in ECE and compliments a play-based approach",* yet participant 9/NZ said that intentional teaching only *"has its place among certain philosophies".* Furthermore, participant 15/NZ believes that intentional teaching is *"it is widely promoted but not totally collaboratively agreed on in our centres. Play-based, child-led, preferred".* This may indicate some teachers in Aotearoa NZ view play-based pedagogy and intentional teaching as separate constructs.

Yet this belief was not commonly shared across contexts, with most participants seeing play and teaching as interconnected. Participant 24/E described the use of intentional teaching in their play-based environment as *"woven"* throughout the day. Furthermore, participant 21/NZ describes how

they inject learning objectives intentionally through play in the following quote: *"I will teach maths in it (play) asking how much water how many spoons of sugar, how much milk".*

4.4.2 Theoretical influences

Throughout the questionnaire, participants referred to child development theory when defining their beliefs on intentional teaching and children's learning. Findings indicate that participants' pedagogical beliefs are influenced by socio-cultural theory; in particular, Vygotsky. Participants discussed how socio-cultural theory has influenced their position in children's learning and referred to Vygotsky's theory of the '*more knowledgeable other'* (Vygotsky, 1987) when providing reasoning for their intentional teaching practice: *"socio-cultural theories underpin my teaching with the belief that adults and children can construct knowledge together"* (P6/NZ). Findings may suggest that this theoretical understanding enables participants to enact a more active role and can *"purposefully further children's learning that cannot be achieved if left to their own devices"* (P6/NZ).

When explaining the theoretical influences on their intentional teaching practice, participants referred to Vygotsky's *zone of proximal development*. Responses from both countries reflected a belief that a child's ZPD provides guidance for educators to conceptualise their active role in children's learning: *"Vygotsky's ZPD is at the centre of my philosophy. Children's development can be supported and enhanced through meaningful support by a more able adult or peer"* (P7/E).

Participants from Aotearoa NZ reported that their intentional teaching beliefs are guided by culturally responsive practice, encompassing a bioecological model and Kaupapa Māori theory. Participants expressed that embracing children's culture, background and language are important considerations of intentional practice. Participants from Aotearoa believe that working alongside and with whānau not only supports children's learning but enables teachers (kaiako) to deepen their understanding and guides intentional practice: *"As kaiako, we learn alongside our community to grow our knowledge too"* (P26/NZ).

4.4.4 Relational pedagogy

Findings indicate participants may enact a relational approach within their intentional practice. The following quote suggests that participants from Aotearoa NZ believe these relationships enable intentional teaching to take place. “*Once reciprocal relationships are formed, I am able to nurture children's learning and provide an environment which fosters their growth”* (P10/NZ). A relational approach to their teaching included partnering with children, partnership with whanau and partnership with colleagues. Participants referred to these relationships as *“trustful” (*P12/NZ), *“authentic and reciprocal”* (P13/NZ) and *“responsive”* (P6/NZ). Participant 8/NZ referenced attachment theory, stating *“children need to feel safe and secure in their environments to be able to do higher order thinking and learning”.* Participants referred to relationships with children as the *“foundation”* (P26/NZ) of their teaching role.

Participants in England and Aotearoa NZ also used the words ‘nurturing’, ‘loving’, and ‘caring’ when describing their role in children’s learning, further suggesting participants believe intentional teachers should have responsive and caring relationships with children. P22/E illustrates this in stating, *“I support children from a place of unconditional love”.*

Findings demonstrate relationships enable intentional teaching to occur in meaningful ways by providing teachers with knowledge of children’s needs and interests. Participant 10/NZ stated, *“intentional teaching is where teachers truly know their children and use their understanding to join in and guide when the opportunities arise”.* This view was shared with participants from both countries. Participant 22/E shared that their understanding of intentional teaching comes from *“a place of having knowledge of a child”.* It suggests participants believe developing responsive relationships is important for guiding intentional practice. One participant shared this belief through the following quote: “*Once reciprocal relationships are formed, I am able to nurture children's learning and provide an environment which fosters their growth”* (P10/NZ).

All participants agreed that responsive relationships are essential for intentional teaching to occur. However, participant 24/E was the only participant from England who described their relational approach in their intentional teaching. They believe *“the first step of intentional teaching is to*

determine the goals and priorities and work together with the families and the children we teach to determine the outcomes".

This participant also provided an example of a relational approach, quoting *"researching and learning together"* as an intentional teaching practice. Participants in Aotearoa NZ responded significantly more on how relational pedagogy guides their intentional practices. This may suggest differences in pedagogical beliefs and practices between Aotearoa NZ and England.

4.4.3 Working in partnership with children

The findings presented participants' perspectives on their teaching role as complex, detailed, and "*nuanced"* (P7/E). A commonly identified belief was that intentional teaching is more effectively enacted in the context of partnership with children. These findings build further from a relational pedagogy, and include beliefs related to the empowerment and agency of the child as a learner.

Results from the data indicate participants from both countries view young children in their settings as competent learners who should be encouraged to take a *"leadership role"* (P11/NZ) in their learning. When participants provided examples of intentional teaching, children's agentic position in their learning was respected by teachers. This was achieved by teachers not taking a didactic approach to learning experiences but trusting children's ability to contribute knowledge and lead their own learning. The following quote from participant 13/NZ highlights this belief, sharing *"with risky play, probably a bit unsafe but I knew the child was capable and able to judge for themselves whether they were safe or not. They thought they were and succeeded in their quest."*

Intentional strategies of *"communicating down to their level"* (P1/NZ) *"facilitate learning around their interest"* (P11/NZ), and *"letting children initiate their play"* (P15/E) suggests participants are cognisant of possible power imbalance, therefore may be intentional in promoting children's agency in response. A quote from participant 24/E illustrates pedagogical beliefs on promoting a balance of power in deciding who initiates learning experiences, in stating *"it is important that practitioners and teachers provide, through responsive and intentional planning, a blend of child-initiated and adult-initiated planning".*

The role of the teacher in ECEC was defined as a *'facilitator'* by many participants from both contexts and the data suggests teachers in both countries show hesitancy towards didactic teaching practices. In mitigating this concern findings suggest that participants believe it is important to share power and control of learning experiences with children and intentionally engage in practices which empower young learners: *"Being in the present moment with them, not forcing their learning"* (P22/E).

Hesitancy towards didactic teaching practices is reflected in teachers' beliefs on curriculum approaches, as many participants identified their prioritisation of a child-led approach grounded in children's interests. When describing their role in ECEC, participants provided detailed responses of their teaching practice being informed by children's cues, needs and interests. This belief was evident in responses from participants in both countries and is reported throughout the questionnaire. This is illustrated in the following quote from P27/E when describing her role in children's education: *"I see my role as that of a facilitator. I provide the free flow play experiences for the children and then develop and respond to their needs and interests"*. This is further exemplified by participant 8/NZ, who states *"knowing individual learners where their strengths, interests and dispositions lay and thinking intentionally how to nurture and grow these further. Setting up learning environments to support interests and grow development".*

A Likert-scale question (see Appendix 5) revealed conflicting views on a child-led approach in ECEC. While 37.5% of Aotearoa NZ participants believe that ECEC should be completely child-led, only 18.8% of English participants agreed . This highlights further possible pedagogical differences between countries. Participants believe that *"children should always be at the forefront of their own learning"* (P20/NZ), and that following children's interests and planning purposeful experiences is an intentional practice. However, participants made little mention of the intentional teaching strategies they use when children lead their own learning. This could indicate that teachers have different ideas about what their role is in a child-led approach to learning.

4.5 The strategies teachers actively use in being intentional practitioners

Findings present similar perspectives on specific intentional teaching strategies across the two countries. Three areas of intentional teaching practices emerged from the data - provisioning the learning environment, active teaching practices, and relational practice.

4.5.1 Provisioning the learning environment

Being a facilitator of learning environments appeared to be a common practice among participants. The data suggest that developing an effective learning environment is important for intentional practitioners. Participant 25/NZ described this practice as *"orchestrating the environment to extend children's learning".* Participants from England have labelled their planned and purposeful environments as *"continuous provision"* (P7/E and P18/E).

When provisioning a stimulating learning environment, safety is a priority for most participants. Participant 14/NZ believed that part of their role as an intentional teacher is to *"make sure their space is safe",* and participant 23/E believes part of their role is to *"provide a safe space for them (children) to explore ideas".* This included the responsibility of supervision and *"scanning the area"* (P14/NZ). Findings illustrated that the facilitation of the physical learning environment was a valuable intentional teaching strategy, and something participants enact every day when working in ECEC.

Furthermore, equipping the environment with purposeful resources was agreed by all participants to be an important intentional teaching strategy. Using resources to support children's learning was important for teachers. When describing examples of effective intentional teaching, there was significant use of resources to support learning. Participant 27/E shared that they intentionally support children's use of *"open-ended resources"* to extend learning and nurture children's self-directed play.

Comparatively, a slight difference emerged in the frequency participants use this intentional strategy to support children's learning. In England, 66% of participants enacted this practice every-day, compared to 46% of Aotearoa NZ participants (see Appendix 6). Participants use purposeful resourcing to support the progression of their learning. Participant 4/NZ exemplifies this, stating

their practice is to *"ensure they (children) have the resources to achieve their goals".* The methods in which participants introduce, use or facilitate these resources were not explained by participants.

Intentionally provisioning the learning environment was a strategy some participants from Aotearoa NZ used to support learning without interacting with children. This was described in the following quote by participant 9/NZ: "*Provide proper resources that are age-appropriate, step back and watch them learn".* Furthermore, when asked how participants intentionally supported children during their play, participant 14/NZ described her role was to *"let children have the time to do what it is they are doing while not being interrupted or disturbed".* Furthermore, participant 9/NZ stated her role is to *"let the child find answers themselves without being interrupted".* These quotes may indicate participants from Aotearoa NZ adopt a more passive position in children's learning.

