Exploring parents' perceptions of support for children with special learning needs in three regular primary classrooms.

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Abstract

The Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) is a funding provision with access to specialists, additional teachers and teacher aides to support inclusion for children with high or very high learning and adaptive needs. This study used a qualitative methodology to explore the perceptions of five parents about the supports received through the ORS funding scheme including its strengths and limitations. The study was conducted in three different regular primary schools in the Central North region of New Zealand. The main themes identified were related to the nature and extent of support by the professional teams and the process of obtaining ORS funding with a clear message for more transparency. The study suggests that the efficacy of the teacher aide role, how the ORS funding is managed and the importance of transparency are all areas for further research.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Over the past two decades in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education has promoted policies and practices that emphasize an official philosophy of inclusive education (McIntyre, 2013). This means that every student has the right to access the curriculum as a full-time member of a regular classroom alongside other students of a similar age. It implies that every child should have the necessary resources and support for successful learning in the classroom (Ballard, 1996). It has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Special Education, to enable those working in schools to provide programmes of learning that increase the participation of all students within regular schools (McIntyre, 2013). This study is about parents' perceptions of how these students are supported within regular schools through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme, a funding support provision provided by the Ministry of Education.

1.1. Background to Inclusion and Special Education in New Zealand

Since the 1970s to today, New Zealand education had separate systems of education for students with special education needs. The responsibility for the education of children with special learning needs remained with families, residential and day special schools, psychopaedic hospitals and voluntary organisations (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1985).

Political rationales widely accepted at the time were that separate facilities and services were designed in the best interests of students with special educational needs. However, the appropriateness of this system began to be questioned and challenged from various perspectives including human rights, social, and shifting political views. For example, Skrtic (1991) defined special education as a profession that emerged in America to contain the failure of public education to educate children for full participation in democracy. Critics also pointed out that special education was

developed based on a belief system of individual pathology, ideas about normal and abnormal, theories of deficit and the belief that only expert teachers can meet the needs of children with special educational needs (Ballard, 1990).

Parents of children with special education needs began calling for equal access to regular education for their children (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). Disability advocacy groups were formed including *The Intellectually Handicapped Society (IHC),* which lobbied for the rights of children with special educational needs (Sleek & Howie, 1987). Studies also reported negative effects of segregated education and the positive outcomes of inclusive settings for students with special education needs (Brinker & Thorpe, 1984).

The *1989 Education Act (New Zealand Government, 1989)* was the first legislation to state that people with special educational needs have the same right to enrol and receive education at a state school as people without special education needs. However, it also gave schools the ability to refuse such enrolments on the grounds that the school did not have appropriate provisions to support the learning of these students.

In 2001, *The New Zealand Disability strategy* (Ministry of Health, 2001) was also introduced. It was developed in consultation with the disability sector and outlined objectives for progression towards a fully inclusive society. Objective three of the strategy focused on providing the best education for "disabled" people. This included supporting development of effective communication, ensuring educators understand different learning needs and students have access to resources available to meet these needs, promoting effective inclusive educational settings and improving schools accountability to special educational needs. As a result, special schools and regular schools became an option for families.

Due to this change, one area of concern raised by schools in relation to inclusive education was the resources and support available for students with special education needs (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998). Parents were also raising concerns over difficulties in coordinating health, welfare and education services (McIntyre, 2013). To address these concerns, Special Education 2000 was introduced in 1996 as an initiative designed to fund resources and intervention programmes for these children with learning and behavioural needs (Kearney & Kane, 2006). The initiative entitled students with ongoing high and very high learning needs to additional educational supports to ensure the curriculum was accessible. A variety of resourcing approaches were also undertaken for those students with low to moderate special education needs (Ward et al., 2009).

More recently, the New Zealand Ministry of Education released a Statement of Intent 2007-2012 stating its commitment to the 2001 New Zealand Disability Strategy and its incorporation into the education system (Ministry of Education, 2007). Following on, the current Statement of Intent 2014-2018 focuses on improving education outcomes for children with special learning needs by supporting inclusive practices across schools (Ministry of Education, 2014).

However, despite the movements towards inclusion, concerns have still been raised surrounding the support children with special learning needs actually receive. Principals have questioned the resource support available to students with high and very high needs and are concerned with a shortfall in funding for support personnel including teacher aides, psychologists and speech language therapists (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998). Teachers have also indicated that a lack of funding contributes to a discrepancy between what was received and what was required to successfully include students with special learning needs (Prochnow, Kearney, & Carroll-Lind, 2000).