Findings suggest that giving children appropriate amounts of time to explore and learn was recognised as an intentional teaching strategy for some participants. Participant 25/NZ describes this as children *"being given the time and space".* This was identified predominantly from participants from Aotearoa NZ. While participants from Aotearoa NZ shared that time was an intentional tool to support learning, findings suggest the strategy of wait-time was not a daily practice for 37.5% of participants in Aotearoa New Zealand (see Appendix 5). Together, these findings may indicate possible differences between espoused practices, beliefs and theories on children's learning versus their actual practices.

4.5.2 Planning and observation

Participants frequently used the words 'planning' or 'planned' when describing intentional teaching and expressed the importance of planning for specific strategies and provisions to support children's learning. Participant 24/E called this, *"responsive and intentional planning".* Participant 11/NZ described this process as *"purposeful planning".* Findings may illustrate participants believe planning is a fundamental practice of the intentional teacher as it to enables teachers to meet the *"needs, interests, and dispositions of the learner and their whānau"* (P26/NZ). Findings show that not only is planning something that occurs for participants before their

interactions but can also occur within the moment. Participant 22/E describes this, stating *"spontaneity is always a good approach to have with learning, so you're able to use something that they are offering in the moment and turn it into a lesson to increase their knowledge and abilities".*

Participants frequently cited using observation as an intentional teaching practice. Participant 5/E describes using observation to support the teacher in *"knowing how a child is accessing and interacting with their chosen play is key".* Participants shared that observation needs to occur first to understand how to support children's learning interests accurately. Participant 24/E defines this through the following statement, "*Observations throughout the day can allow us as practitioners to scaffold learning for children and offer challenges to their interests".*

Although observation was expressed as a strategy to help inform planning and intentional teaching practices, some participants used the term observation in ways that may suggest a more passive position in the learning environment. Participant 9/NZ comments, *"stand back observe and watch the child solve or work out a solution in their own time and space"*. Furthermore, participant 13/NZ stated when supporting children in their individual play, a teacher should be *"happy to sit back and observe what is happening with the children".* The term observation was used by English participants to support their understanding of what children are doing and to help teachers *"know when to intervene"* (P27/E) which may suggest a more intentional form of observation.

4.5.3 Active teaching practices

While providing a rich, inviting and stimulating learning environment is important for teachers, findings demonstrated specific intentional strategies teachers actively use when engaging with children. The active and intentional actions teachers implement to support children's actions were common across both countries. Participants shared similar values in what they believe to be valuable and important strategies when interacting with children. There were slight variances in what active teaching strategies teachers valued from both contexts, and this will be discussed in the following section. Whilst the findings from this section emerged primarily from qualitative data, the quantitative data elements are supported by tables found in the Appendices section of this thesis. Appendixes five, six and seven support the data where quantities and percentages discussed.

Dialogic strategies where teachers use language purposefully to support and progress children's learning are highly valued strategies, and findings indicate they are used amongst participants on a regular basis (see Appendix 6). Findings suggest that participants often described (or noted) questioning skills when providing examples of intentional teaching practice. The most frequently used dialogic strategies were effective questioning, descriptive praise, and verbal guidance. The data presented other regular dialogic strategies that teachers use is active listening, direct instruction, responsive verbal feedback and providing new language.

The findings suggest effective questioning is a regular and important intentional practice teachers use to support children's learning and defined by many participants as open-ended questioning. Effective questioning was used in participant 1/NZ definition of intentional teaching, describing the pedagogical practice as *"provoking thoughtful questioning",* which they defined as *"open-ended questions that encourage children to use language to discuss their intentions and explorations".* Participant 18/E described the intentional practice as *"higher level questions".* Participants used this strategy within children's play, as exemplified by participant 21/NZ in describing their practice: *"asking intentional questions in their play".* When participant 7/E was giving an example of effective intentional teaching, they described how their use of effective questioning helped to progress a child's learning. They stated, *"After my question about did he think he could predict what might happen, he then made sensible predictions before testing his theory".*

Although effective questioning was suggested to be an important practice, participant 15/NZ mentioned they *"try to make statements to encourage children further, rather than questions"*. This may reflect other possible dialogic strategies participants regularly employ; sustained shared thinking (SST) and verbal guidance. Findings suggest participants use SST within children's play to support their social interactions. P6/NZ explains this by stating, *"I would actively support their pro-social skills and ability to communicate in a collaborative and co-operative way"*. However, only one participant used the term 'sustained-shared thinking' within the data. Additionally, Participant 15/NZ presented the view that meaningful and co-constructed conversations with children should involve encouraging statements, *"rather than just questions".*

Findings demonstrated how teachers see descriptive praise as an important and valuable intentional practice. Participants use descriptive praise to encourage children's participation and to build children's self-esteem and confidence. Participants defined descriptive praise as *"positive encouragement and reinforcement"* (P2/NZ), *"verbal praise"* (P8/E), and "*proximal praise*" (P26/NZ). Participant 22/E illustrates this strategy through the following quote:

> *"I use encouraging words with each child. If some children lose focus I try and bring them back into the activity gently, showing more excitement in how I am experiencing the activity. I use uplifting sentences about them and the group play activity"*

Nine out of ten participants in England believed that descriptive praise is a valuable intentional teaching approach. Comparatively, 3 participants from Aotearoa NZ believe it has little to some value (see Appendix 7). This may highlight possible differences in participants' beliefs and practices on purposeful praise between Aotearoa NZ and England.

Participants referred to other dialogic strategies they implement. Participant 19/E commented they intentionally *"narrate play"* and participant 25/NZ said they *"suggest ideas and explain"* to support learning. Introducing new vocabulary was also a strategy that participants from England identified as intentional teaching. Participant 7/E elaborated on this by providing details on a particular interaction with a child to support their understanding of scientific concepts:

> *"Child was playing with an activity planned by me to help them explore the idea of floating and sinking. I observed for a while and later asked him what he had noticed. He did not fully understand the vocabulary of floating and sinking. We explored together where I introduced the words and demonstrated what they mean. The next day, I placed new items to explore and encouraged him to do so. He did so and was very excited to be able to use the words 'float' and 'sink' in context"*

Moreover, active listening was highlighted from two participants in Aotearoa NZ as an intentional teaching strategy. Participant 25/NZ believes that *"active listening is key"*, which potentially may further indicate use of sustained-shared thinking.

Participants often referred to the strategy of scaffolding when describing their intentional teaching practice. Participants from both countries described scaffolding as “extending learning” (P26/NZ) within children’s interests and inquiries. Participant 22/E describes this process, stating *“working with what they (children) give me and what interests them and then expanding that into something they can learn”*

As per earlier examples of teachers’ sociocultural practice, findings suggest participants view scaffolding as an intentional strategy for transporting children’s current understanding to new learning possibilities. Participant 8/NZ describes this through the following quote: *“Scaffolding and supporting their zone of proximal development. This means being a good observer and having a good understanding of child development so that the appropriate supports can be put in place”.*

Across the data set, scaffolding was recognised by participants as an important and valuable tool to support learning. However, a discrepancy in the frequency with which participants use scaffolding is highlighted. Whilst all England-based participants said they use scaffolding every day, only 75% of Aotearoa NZ based participants reported doing so (Appendix 6). This may further indicate differences between espoused practices, beliefs, and theories versus teachers’ actual practices in Aotearoa NZ based participants.

Throughout the findings, participants referred to assessment as an intentional teaching practice. Although participants identified this practice, only one participant (P26/NZ) explained how they use this to support learning. This can be illustrated through the following quote: *“As we notice more, our role can be to celebrate the knowledge children and whānau bring and weave this into assessment”.*

Findings indicate that participants may evaluate of their teaching practice through reflection supported intentional teaching. Participant 7/E depicts this by stating, *“reflect on what further activities could be planned to extend learning further”.* Many participants from both countries used the term “reflect” when describing their own intentional teaching practice. Using reflective questions to elicit evaluation of practice, reflective feedback between colleagues, and *“reflecting in the moment”* (P17/NZ) were highlighted by participants as supporting intentional teaching.

4.5.4 The co-construction of knowledge

Findings suggest that participants from Aotearoa NZ use the relational pedagogical practice of 'ako' to promote learning. Participant 15/NZ described ako as where *"we can be co-learners with the child"*, and to have a *"willingness to learn from children".* Participant 26/NZ further states that *"in ako we move between learners and teachers as do our children".*

Although participants referred to the use of 'ako' as an intentional teaching strategy, this practice was also described as co-construction by participants in Aotearoa NZ. Findings suggest that participants' use children's previous knowledge, interests and working theories to *"construct and collaborate"* (P26/NZ) new knowledge alongside children. Data shows that participants from Aotearoa NZ may view their role as co-constructors of learning, as illustrated in the following quote: *"My role is a co-constructor, facilitator and guide in children's learning. Children are very much a part of their learning journey and can lead the way with the guidance of a skilled and knowledgeable adult".* (P6/NZ). An example of how this strategy is used to intentionally support learning is described by participant 8/NZ:

> "*An example was a child who liked to drum on all surfaces. Together we co-constructed a music wall outside. He chose all the props to go on the wall and where he wanted them to be added. There were lots of problem-solving opportunities to select which items were fit for the wall, and conversations thinking about where items would be placed. My role in this was to encourage and support him throughout the process and be his hands when he couldn't secure the pieces to the wall"*

The term 'co-construction' wasn't present in qualitative responses from participants in England. However, 54% of participants claim they use co-construction every day (see Appendix 6). This may indicate a lack of understanding or articulation of this specific teaching strategy.

This may further indicate potential differences between espoused and enacted practices. Subsequently, the above findings may also suggest possible differences between pedagogical practices in Aotearoa NZ and England.

4.6 Influences of formal curriculum documents and guiding frameworks

Perspectives on the influences of curriculum frameworks and their guiding documents on supporting and guiding intentional teaching practice were different for participants from Aotearoa NZ compared to those from England. Participants from England didn't provide detail on how the *EYFS framework* (2021) curriculum explicitly guides their practice but did express critique on how the framework can hinder their intentional teaching. However, findings reveal that participants in Aotearoa NZ do make explicit use of *Te Whāriki* (2017) to guide their intentional practice through drawing on the reflective questions, learning outcomes, pedagogical approaches, and development theory. The following quotes reflect how participants value and embrace *Te Whāriki* (2017) to support and guide their intentional teaching practice; *"I follow Te Whāriki blindly"* (P22/NZ), *"My entire practice is guided by Te Whāriki"* (P4/NZ) and "*Te Whāriki underpins my work"* (P8/NZ).

Some participants view *Te Whāriki* (2017) as a curriculum that is underpinned by intentional teaching practice: *"All of Te Whāriki is about intentional teaching"* (P13/NZ). The data may also indicate that participants from Aotearoa NZ use *Te Whāriki* (2017) as an active, working document; *"When posed with something I am not quite sure about how to address I go back to Te Whāriki's key documents for guidance"* (P20/NZ) and intentionally use the document to inform their teaching practice and prompt reflection; *"Te Whāriki helps you remember ways you support children and they learn when you are aware of these principles"* (P15/NZ)

Participants from Aotearoa NZ discussed how *Te Whāriki* guides their intentional practice by providing *"valuable ideas for age-appropriate learning outcomes"* (P12/NZ) which delivers *"a basis for what to aim for with children"* (P6/NZ). The learning outcomes within *Te Whāriki* (2017) are indicated in the findings to support participants' intentional use of assessment. As described by participant 26, *Te Whāriki's* (2017) learning outcomes *"guide the dispositional lens of assessment".*

Findings suggest participants in Aotearoa NZ use *Te Whāriki* (2017) to guide their intentional practice using the curriculum's reflective questions to elicit reflective thought and improve practice. This is demonstrated by the following quote: *"The reflective questions for kaiako are useful with eliciting reflection and a guide to what our teaching practice should look like"* (P6/NZ).

The development of *Te Whāriki's* (2017) positioning of the teacher in children's learning may cause possible differences in intentional practice among teachers in Aotearoa NZ. Participant 6/ NZ illustrates this in the following quote:

> *" I believe intentional teaching isn't consistent across the board in ECE. It seems that new teachers coming into the sector have knowledge on it and it's the older/experienced teachers who are proficient in the old version of Te Whāriki who are still developing their knowledge on intentional teaching. This may not be the case across the whole sector but certainly what I have observed in my experience".*

Participants from Aotearoa NZ highlighted the supporting curriculum document *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (2019) as a guide and support for their intentional teaching practices. Participants gave this document high praise, referring to it as '*amazing*' (P14/NZ) in supporting teachers' practice in '*coaching*' (P21/NZ) children's social and emotional development.

Ten participants from England follow the *EYFS framework* (2021), and one participant uses a '*bespoke*' curriculum based upon the needs of the children in their setting. Participants from England were not as descriptive in how the curriculum supports or guides their intentional teaching practice, but shared criticisms of the framework as to how it may restrict intentional teaching. Some participants felt the framework guided teachers to create "*effective lesson plans and experiences for children that are based upon goals and objectives*" (P24/E). Yet another participant (P16/E) critiqued this by suggesting the framework limits children's learning: *"The curriculum aims for specific outcomes rather than the skills being learned. Although I appreciate the documents and the underpinning aims for holistic development, I feel the end goal is overshadowing experiences children should have".*

Findings also suggest that teachers in England may feel opportunities for their practice to intentionally guide learning can be limited by curriculum requirements as it does not leave much room for autonomy. This is illustrated in the following quote: "*Teachers can be too dependent upon the statements as fact not guidance. It's a tool to support not direct your teaching*" (P5/E).

Furthermore, this is also illustrated by the following quote from Participant 23 (E): "*Sometimes the things we need to do that day overshadow my philosophy and ideal teaching goals*".

The following response from participant 7/E describes how their bespoke curriculum (independent from the *EYFS framework* (2021)) empowers practitioners to enact intentional teaching practices using specific and purposeful strategies that promote teachers to be active in their role in children's education: *"It is based on learning through play with adult support that supports dialogue and open questioning. We focus on learning dispositions to help our children become effective learners".*

The findings on how curriculum supports intentional teaching practice argue that curriculum can either guide or inhibit opportunities for intentional teaching, and how teachers' position in children's education is possibly empowered or directed by curriculum frameworks.

4.7 The supports and challenges of being an intentional teacher

Responses from the questionnaire suggest various factors which either inhibit or enabled participants to practice intentional teaching. Participants across both countries shared similar perspectives on how the dynamic influences of government, ECEC settings, provision of resources, time, and professional development can impede their ability to be intentional practitioners in young children's education.

Findings suggest that teachers require support from leaders and owners of ECEC settings to provide adequate time, resources, and training for intentional teaching to occur. When participants were asked what factors either inhibit or support their intentional teaching, "*finding the time*" (P7/E) to enact quality intentional teaching was important for participants from both countries. Data suggests time to be intentional is influenced by various factors, including; "*staff absences*" (P8/NZ), "*terrible ratios*" (P13/NZ), daily housekeeping duties, routines, paperwork, and curriculum demands. Participant 20/NZ describes the limitations of time are associated with the pressures of *"adult tasks that need to be done in the classroom like paperwork and cleaning".*

Participants in Aotearoa NZ particularly referenced transitions and settling new children into the setting when discussing the impacts of time to intentionally teach: *"The main thing that inhibits me is when we are having a crazy busy day settling young/new children. It is hard to focus on teaching and learning when trying to settle new children"* (P25/NZ).

Not only did participants highlight the need for time to be present and "*in the moment with children*" (P11/NZ), but also indicated that they need time to prepare and plan for intentional teaching to occur. This is illustrated in a quote from participant 6 (Aotearoa NZ): "*Having the time to plan for children's learning is important because it allows you to feel prepared and carry out practices that make you more intentional".*

Furthermore, findings indicate that participants view the demands from routines and curriculum as limiting children's time to deepen their learning alongside an intentional teacher. Participants described the need for *"giving children time"* (P5/E), specifically to develop their learning without interruption of routine or adult-directed activities. The pressures of these routines and daily tasks are illustrated by a participant in Aotearoa NZ who comments: "*I end up being overrun with routines of the day, opposed to a slower pace of engagement with the children"* (P8/NZ). However, the below quote suggests that while intentional teaching doesn't always require long periods of uninterrupted time, adequate time is important for participants. Participant 8/NZ shares, *"You can still be intentional in short spaces of time, however time to be present with the children supports those responsive relationships and allows you to get deeper".*

The pressures facing participants, particularly from England, from curriculum demands, parental expectations, and management are argued to be challenging factors for intentional teaching. Participant 16/E described this as *"top-down pressures".* These pressures may result from a lack of understanding or knowledge about intentional teaching within play from those in leadership positions. This is demonstrated by a quote from participant 5/E when they described possible factors which may inhibit their intentional teaching: *"Top-down pressures and lack of understanding of early years from lead teachers and colleagues".*

In describing other factors which may inhibit intentional teaching, participants from Aotearoa NZ cited a lack of knowledge about intentional teaching practices, highlighting a "*need to grow their practice*" (P8/NZ) so they can implement and understand intentional teaching. However, when providing details on what factors support participants to be intentional practitioners, the key theme of colleagues who understand intentional teaching and support each other's practice emerged in the data. Having "*colleagues with similar beliefs*" (P1/NZ) who are supportive of each other's practice is argued to be a contributing factor in effective intentional teaching. This is illustrated in the following quote: *"When engaged in intentional teaching I trust that my fellow educators are helping to keep the environment calm so learning can continue"* (P20/NZ).

Other factors which support participants to be intentional included engaging in research-based literature, guiding documents such as *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (2019) and continuous professional development opportunities to further develop quality intentional practice. The data also suggests that not only do these factors contribute to teachers' effective use of intentional teaching practices but build their confidence in being an intentional practitioner. One participant from Aotearoa uses a list of teaching practices to prompt intentional teaching, stating *"I have a list of teaching strategies pinned up above my computer which I use almost every day when thinking about how to extend specific children's learning"* (P25/NZ).

The highlighted factors presented in the data may indicate there are significant factors that policy makers, ECEC leaders, and teachers need to consider when to enable intentional teaching practices. Furthermore, data suggests these factors are similar within both countries and may be indicative of influences outside of teachers' control.

4.8 Summary

Teachers' perspectives, understanding, and use of intentional teaching are influenced by their pedagogical beliefs, which in turn influence implementation in practice. Data show that professional development has helped teachers understand intentional teaching and has been influential in guiding teachers' to be more intentional in their practice. ECEC teachers in New Zealand and England hold similar beliefs about play-based learning, sociocultural theory, working with children, and relationships. These beliefs are central to teachers' pedagogy and guide their

interactions with children. However, the findings suggest that teachers' pedagogical beliefs may not correspond to their practice, highlighting possible discrepancies between espoused and enacted practice. The thematic analysis revealed how teachers comprehend and apply intentional teaching in their settings. Findings indicate teachers view provisioning an effective learning environment as intentional practice, as well as planning and observation. However, the active strategies teachers enact while engaging with children are significantly grounded in dialogic techniques, promoting conversation and strategies such as effective questioning, SST and descriptive praise. While both countries employ these intentional strategies, Aotearoa teachers employ the concept of 'ako' to co-construct knowledge with children, signifying the influence the cultural-historical context of Aotearoa may have an impact on intentional teaching. Both countries experienced similar contextual factors that hinder intentional teaching, emphasising the importance of adequate staffing to allow teachers time to engage in meaningful learning with children. Furthermore, curriculum and guiding frameworks were found to influence teachers' intentional practices. Teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand used *Te Whāriki* (2017) to support intentional teaching using reflective questions, and the guiding framework, *He Māpuna te Tamati* (2019) to guide their practice. However, participants from England reported that the *EYFS framework* (2021) places restrictions on teachers' autonomy and placing pressure on teachers through the prioritisation of specific learning goals.

The following chapter will discuss, analyse, and interpret these findings in the context of the literature presented in Chapter two. In doing so, the significance of the findings will be explained in the context of the overarching research questions.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study investigated ECEC teachers' beliefs, perspectives and use of intentional teaching practices to support young children's learning in early childhood education. This chapter critically examines the findings considering the literature discussed in chapter two, within the framework of the guiding research questions. This chapter is organised into three sections based on the study's research questions, as outlined below. The fourth research question related to a comparison of responses from participants has been woven throughout this chapter, highlighting potential similarities and differences between England and Aotearoa NZ within each relevant section.