In 2010, the Education Review Office explored inclusion within New Zealand schools. They found the most inclusive schools operated under three key principles:

(1) Having ethical standards and leadership that built the culture of an inclusive school.

(2) Having well-organized systems, effective teamwork and constructive relationships that identified and supported the inclusion of students with high and very high needs.

(3) Using innovative and flexible practices that managed the complex and unique challenges related to including students with high and very high needs.

However, only half of the 229 schools reviewed demonstrated these principles. Within their review they also discussed common challenges and barriers to inclusion. This included funding, recruiting suitable support staff, and level of staff knowledge (Education Review Office, 2010).

In 2010 the public was also invited to place feedback around special education in schools. The public responses came from parents, teachers and professionals. These responses gave the strong messages that teachers and teacher aides needed to have the right skills and knowledge, access to and funding for specialist services, and families needed to be included in the sharing of information and support (Ministry of Education, 2010).

As a result of this review, the Ministry of Education's vision was a fully inclusive education system, "Success for All – Every School, Every Child" with a target of 80 percent of New Zealand schools successfully inclusive by the end of 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2015b). This policy extended provision for students with special education needs including focusing on strengthening schools' inclusive practices (Education Review Office, 2015b).

A more recent report by the Education Review Office (2015b) found improvements from 2010. Over three quarters of the schools in the sample were found to be mostly inclusive compared with only half in the 2010 evaluation. However, it was noted that this review included a broader group of students including those with moderate needs that may have contributed to this difference. Recommendations for the Ministry and schools involved ensuring all students with special education needs are included and making progress.

Along with this review, an engagement survey was completed by the Ministry of Education to help identify the right service and system improvements. Findings came from parents, whānau, educators and the disability sector (Ministry of Education, 2016f). The engagement findings focused on six areas for improvement including greater involvement of parents, more transparent access to support and better interagency coordination (Ministry of Education, 2015a).

As a result, the Ministry of Education has moved to a vision to see all children and students succeed personally and achieve educational success within inclusive environments. Projects are now being implemented in communities to work on how the Ministry can improve the special education system through improved support and strengthening collaboration (Ministry of Education, 2016f).

1.2. Overview of the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme

One strategy developed through the Special Education 2000 provision to support children within schools was the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS). ORS is used to fund specialists, additional teachers, teacher aides and funding for items such as computer software or braille machine paper. To be able to receive ORS funding, a student must meet certain criteria indicating very high or high needs due to an ongoing, extreme or severe difficulty with either learning, seeing, hearing, moving around or

using language and social communication or a combination of three ongoing moderate

to high difficulties, one of which must be learning (Ministry of Education, 2016c).

ORS is managed and allocated through Ministry of Education: Special

Education (formerly Group Special Education) who acts as the "fund holder" for

students identified on this scheme. Schools apply for ORS funding through the Ministry

of Education: Special Education who then assesses each application and decides on

eligibility. The total pool of ORS funding allocated for each student can then be used to

purchase specialist expertise, additional teaching, paraprofessional support or

consumable items (Ministry of Education, 2016d).

In 2010, a third extension category was added to include an additional 400

students who were moderate to high needs, over nine years old and who narrowly

missed on the ORS funding in the past. By July 2015, 8252 students were receiving

ORS funding making up 1.1% of the student population (Ministry of Education, 2016c).

To assist in accessing the ORS funding, a lead or key worker is provided by the

Ministry of Education to coordinate services, attend relevant meetings and handle any

funding issues (Ministry of Education, 2016g). While there is no research on the key

worker's role within New Zealand, international research has shown a key worker can

play an important role in bringing greater coherence to the provision of support for

children in enabling schools to achieve their inclusion goals (Webb, Greco, Sloper, &

Beecham, 2008). Mengoni, Bardsley, and Oates (2015) also reported that a key worker

empowers families through taking a needs-based approach to assessment and planning,

and assists in providing relevant information relating to required supports.

Assistance aside, there has been concerns raised about the process of applying

for the ORS funding. Bartlett (2009) has highlighted the need to adopt a deficit

perspective when completing the ORS application form in order to increase the chance

that funding would be granted for the child. Similarly, anecdotal evidence has suggested that students who have been denied ORS funding on first or second application, received the funding on the third application, with some parents distraught and overwhelmed by the negative stance they had to take with regards to their child in order to get the funding. This raises a concern that students may not receive ORS funding due to a weakness in schools' ORS applications and at times parents' unwillingness to portray their child in a negative light, rather than the student's actual level of need (Education Review Office, 2010).