1. **What are ECEC teachers' beliefs about intentional teaching**?

This section examines how teachers' beliefs influence and guide their intentional teaching practice. Teachers' beliefs on children's play, sociocultural theory, and relational pedagogy are discussed in relation to how these inherently guide teachers' pedagogy and practice.

2. **In what ways do ECEC teachers enact intentional teaching?**

In this section, two specific elements of intentional teaching are discussed. The first is the planning and provisioning of the environment, which teachers consider to be key practises in intentional teaching. The second investigates the specific, active strategies teachers use to guide and support young children's learning and development. This section concludes by considering the factors that may inhibit intentional teaching.

3. **How do ECEC teachers understand intentional teaching?**

While participants described a good level of understanding of what intentional teaching means, it appears there may be tensions and differences between their beliefs and the actual reported practices. This lays the argument for adequate initial teaching training and professional learning opportunities to adopt a robust understanding, knowledge, and articulation of effective teaching pedagogy and practice.

5.2 What are ECEC teachers' beliefs about intentional teaching?

Teachers' pedagogical beliefs and theories underpin their pedagogical decisions on supporting young children's learning and development. The child-centred approaches which dominate western early education emphasise constructivist and sociocultural influences that teachers adopt. ECEC teachers in Aotearoa NZ and England have several core beliefs about their role in supporting children's learning. This section discusses how teachers believe play is most important for young children, and how sociocultural theory and responsive relationships are key components of intentional teaching. The last part of this section examines how teachers' child-centred beliefs are illustrative of tensions outlined in the literature review.

5.2.1 Teachers believe play matters most in ECEC

ECEC teachers in both Aotearoa New Zealand and England believe that play is important and should be the primary vehicle of learning for young children. This is unsurprising, as ECEC pedagogy within Aotearoa NZ and England is founded on children's right to access meaningful play in their learning environments. A child-centred approach remains at the forefront for western ECEC (Farquhar & White, 2014), where learning through play is paramount. This is supported by the curriculum frameworks in Aotearoa NZ and England as they promote the central importance of play. The *EYFS Framework* (2021) states "Play is essential for children's development (Department for Education, 2021a, p. 16), and is echoed in *Te Whāriki* (2017) where play is "valued as meaningful learning" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 25). With play being a central component of both frameworks, it is essential teachers are intentional and active practitioners within children's play and avoid seeing play and teaching as a dichotomy (Ofsted, 2015).

Participants in this study shared positive and effective examples of intentional practice where children's learning was guided and extended. Learning objectives of mathematics, science and literacy were woven within moments of play. This highlights how play is the optimum space of intentional teaching to occur in the early learning environment. However, tensions between learning, play, and teaching were evident, particularly for some teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Viewing intentional teaching and play as separate elements in the early learning environment averts teachers from recognising opportune moments for extending children's learning (Edwards, 2017).

Play provides a natural and developmentally appropriate way for children to cultivate key learning dispositions that are vital to academic success. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to find successful methods of integrating play and curricula through intentional teaching. Developing an understanding of different play-types can support teachers in viewing teaching and learning as a cohesive paradigm. Pyle and Danniels (2017) suggest viewing children's play through different play types can enable teachers to position themselves as active, contributing members of children's play. In guided-play, children direct learning while adults guide, co-construct, and enhance it. Having a deeper understanding of play types will support teachers in delivering learning objectives using intentional teaching, whilst continuing to value play in young children's learning.

5.2.2 Teachers believe the sociocultural context of learning is important

ECEC teachers in England and Aotearoa NZ are deeply influenced by sociocultural theory and believe the sociocultural context is where children learn best. In this space, teachers uphold the values, identity and aspirations that are unique to the cultural context. The findings from this present study support not only the important role teachers have but affirm most participants believed sociocultural theory supports their active and influential position in children's learning.

Socio-cultural theory can successfully situate intentional teaching within play-based ECEC. Using children's ZPD alongside the concept of the 'more knowledgeable' other establishes intentional teaching successfully within socio-cultural frameworks and pedagogy. By understanding what a child is capable of and what knowledge and skills they already possess, teachers can orchestrate their pedagogical practices to extend children's learning purposefully. Essentially, effective intentional teachers develop and adapt their pedagogical techniques to meet the learning outcomes whilst working within a child's zone of proximal development (Cherrington, 2018)

Furthermore, sociocultural theory is a valuable framework for understanding children's development, as it recognizes the importance of individual cultural contexts. This present study indicates teachers' intentional practice in Aotearoa NZ is also driven by Kaupapa Māori theory. It is a noted difference that teachers in England did not mention children's culture inspiring their intentional teaching. However, this could be explained by the unique cultural setting of Aotearoa

NZ, based in Te Tiriti o Waitangi which is at the core of Te Whāriki and the sociocultural-historical ECEC pedagogy in Aotearoa NZ (Ministry of Education, 2017). These theoretical foundations promote the use of intentional teaching by establishing teachers' role in children's learning, and engaging children's culture in deliberate and meaningful ways.

5.2.3 Teachers believe in responsive, collaborative relationships with children

ECEC teachers believe their responsive and collaborative relationships with children provide the foundation for meaningful, intentional teaching. This is unsurprising, due to the clear influence of sociocultural theory on teachers' pedagogical perspectives, beliefs, and actions. The emphasis of relational pedagogy was presented throughout the findings. Participants from England and Aotearoa NZ shared their views on the importance of relationships in the early years, and all agreed that responsive relationships are essential for intentional teaching to occur.

Teachers' robust beliefs on the connections between relationships and intentional teaching shared in this study demonstrates how relational pedagogy is a priority for ECEC (Cherrington, 2018). Curriculum discourse and evidence-based research continues to highlight the importance of meaningful, responsive relationships between children, teachers, whānau and the wider community. The findings from this present study correlates with the growing body of data that presents the critical links between high-quality relationships and children's learning and development in ECEC (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hedges & Cooper. 2018; Wood & Nuttall, 2020; Vygotsky, 1987). McLaughlin et al. (2016) assert relationships are critical to implementing high-quality ECEC, which then enables intentional teaching to occur in meaningful and authentic ways that link to children's interests, needs and aspirations. The teaching lists from the study in MacLaughlin et. al. demonstrated the active and purposeful ways in which teachers can enact these relationships in the learning environment with children, whānau, colleagues, and the wider community. The non-exhaustive yet comprehensive list explains how teachers can actively develop and support relationships with members of the learning community based on reciprocal trust, respect, and aroha.

Participants from Aotearoa NZ gave more thorough explanations of how relational pedagogy affects their intentional practice; highlighting strategies like co-construction, following children's

interests, and enacting play partnerships. However, participants from England gave little response or detail about how relational pedagogy guided their intentional teaching. This highlights possible pedagogical variances between the two countries, emphasises the differing cultural contexts across nations and how the curriculum in Aotearoa NZ has been designed with culturally-relevant legislation. Te Whāriki clearly establishes the theoretical underpinnings of relational pedagogy but also makes clear how relationships between teachers, students, and the wider learning community are essential to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Wood & Nuttall, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2017). Fundamentally, intentional teachers' pedagogical beliefs on intentional teaching are influenced by their surrounding cultural contexts and this is evident in their practice, pedagogical decisions and curriculum design and implementation.

5.2.4 Teachers believe children are agentic in their play and learning

ECEC teachers view children as competent and engaged participants in the learning environment, encouraging their autonomy in their learning and play. Working in partnership with children is important for teachers in the early years, and teachers believe children learn best when their interests are at the forefront of children's learning and play. While findings presented discrepancies between participants in England and Aotearoa NZ on whether ECEC should be completely child-led, it was evident children's agency is an important factor for teachers.

These findings highlight the tensions between learning, play and teaching, and illustrates the complexity of teachers nuanced role in child-centred pedagogy. The challenges teachers face in delivering outcome-based academic content while following a child-centred approach was evident for participants in this study. ECEC teachers have demonstrated hesitancy towards intentional teaching because of their aversion to didactic approaches (Kilderry, 2015). However, intentional teaching is not didactic; it simply places the teacher as an active contributor within the learning environment. Child-led learning exists within a child-centred pedagogical approach, where children and teachers construct knowledge together rather than through a transmission model (Fives & Gill, 2015). A careful balance needs to be considered when empowering children's agency in their learning whilst teachers are intentionally delivering practices to plan, implement, and deliver specific learning outcomes.

It is crucial that teachers do not regard teaching and learning as two distinct concepts. As much as teachers acknowledge children's competent contributions, teachers must also acknowledge their active role in the partnership. Both the child and teacher have valuable and significant influence within the learning environment, and by adopting an overarching theme of intentionality (Leggett & Ford, 2013), teachers can acknowledge that both their role and the agency of the child are central to intentional teaching.

5.3 In what ways do ECEC teachers enact intentional teaching?

This study affirms the commitment of ECEC teachers in England and Aotearoa New Zealand to be intentional practitioners who support children's holistic development and learning goals in meaningful and purposeful ways. The approaches outlined in this section align with the pedagogical beliefs of teachers, emphasizing strategies based on reciprocal interactions and embedded within the context of children's play. This section discusses two specific elements of intentional teaching. The first is the need for careful planning and provisioning of the environment, which was seen as essential by most participants. The second will discuss the active intentional teaching practices regularly employed by participants to support and promote learning, and how this aligns with the research related to effective, quality pedagogy in ECEC. Observation, dialogic strategies, co-construction, and scaffolding are emphasized. Potential similarities and differences between practices in England and Aotearoa NZ are identified throughout the discussion.

5.3.1 Planning and provisioning a high-quality learning Environment.

The creation of a meaningful and safe learning environment that piques children's interests and stimulates their learning is an important and intentional teaching practice for teachers. This is not surprising because play based ECEC is influenced by leading early years theories and approaches such as Froebel and Reggio Emilia, which advocate for the environment to serve as a third teacher (Rinaldi, 2006) While participants in England referred to this practice as continuous provision and participants in Aotearoa NZ frequently referred to it as preparing the learning environment, despite the different terminology, both terms refer to the same practice. This was a daily occurrence that was carried out by all participants.

For some participants in Aotearoa-New Zealand, facilitating the learning environment was enough in and of itself to support children's learning. Some teachers found this to be sufficient guidance, allowing children to lead the play while teachers stood back and observed the play. While this position was not exclusive to Aotearoa New Zealand participants (one participant in England held similar views), it does not imply that this is a widespread practice.

Teachers viewing their role as passive facilitators is indicative of the tensions between learning and play, and teachers' position in the learning and teaching process. It may be linked to traditional early educational approaches which relied heavily on Piagetian principles (Grieshaber et al., 2021), where the child as an independent explorer and learner was emphasized. McLaughlin and Cherrington (2018) argue that previous ECEC frameworks and discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand positioned teachers in passive roles in children's learning. Now, teachers are urged to take a more active role in children's learning and not rely solely on the facilitation and provision of an environment that is conducive to learning. Children need skilled teachers to support and develop specific learning outcomes that are critical to their educational success. Facilitation of a well-provisioned and exciting learning environment is simply not enough. The guided instruction of intentional teachers is required for children to learn important skills such as early writing (Bahlmann-Bollinger & Myers, 2019).

5.3.2 Active teaching strategies

In both Aotearoa NZ and England, teachers highlighted the use of active, child-centered teaching strategies. Scaffolding, co-construction, questioning, and sustained-shared thinking were the most important. This study found that high-quality ECEC teachers value reciprocal relationships with children to achieve learning outcomes. Thus, teachers use interactive and intentional strategies to maximize learning.

The term scaffolding was described frequently by participants as a method of supporting children's learning and is most used by England-based teachers as a daily practice. Teachers shared their use of scaffolding was predominantly used to deliver new concepts to children in interesting and interactive ways. While teachers referred to their practice as scaffolding, interpretations of the examples they provided suggest co-construction. Teachers shared the power dynamic through

reciprocal interactions, echoing co-construction as scaffolding tends to give teachers control (MacNaughton & Williams, 2008).

Co-construction enables teachers to share power with children in the learning environment, thereby valuing their contributions, ideas, and prior knowledge. While co-construction has been compared to a similar strategy of scaffolding (Fleer, 2010), co-construction encourages children to be agents of their learning with the participation of an adult or peer. As a result, it is not surprising that participants in this study who shared similar beliefs about sociocultural theory, relationships, and play regularly use co-construction to support children's learning. Co-construction enables the child to be recognised as an intentional learner, positioning the child's own knowledge and learning intentions as powerful, creating a "socially just education" (Krieg, 2018).

The term 'ako' is exclusive to the ECEC context of Aotearoa, NZ as it describes the culturally responsive and reciprocal method of learning in partnership with children through a Māori worldview. This suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand's unique cultural-historical context has a substantial impact on teachers' beliefs. Although the terms 'ako' and 'co-construction' were identified by only Aotearoa New Zealand participants in their written responses, co-constructing knowledge with children was a common intentional practice utilised in both countries. This may indicate that teachers may not have a clear understanding of pedagogy or be able to articulate the intentional teaching methods they are implementing (Barblett et. al., 2016; Batchelor, 2016; Krieg, 2018; Leggett & Ford, 2013). This reinforces the need for more professional development opportunities for ECEC teachers on pedagogical guidance and its implications for young children's learning and development. These opportunities will enhance ECEC teachers' comprehension of what, why, and how they implement effective learning opportunities for children.

The use of purposeful and intentional dialogue with children by teachers was a significant finding. For all study participants, the use of effective questioning, purposeful praise, and examples of teaching that reflect sustained shared thinking were prevalent methods (see Appendix 6). It was evident that these intentional dialogical strategies facilitated children's learning and growth. Effective questioning was determined by participants to be open-ended and promoted critical thinking and was commonly used by teachers in both countries. Literature demonstrates how

intentional dialogic strategies can improve learning outcomes for children (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2008) and support children's metacognition (Hackling & Barrett-Pugh, 2012).

In this study, the use of sustained shared thinking, in which teachers and students engage in collaborative conversations on a topic of interest, promoted a deeper level of learning and comprehension. Whilst the term 'sustained shared thinking' was used by only one participant, evidence of this practice was interpreted through the examples of intentional teaching provided by participants. SST is found to be an intentional pedagogical practice that uses deep and provoking language to foster learning dispositions and objectives (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Play is an effective context for SST to occur, as it supports children's metacognition and development whilst encouraging them to take risks in their learning (Siraj & Asani, 2015). Within this context, the use of deep and provocative language can help to scaffold children's thinking and encourage them to reflect on their learning processes. This type of intentional pedagogical practice can help children develop critical thinking skills by encouraging children to question and challenge their own and others' working theories with the support of an intentional teacher (Meade et al., 2013.

5.3.3 What inhibits teachers from being intentional practitioners

Participants from both countries identified similar factors that inhibit their intentional teaching practice. Unsurprisingly, these factors are influences that are out of teachers' control. Typically, findings demonstrated that time, resourcing, and training were the most significant barriers hindering teachers from being intentional.

Teachers discussed that adequate and quality resourcing is an important factor in intentional teaching, and not having adequate resources available can disrupt or hinder intentional teaching opportunities. Well-provisioned environments are important for teachers in ECEC as they promote child-centered learning by enabling children to access and engage with a range of learning opportunities. Intentional teachers should provide a plethora of open-ended resources that children can use in a variety of ways that support their in-depth exploration (Epstein, 2014), and which also provide the context for teacher/child engagement.

Ratios, staff absences, and daily housekeeping duties were identified as factors that prevented teachers from dedicating enough time to children's learning. It takes time and focus to devote adequate time to exploring children's ideas and theories. To engage in the many facets of intentional teaching, teachers must have the support of leadership and management. An effective teacher employs a wide range of skills and strategies to engage in intentional pedagogy and orchestrates a child's learning journey using such interventions (Sylva et al., 2004). However, these practices take time, and for high-quality teaching to occur in ECEC, management must ensure that teachers have sufficient opportunities such as sufficient staffing and resources to implement effective intentional teaching strategies. Providing efficient ratios for staffing is a quality marker for ECEC settings (Alexander, 2023). This highlights the implications policy and regulations of staffing ratios has on the ability for teachings to engage in rich learning moments with children that is reflected within intentional teaching.

Participants in this study highlighted the significance of professional development opportunities for enhancing their understanding of intentional teaching. Participants were concerned about their colleagues and management's lack of pedagogical knowledge regarding intentional teaching, according to the findings. This further emphasizes the significance of professional development in enhancing the pedagogical understanding of ECEC professionals. Not only teachers but also ECEC leaders, must have access to professional development opportunities to ensure effective intentional teaching and improved learning outcomes for children (McLaughlin & Cherrington, 2018) Specifically, Aotearoa NZ has lacked guidance for teachers and leaders in developing refined pedagogical practices (McLaughlin et al. 2016). ECEC discourse continues to emphasize the need for adequate funding from policy makers to provide high-quality professional learning opportunities. If ECEC professionals have a deeper understanding of intentional teaching, children’s learning outcomes will improve (Barblett et al., 2016; Krieg, 2018; Kilderry, 2015; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2008) and the professionalization of ECEC teachers will increase (Dalli, 2008).

5.3 How do ECEC teachers understand intentional teaching?

Participants defined intentional teaching as the deliberate acts of teaching to support and promote meaningful learning for young children. Their descriptions of intentional teaching are reflective of language defined in literature, using words such as purposeful, deliberate and planned (Epstein,

2014). This section discusses how teachers interpret intentional teaching in the context of ECEC. It investigates whether, while participants had this understanding, there are differences between teachers espoused and actual intentional teaching practices. Curriculum influences on teachers' understanding and use of intentional teaching are investigated.

5.3.1 Teachers' understanding of intentional teaching

The teachers in the study articulated a robust understanding of intentional teaching. When participants described intentional teaching, they used vocabulary which is commonly used to describe the pedagogical practice within relevant literature (Esptein, 2014; Kirkby et al., 2018; Leggett & Ford, 2013; McLaughlin et al. 2016). Terms used by participants such as 'deliberate', 'purposeful', and 'planned' suggests most participants understand that intentional teaching requires active and meaningful involvement of teachers in young children's education. Twenty-five out of 27 participants held a recognized teaching qualification, which is in alignment with previous studies that suggest that qualified teachers have a deeper pedagogical understanding and articulation of how to support children's learning (Meade et al., 2013; Sylva et al., 2004).

However, while the results initially indicated a high level of understanding, upon closer examination, some participants from Aotearoa New Zealand did not see intentional teaching as a good fit for play-based ECEC; further emphasizing tensions between play, teaching, and learning. It also suggests possible misunderstandings of what intentional teaching is and a lack of articulation and understanding of Teachers' role within children's learning and play (Batchelor, 2016; Kilderry, 2015; Krieg, 2018; Leggett & Ford, 2013).

These patterns also emerged in the data where participants described the quantity and type of intentional practices they employ. There were significant differences between some participant's responses in qualitative-designed questions in comparison to Likert-scale questions (Appendix 6 & 7). This was presented through the lack of wait time used in comparison to the belief of standing back, observing, and allowing children to find answers without interruption. This also emerged when participants also made considerable references to the practice of scaffolding, yet 25% of participants who didn't enact this daily. This study suggests teachers' beliefs and theories on learning may not resemble the practices they accurately enact, suggesting teachers need to be

more aware of their pedagogical beliefs and improve their articulation and understanding of what their role is (Reynolds, 2007). Teachers need to develop a deeper pedagogical knowledge of their role in children's learning, suggesting this understanding will enable teachers to view intentional teaching as an effective method of guiding children's learning (Kirkby et al., 2018).

According to McLaughlin and Cherrington (2018) teachers cultivate a "broader construct of pedagogy" (p.36) through professional learning opportunities. This highlights the importance of professional development opportunities to broaden teachers' knowledge of intentional teaching. Professional learning opportunities were the primary source of knowledge about intentional teaching for participants, emphasizing the importance of these opportunities in increasing teachers' knowledge and understanding of quality teaching practice. This aims to improve ECEC teachers' articulation and knowledge of intentional teaching practices but also supports the reconceptulisation of the role of ECEC teachers as fundamental to children's learning and development (McLaughlin & Cherrington, 2018).

5.3.2 Implications of curriculum on intentional teaching practices

The findings from this study presented the prominent impact of curriculum frameworks on teachers' understanding and use of intentional teaching. Teachers would often refer to their national curriculum documents/frameworks as either an obstacle or provision of their intentional teaching practice. These implications were different for participants in Aotearoa NZ compared to those in England. This is a significant difference presented in the findings for teachers in England and Aotearoa NZ. Whilst participants from Aotearoa NZ presented positive and detailed feedback on how their curriculum enables intentional teaching, participants from England felt restricted and limited by their curriculum framework.

The revised version of *Te Whāriki* (2017) is underpinned by intentional teaching as it provides teachers with concise guidance in supporting children's learning and development. It was clear that teachers in Aotearoa NZ used *Te Whāriki* (2017) as a working document to guide their intentional teaching. Using the document's reflective questions, theory, and learning outcomes, teachers felt supported and guided by the ECEC framework in Aotearoa New Zealand. Additionally, participants referred to the supporting document, *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (2019) as an additional

source for guiding their intentional teaching. These results are encouraging, as it indicates the revised version of *Te Whāriki* (2017)'s shift of teachers' role as more active and intentional (McLaughlin & Cherrington, 2018) is supporting teachers to be more intentional practitioners within the learning environment. *Te Whāriki* (2017) states "Kaiako are the key resource in any ECE service. Their primary responsibility is to facilitate children's learning and development through thoughtful and intentional pedagogy" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 59).

However, in England, participants were not descriptive in their use of the curriculum as a tool to guide their teaching practices. When discussing the implications of curriculum on their intentional teaching, results more commonly cited criticisms of the framework. Some participants expressed that the framework was restricted by its prescriptive nature which left little room for autonomy. This was defined by their lessons and environment being directed at children reaching definitive learning outcomes, rather than supporting children's learning dispositions and interests.

The pressure on teachers in England to support children in achieving prescribed learning goals and outcomes is reflective of schoolification. Research suggests schoolification has been driven by the "datafication" (Bradbury, 2019) of ECEC in England which has increased pressures on teachers to produce high levels of academic success for children. This requirement for data is driven by government policy. Robert-Holmes (2015) argues this has inhibited teachers by restricting their ability to follow child-centered pedagogies where children's interests and knowledge are prioritized.

A significant difference between the frameworks of each country is the sociocultural theory that not only underpins Te Whāriki but is evident within Aotearoa NZ's unique cultural-historical context. In contrast, while the *EYFS framework* (2021) states that children's personal, social, and emotional development is fundamental (Department for Education, 2021a) the *EYFS Framework* (2021) is focused on children's measured learning outcomes (Basford, 2019). Additionally, there is no reference to the *EYFS framework's* (2021) underpinning theories and pedagogical approaches to learning. However, the Department for Education has published non-statutory documents to support the effective implementation of the *EYFS framework* (2021). *Development Matters* (Department for Education, 2021b) outline key areas of effective practice and gives clear guidance

for ECEC teachers to support children's learning using intentional strategies. However, there was no reference to this document from participants in this present study.

These differences amplify the significant influence curriculum can have on intentional teaching practices. Curriculum frameworks should enable teachers to be intentional within their practice, provisioning them with guidance and outlining examples of effective intentional teaching. Curriculum frameworks and their supporting documents need to be actively used by teachers regularly to refer to, reflect on, and used to guide their intentional teaching.

5.4 Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of this study in correlation with relevant literature to present an examination of teachers' perspectives, beliefs and use of intentional teaching to support children's learning in play-based ECEC. Weaving findings and literature together, this chapter argues intentional teaching is important as it increases the quality of ECEC by improving pedagogical practice in play-based settings. The chapter highlights teachers' pedagogical beliefs on play, sociocultural theory, relationships and children as agents of their learning environment, signifying how these beliefs guide teachers' intentional teaching practices. The discussion argues the tensions of teachers' active positioning and children as powerful contributors can be resolved by adopting an overarching theme of intentionality. Similarities of teaching strategies were identified, with a specific focus on the child-centric, interactive dialogic strategies teachers enact that are based within responsive relationships. However, it was noted that teachers' espoused beliefs and practices may differ from the actual practices recorded in the data. Contributing factors that inhibit teachers were discussed, outlining the implicating factors of effective resources and efficient staffing on intentional teaching. The examination of teachers' understanding and knowledge of intentional teaching highlighted the importance for quality professional learning opportunities. This chapter also examined how findings on the influence of curriculum framework can either guide or inhibit intentional teaching to occur. Differences of perspectives on the curriculum frameworks were evident between teachers in Aotearoa NZ and England.

The following chapter concludes the thesis, providing implications for practice and recommendations for teachers, leaders and policy makers in ECEC. Limitations, delimitations and

strengths of the research are discussed, as well as recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with final reflections from the researcher on the research journey and outcomes of the study.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate ECEC teachers' perspectives, beliefs and use of intentional teaching practices to support young children's learning in Aotearoa NZ and England. This study offers a comparative insight into how teachers' pedagogical beliefs influence their perspectives of intentional teaching, and how these beliefs inform their utilisation of intentional teaching strategies. The findings suggest sociocultural theory, relational pedagogy and play-based learning underpins ECEC teachers' pedagogical beliefs which subsequently shape the enactment of intentional teaching practices. ECEC teachers across both contexts shared a similar understanding of intentional teaching, but it was discovered their own pedagogical beliefs and espoused practices may differ from the practices they enact. Furthermore, the study demonstrated how formal curriculum frameworks can hinder or support teachers being intentional practitioners.

Using a qualitative, interpretivist research design, this study has sought to offer new insights into intentional teaching. The participation of teachers in England and Aotearoa NZ provided the study with a comparative element. While this study is limited by its small-scale, this comparative contributes to the growing body of research dedicated to ECEC teachers' pedagogical practices and implementation of curriculum.

The findings in this study exemplify the tensions between teaching and play in ECEC, indicating the need for quality professional learning opportunities for teachers to develop and understand intentional teaching practices, deconstructing views of teaching and learning as separate constructs, and the reasons behind their pedagogical beliefs. The comparative data indicates that while ECEC teachers in both countries share similar practices, understandings, and beliefs on intentional teaching, Aotearoa NZ 's distinct cultural-historical context offers an additional dimension to understanding this construct. This chapter outlines possible implications for practice for ECEC teachers in both countries, recognises the delimitations and limitations of the study, offers a final researcher reflection and suggestions for future research.

6.2 Implications for practice

Intentional teaching improves learning outcomes for children. To foster and promote intentional teaching in early childhood educational settings, teachers need to be aware of their position in children's learning and understand how to actively support children's learning through specific, intentional teaching strategies. Teachers need to have a robust understanding of their pedagogical beliefs and how these influence their practice. Understanding intentional teaching strategies, embracing intentionality as an overarching theme, and being able to articulate these practices will support teachers, leaders and policy makers to have stronger pedagogical practice that ultimately improves learning outcomes for young children.

6.2.1 Practical recommendations for teachers

- Undertake reflective practices to prompt meaningful deliberation of teaching moments and observations. Reflective practice helps teachers develop their pedagogical thinking on how to best interact and support children's learning. Cherrington and Loveridge (2014) recommend using a community of practice approach to prompt these reflections. Evidence-based research demonstrates how collective reflection amongst ECEC teachers can improve practice and develop Teachers' intentionality (Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014; Duley, 2016).
- Embrace an overarching theme of intentionality within a child-centred approach; viewing both teachers and children as intentional contributors to the learning environment.
- Use curriculum frameworks as active, working documents. Use the supporting documents to prompt reflection, provide ideas, and elicit best practice.
- Engage in professional learning opportunities to deepen knowledge and understanding of the pedagogical and theoretical influences on teachers' beliefs.
- Engage in professional learning opportunities on intentional teaching practices to improve understanding and articulation on how to best support learning in ECEC.

6.2.2 Practical recommendations for ECEC Leaders

- Adhere to curriculum requirements and underpinning principles to promote Teachers' active position in children's learning; supporting the reconceptualization of teachers in ECEC.

- Provide teachers with adequate time to engage in planning and provisioning of the environment so they can adequately implement intentional practices.
- Ensure adequate staffing is a priority. This will enable teachers the time needed to engage in rich, meaningful learning with children.
- Facilitate internal evaluations using a community of practice approach. Engaging in collaborative action research (CAR) opportunities could provide a suitable avenue. Duley (2016) demonstrates using CAR is an effective method in supporting teachers to shift their beliefs and become more intentional in their practice.

6.2.3 Practical recommendations for policy makers

- Increase the requirement for qualified staff in ECEC settings. Research continues to demonstrate the correlation between teacher qualifications and quality education (Meade, 2013; Sylva, et al., 2004). Increasing the number of qualified staff will increase learning outcomes for children by teachers who are skilled in their intentional practice.
- Oversee the implementation of intentional teaching being taught to student teachers in their initial teacher education.
- Increase funding of specifically designed professional learning opportunities to develop Teachers' pedagogical understanding, knowledge and skills enabling intentional teaching to be a fundamental practice for ECEC.
- Review and improve ratio sizes for ECEC settings in both England and Aotearoa NZ. This will enable teachers to engage in more meaningful, rich learning opportunities for children to extend and develop learning outcomes, thus improving quality of ECEC.
- Fund research which examines the pressures and implications of schoolification on ECEC and its unique child-centred pedagogy.

6.3 Limitations, delimitations and strengths of the study

It is important to note that this is a small-scale study and operated within an interpretivist research design. Therefore, the views expressed in this study may not be indicative of the views of all ECEC teachers in England and Aotearoa. As only 11 participants from England, and 16 from Aotearoa NZ participated in this study, no generalisations on Teachers' perspectives, beliefs and use of

intentional teaching can be made. However, the views presented in this study offer valuable insight into intentional teaching that should be considered.

Despite efforts to increase the sample size, the study was limited due to a lack of respondents in the questionnaire. A larger sample size could have allowed for a more in-depth examination of the findings. While the questionnaire was designed to allow participants to respond anonymously, a second phase of data collection would have supported the validity of the research. Having conversations through the method of a focus group interview would have provided opportunities to further probe participant's responses to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching.

During the thematic analysis, reflection was a key tool to limit researcher bias. During this process, a delimitation of the study was presented in reflecting on the questions used in the questionnaire. Because of the large variety of ECEC settings in England, specifically with reception classrooms in school settings, participants from England should have been asked to define the context of their ECEC environment. While teachers in reception classes in England follow the *EYFS Framework* (2021), their pedagogy and classroom management may be influenced by the primary school's leadership and expectations.

This study aimed to fill an identified gap in the research. A strength of this research is that it is the first study that has explored Teachers' perceptions, beliefs and use of intentional teaching through a comparative lens between teachers in England and Aotearoa NZ. A particular strength of this research was the unique position of the researcher. The researcher's background in ECEC was predominantly in Aotearoa NZ. During this research project, the researcher began teaching in England as a reception class teacher. Having experienced early childhood education in both countries gave the researcher a unique perspective on intentional teaching in different contexts. These experiences prompted continuous reflection as a teacher and as a researcher. Throughout the research project, the researcher used reflective practices to reduce potential bias and critically analyse findings through a unique interpretivist lens.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Recent research has continued to investigate Teachers' beliefs and how these influence Teachers' practice. This research study identified teachers' pedagogical beliefs and theories are not necessarily aligned in their practice. Supporting teachers to understand how their beliefs impact their practice can increase pedagogical knowledge, understanding and practice. Therefore, further research could undertake a CAR project to investigate how teachers' beliefs and theories on children's learning align with their intentional teaching practice. Using the CAR approach, teachers can be engaged in the research and use it as a professional learning opportunity to observe, view, analyse and evaluate their pedagogical beliefs, theories and practice in more intentional ways.

Because this study gathered data through a written questionnaire, it is suggested further research adopts methodology which explores intentional teaching through observational practice. This would provide an opportunity to examine how teachers' pedagogical beliefs are enacted within their daily, intentional practice. Furthermore, it could explore the enactment of curriculum frameworks in guiding and supporting intentional teaching to achieve desired learning goals.

6.5 Researcher reflections

Learning about Teachers' perspectives, beliefs and use of intentional teaching has provided me with insight into the complex factors that guide and inhibit Teachers' practice. This research project has been an invaluable journey which has given me a foundation to grow upon as a researcher. Engaging in the literature, data, conversations with my supervisors, and reflective processes has supported my own teaching practice. Learning how curriculum, beliefs, and theory shapes teachers intentional teaching has encouraged me to reflect on my own practice; guiding me in becoming a more intentional practitioner with the children I teach.

My hope for this study is to amplify the importance of the teacher in ECEC. It has given me a deep understanding of how teachers can support learning whilst still advocating for play-based pedagogy where children are active, contributing leaders of their learning environment. Throughout this journey, my pride for the unique cultural-historical context of Aotearoa has grown alongside my developing understanding and respect for the early year's context in England. My hope for this research is to inspire other teachers to be competent, confident practitioners,

intentionally guiding children to achieve their goals in culturally responsive , play-based learning environments.

"Intentional teaching is a taonga. It is a vital component for our children, whanau and learning community. It is where we can live the art of teaching and truly make a difference to our akonga."

(Participant 26 – Aotearoa NZ)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

. My name is Kirsten Bassett, and I am conducting this research as part of completing my Master of Education (Early Years) with Massey University, New Zealand. This research is supervised by Dr. Karyn Aspden and Philippa Isom. This questionnaire is designed to gather data to inform a research project focused on understanding teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching to support young children's learning in early childhood education and care (ECEC). This qualitative study is built upon an exploratory comparative design which seeks to gather data from ECEC teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), and the United Kingdom (UK).

Intentional teaching can be defined as the deliberate, thoughtful and purposeful actions teachers enact to support and extend children's learning. Using their professional expertise and knowledge, intentional teachers can recognise opportunities for learning in a variety of learning contexts and act with intended and specific learning outcomes or goals for children (Epstein, 2014). The aim of this questionnaire is to capture your experiences, beliefs, and perspectives on intentional teaching within your own practice.

To participate in this study, you need to be currently working in ECEC and be currently residing in England or Aotearoa New Zealand.

If you are interested, I would be very grateful if you could complete the questionnaire, which will take approximately 25 - 30 minutes. Please be assured that all information is completely confidently, and your identity remains anonymous. Qualtrics is securely encrypted, and no identifying data (IP and email addresses) are stored. Your submission of the questionnaire is deemed to be your consent. You are free not to answer any or all questions.

If you would like access to a summary of the findings, you can email me at KirstenLeighBassett.Bassett.1@uni.massey.ac.nz. If requested, a summary will be provided at the end of the research study. If you have any queries or concerns about the research, you can contact me via email at KirstenLeighBassett.Bassett.1@uni.massey.ac.nz. Alternatively, you

can contact the research supervisors: Dr Karyn Aspden - k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz Philippa Isom - p.isom@massey.ac.nz.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named in this document is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Many thanks. Your participation in this study is highly valued and will inform a greater understanding of intentional teaching in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Please note that the questionnaire has used the term Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to encompass all settings which cater for children between the ages of 2-5 years old. Furthermore, the term ECEC teachers has been used to refer to all who work directly with children in ECEC environments.

Q1. Please choose from one of the following options

- ○ I work in ECEC in Aotearoa New Zealand
- ○ I work in ECEC in England

Q2. What is your role in early childhood education?

- ☐ Teaching assistant
- ☐ Fully certificated teacher (Aotearoa New Zealand)
- ☐ Teacher with QTS or EYTS (United Kingdom)
- ☐ Provisionally certificated teacher (Aotearoa New Zealand)
- ☐ ECT Teacher
- ☐ Teacher in training
- ☐ Unqualified teacher
- ☐ Team leader
- ☐ Assistant manager
- ☐ Nursery or centre manager
- ☐ Head Teacher
- ☐ Other (please specify) ________

Q3. Does the early years setting that you work within follow any specific early childhood educational philosophy or approach (e.g. Montessori, Kohanga Reo)

Q4. How long have you been working in the early years sector?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10-15 years
- 16 years or more

Q5. What is the highest early childhood qualification that you have?

- I don't have a formal education in early childhood education
- Level 2 Diploma for the Early Years Practitioner
- Level 3 Diploma in Early Years Education and Care
- Early Years Foundation degree
- Bachelor of Arts in Childhood studies
- Diploma in Early Childhood Education or Teaching and Learning (Early Years)
- Bachelor of Education (Early Years)
- Bachelor of Teaching (Early Years)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Early Childhood Education
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education
- Master's of Education (Early Childhood Education)
- Doctorate
- Other

Q6. Can you please tell me about your understanding of the term 'intentional teaching'?

Q7. Can you please tell me about how you view your role in supporting young children's learning?

Q8. Please rate your level of agreement to the following statements that relate to intentional teaching in early childhood education

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Adult-initiated learning experiences are an important component of an ECEC setting	○	○	○	○	○
ECEC should be completely child-led	○	○	○	○	○
I regularly plan the specific strategies I will use to support children's learning	○	○	○	○	○
Up-to-date research informs how I teach young children	○	○	○	○	○

I believe intentional teaching can sit within play-based pedagogy	O	O	O	O	O
Teaching and play are separate constructs	O	O	O	O	O
Intentional teaching can occur during children's free play	O	O	O	O	O
Close relationships with children are crucial for intentional teaching to occur	O	O	O	O	O
As a teacher, it is my responsibility to introduce new concepts to children	O	O	O	O	O
Intentional teaching aligns with a child-centred philosophy	O	O	O	O	O
I would define myself as an intentional teacher	O	O	O	O	O
I have a good understanding of intentional teaching	O	O	O	O	O
Intentional teaching is an important pedagogical practice in the early years	O	O	O	O	O

Q9. Can you tell me about some of the ways that you actively support children's learning while they are engaged in individual play?

Q10. Can you tell me about some of the ways that you actively support children's learning while they are engaged in group play?

Q11. Could you please tell me about an occasion where your intentional teaching practices had a positive impact on a child's learning?

Q12. The following list highlights some intentional teaching strategies. How often would you use these in your practice?

	Every day	2 - 3 times a week	Once a week	1 - 2 times a month	Never
Scaffolding	○	○	○	○	○
Effective questioning	○	○	○	○	○
Dialogic reading	○	○	○	○	○

Co-construction	○	○	○	○	○
Sustained-shared thinking conversations	○	○	○	○	○
Observation	○	○	○	○	○
Responsive verbal feedback	○	○	○	○	○
Developing responsive relationships with children	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher modelling/demonstrating	○	○	○	○	○
Peer modelling/demonstrating	○	○	○	○	○
Descriptive Praise	○	○	○	○	○
Talk-aloud narration	○	○	○	○	○
Verbal guidance	○	○	○	○	○
Wait time	○	○	○	○	○
Facilitating and supporting children's social interactions	○	○	○	○	○
Joint attention	○	○	○	○	○
Being a partner in children's play	○	○	○	○	○
Extending children's play ideas	○	○	○	○	○
Providing new language	○	○	○	○	○
Introducing new concepts	○	○	○	○	○
Posing problems and facilitating challenges	○	○	○	○	○
Active listening	○	○	○	○	○
Repetition	○	○	○	○	○

Direct instruction	○	○	○	○	○
Facilitation of the physical environment	○	○	○	○	○
Introducing purposeful resources	○	○	○	○	○
Joint inquiry	○	○	○	○	○

Q13. Can you please describe any other intentional teaching practices that you believe ECEC teachers use to support children's holistic learning and development?

Q14. Can you please share your key beliefs and/or theoretical underpinnings on how children learn, and how these influence your intentional teaching?

Q15. Please rate how valuable you believe the following intentional strategies to be on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being of no value, and 5 being of great value)

	1 *no value*	2 little value	3 some value	4 valuable	5 great value
Scaffolding	○	○	○	○	○

Effective questioning	○	○	○	○	○
Dialogic reading	○	○	○	○	○
Co-construction	○	○	○	○	○
Sustained-shared thinking conversations	○	○	○	○	○
Observation	○	○	○	○	○
Responsive verbal feedback	○	○	○	○	○
Developing responsive relationships with children	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher modelling/demonstrating	○	○	○	○	○
Peer modelling/demonstrating	○	○	○	○	○
Descriptive praise	○	○	○	○	○
Talk-aloud narration	○	○	○	○	○
Verbal guidance	○	○	○	○	○
Wait time	○	○	○	○	○
Facilitating and supporting children's social interactions	○	○	○	○	○
Joint attention	○	○	○	○	○
Being a partner in children's play	○	○	○	○	○
Extending children's play ideas	○	○	○	○	○
Providing new language	○	○	○	○	○
Introducing new concepts	○	○	○	○	○
Posing problems and facilitating challenges	○	○	○	○	○

Active listening	○	○	○	○	○
Repetition	○	○	○	○	○
Direct instruction	○	○	○	○	○
Facilitation of the physical environment	○	○	○	○	○
Introducing purposeful resources	○	○	○	○	○
Joint inquiry	○	○	○	○	○

Q16. In what ways do you think the curriculum (and it's supporting documents) guide your teaching practices?

Please specify if you are using Te Whāriki or the EYFS framework

Q18. Can you please tell us about any factors which support you in being an intentional teacher?

Q17. Can you please tell us about any factors which inhibit you from being an intentional teacher?

Q19. Could you please share with us where you have learnt about intentional teaching?

e.g. Initial teacher education, colleagues, professional development

Q20. Do you have any further comments you would like to make in relation to intentional teaching?

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Appendix 2: Blurb for social media

Kia ora,

Have you heard of the term 'intentional teaching'?
Are you interested in sharing your views and ideas on intentional teaching?

I am researching intentional teaching to complete my Master of Education (Early Years) at Massey University, New Zealand. Specifically, I am focusing on understanding teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching to support young children's learning in early childhood education and care (ECEC).
This comparative study is open to anyone working in ECEC (with children aged 3-5 years old) who is a resident in either Aotearoa New Zealand or England.

If you would like to share your perspectives, beliefs, and experience, then please click the link below, which will take you to the questionnaire. It should take approximately 25 – 30 minutes.

All responses are anonymous.

Thank you. Your support and participation are valuable and appreciated.

(The screenshot of Facebook post has not been used as it identified possible participants identities in the 'likes' section)

Appendix 3: Invitation to ECEC organisations

Teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching to support young children's learning in early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Request for Kindergarten teacher participants

Hello,

My name is Kirsten Bassett. I am currently completing a Master of Education with Massey University. I am undertaking a research project that explores teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and use of intentional teaching to support young children's learning in ECEC. This study follows an exploratory comparative approach and seeks data from participants in both Aotearoa New Zealand England. The questionnaire is open to anyone working with children in ECEC, not just qualified teachers.

Intentional teaching can be defined as the deliberate, thoughtful, and purposeful actions teachers enact to support and extend children's learning. Using their professional expertise and knowledge, intentional teachers can recognise opportunities for learning in various learning contexts and act with intended and specific learning outcomes or goals for children. The purpose of this qualitative study is to develop an understanding of how intentional teaching practices support children's learning from a teacher's lens.

I would like to send an email invitation to all teachers in your Kindergarten Association to participate in my research. I am requesting your permission to contact your teachers by e-mail. The email invite will provide a link to an anonymous survey, and the teachers are under no obligation to accept the invitation. If the teachers do decide to participate, the completion of the questionnaire will imply consent.

The survey will ask teachers questions about their understanding of intentional teaching and how this is used within their own practice. The survey does not collect any identifying data and responses are completely anonymous. It is not expected that participants will experience any discomfort or harm whilst undertaking this survey. However, teachers will be invited to contact my supervisors should they have any questions or concerns.

This online survey is expected to take approximately 25 minutes to complete. The data collected for this research will only be used for the completion of this thesis and any resulting publications of this work. The data will be stored in a secure and confidential place for five years before being disposed of.

Appendix 4: Ethics Approval

[HE007] - Human Ethics Notification - 4000026317

From: humanethics@massey.ac.nz
To: KirstenLeighBassett.Bassett.1@uni.massey.ac.nz , K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz , P.Isom@massey.ac.nz
Cc: humanethics@massey.ac.nz
Date: Tue, 16 Aug 2022, 22:20

Kia ora,

Link to the application
HoU Review Group

Ethics Notification Number: 4000026317
Title: Teacher's perspectives, beliefs and use of intentional teaching in early childhood education

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as low risk.

Your project has been recorded in our database for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to

1 / 2

publish require evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again answering yes to the publication question to provide more information to go before one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

If you wish to print an official copy of this letter:

1. Please login to the RIMS system (https://rme.massey.ac.nz).
2. In the Ethics menu, select Ethics Applications.
3. Using the Advanced search with appropriate criteria to find only this application.
4. With the application on the Results tab, select Reports from the toolbar.
5. Select the "Human Ethics - Low Risk Notification Letter" link, this will open the report viewer.
6. Select the application code from the Report Parameters dropdown and submit. You can then select an export option from the top toolbar (Print, Save).

Yours sincerely
Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)

Appendix 5: Likert-scale of Teachers' agreement to pedagogical statements

Statement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	ANZ	ENGLAND	ANZ	ENGLAND	ANZ	ENGLAND	ANZ	ENGLAND	ANZ	ENGLAND
Adult-initiated learning experiences are an important component of and ECEC setting	6.25%	9.09%	18.75%	9.09%	25.00%	9.09%	50.00%	63.64%	0.00%	9.09%
ECEC should be completely child led	0.00%	9.09%	43.75%	63.64%	18.75%	9.09%	25.00%	0.00%	12.50%	18.18%
I regularly plan the specific strategies I will use to support children's learning	0.00%	9.09%	6.25%	9.09%	0.00%	18.18%	75.00%	36.36%	18.75%	27.27%
Up-to-date research informs how I teach young children	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	909%	18.75%	45.5%	68.75%	9.09%	12.5%	27.27%
I believe intentional teaching can sit within play-based pedagogy	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.75%	18.18%	37.50%	54.55%	43.75%	27.27%
Teaching and play are sperate constructs	18.75%	36.36%	56.25%	54.55%	12.50%	9.09%	6.25%	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%
Intentional teaching can occur during children's free play	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	43.75%	54.55%	43.75%	36.36%
Close relationships with children are crucial for intentional teaching to occur	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	18.75	54.55%	68.75%	36.36%
As a teacher, it is my responsibility to introduce new concepts to children	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	27.27%	18.75%	9.09%	56.25%	45.45%	18.75%	18.18%
Intentional teaching aligns with a child-centred philosophy	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	18.18%	12.50%	18.18%	50.00%	54.55%	25.00%	9.09%
I would define myself as an intentional teacher	0.00%	9.09%	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	36.36%	56.25%	36.36%	18.75%	18.18%
I have a good understanding of intentional teaching	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	6.25%	9.09%	75.00%	54.55%	18.75%	18.18%
Intentional teaching is an important pedagogical practice in ECEC	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	9.09%	18.75%	27.27%	37.50%	18.18%	37.50%	45.45%

Appendix 6: Frequency of intentional teaching strategies used

Teaching Strategy	Every day		2 - 3 times a week		Once a week		1 - 2 times a month		Never	
	England	NZ	England	NZ	England	NZ	England	NZ	England	NZ
Scaffolding	11	12	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
Effective questioning	10	15	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dialogic reading	5	9	5	5	1	1	0	0	0	1
Co-construction	6	11	2	4	2	1	0	0	0	0
Sustained-shared thinking conversations	9	12	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
Observation	11	12	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
Responsive verbal feedback	10	14	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Developing responsive relationships with children	11	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teacher modelling/demonstrating	10	12	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
Peer modelling/demonstrating	7	11	3	4	0	1	0	0	1	0
Descriptive Praise	11	13	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Talk-aloud narration	9	13	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal guidance	11	15	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Wait time	6	9	4	6	0	0	0	0	1	0
Facilitating and supporting children's social interactions	11	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joint attention	9	14	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Being a partner in children's play	7	12	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Extending children's play ideas	8	11	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Providing new language	7	13	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0
Introducing new concepts	4	7	5	6	0	2	0	1	1	0
Posing problems and facilitating challenges	6	11	2	1	1	4	0	0	1	0
Active listening	10	15	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Repetition	9	13	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct instruction	7	13	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	0
Facilitation of the physical environment	9	15	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Introducing purposeful resources	6	7	3	7	0	1	0	1	1	0
Joint inquiry	6	8	1	4	2	3	1	1	0	0

Appendix 7: How valuable teachers find intentional teaching strategies

Teaching Strategy	No Value		Little Value		Some Value		Valuable		Great Value	
	England	NZ	England	NZ	England	NZ	England	NZ	England	NZ
Scaffolding	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	9	8
Effective questioning	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	7	6	9
Dialogic reading	0	0	1	1	0	6	7	4	2	5
Co-construction	0	0	1	0	1	4	4	5	4	7
Sustained-shared thinking conversations	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	7	6	9
Observation	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	8	10
Responsive verbal feedback	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	7	9
Developing responsive relationships with children	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	15
Teacher modelling/demonstrating	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	8	5	7
Peer modelling/demonstrating	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	6	6	9
Descriptive praise	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	7	6	6
Talk-aloud narration	0	0	1	0	1	4	3	5	5	7
Verbal guidance	0	0	0	1	1	4	5	4	4	7
Wait time	0	0	0	1	3	2	3	9	4	4
Facilitating and supporting children's social interactions	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	8	14
Joint attention	0	0	0	0	1	3	4	6	5	7
Being a partner in children's play	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	6	7	7
Extending children's play ideas	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4	7	11
Providing new language	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	6	11
Introducing new concepts	0	0	0	0	1	3	5	7	4	6
Posing problems and facilitating challenges	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	6	6	9
Active listening	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	7	11
Repetition	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	4	5	10
Direct instruction	0	0	0	1	3	5	2	5	5	5
Facilitation of the physical environment	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	9	12
Introducing purposeful resources	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	8	14
Joint inquiry	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	6	6	8