In addition, the New Zealand public provided feedback in regards to special education. This included a need for the ORS verification process to be improved and further action required to ensure the criteria is clearer to families and schools, fairer and more consistently applied. Furthermore, respondents were concerned about it being a paper-based process that relied on strong writing skills and suggested incorporating the use of information and evidence such as video footage to personalize the nature of the process (Ministry of Education, 2010).

1.2.1. Past Reviews of the ORS Funding

During 2004 and 2005, the Education Review Office (ERO) evaluated how effectively schools used ORS funding to improve outcomes for students. This was based on information from a representative sample of 179 ORS funded students over 96 schools. ERO found that the majority of schools managed and used the ORS funding and supports to improve outcomes and had well-developed consultative practices with parents. However, they also found a small group of schools that did not manage the ORS funding effectively. Common concerns for these schools included poor assessment practices, absences of specific and measureable outcomes for students, low expectations

for students and ineffective school self-review systems. Furthermore, not all key stakeholders were involved in the student's learning (Education Review Office, 2007).

More recently, one in five schools reported to ERO about how they supported ORS students. This included allocating resourcing, bringing together teachers, families, specialists and teacher aides, obtaining advice and support for teachers from external specialists, and using the teacher resourcing funding to develop and modify learning programmes. However, ERO noted the concerns that schools did not identify the impact of their provision on the learning outcomes and progress for their ORS students. They suggest that schools may not be in a position to know whether the resources supporting ORS students were having the intended impact or are being used in the most effective way (Education Review Office, 2012).

Due to the limited research on ORS funding itself, this research will explore the supports made available in schools through the Ongoing Resource Scheme (ORS) for children with special learning needs. 'Children with special learning needs' is used to refer to students who require additional support to enable access to the curriculum across a range of educational settings (McIntyre, 2013). As key stakeholders, exploring parents' perceptions can provide a better understanding of how children are supported through the ORS funded resources, and the strengths and limitations of these supports.

This chapter has presented the background to special education and inclusion in New Zealand. The area of focus was also introduced. The remainder of this research is structured into four chapters. The next chapter will review literature surrounding the ORS funding scheme and the supports it provides, with a focus on the perceptions and experiences of parents. Chapter Three presents the method and methodology of the current research including ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the results of the semi-structured interviews. Lastly, Chapter Five will present a discussion of the

results including how the results relate to previous research. The implications and limitations of the results are also discussed. Chapter Five closes with a final summary and conclusion of the current research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter will explore literature around parent's perceptions, involvement and experiences with special education and inclusion. It will also explore international and New Zealand research around parents' perspectives on specialist support, additional teaching time and teacher aides for their child with special educational needs.

2.1. Parents' perceptions

Cognition is concerned with the internal processes involved in making sense of the environment and processing information. These higher mental processes include attention, perception, learning, memory, language, problem-solving, reasoning and thinking. Perception itself is the process by which we interpret and organise various types of information including visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory or olfactory information depending on the sensory system detecting it. When a person is confronted with a situation or stimuli, the person interprets the information into something meaningful. Perceptions can be influenced by prior experiences, existing beliefs, knowledge, attitude, motivation and personality (Edgar & Edgar, 2016; Pickens, 2005).

Research supports the statement that parents' perceptions and behaviors related to children's education influence students' learning and educational success. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandier (1997) have explored perceptions and behaviours of why parents become involved in their child's education that has lead to a model of the parental involvement process. The model constructs includes

a) Parents' active role constructions for involvement, and a positive sense of efficacy for helping the child learn.

b) Perception of invitations to involvement from the school, teacher, and student.

c) Important elements of parents' life context that allow or encourage involvement.

These constructs are based on the reality that not all parents need encouragement to become involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

2.1.1. Parental Role Construction and Self-Efficacy

Parents' role constructions for involvement include the belief that they should be involved in their child's education due to a sense of personal or shared responsibility for the child's educational outcomes. Role construction for involvement is influenced by parents' perceptions about how their children develop, what parents should do to raise their children effectively, and what parents should do at home to help children succeed in school. Role construction is also shaped by the expectations of other key people about the parent's responsibilities relevant to the child's schooling and is influenced by parents' experiences over time with individuals and groups related to schooling. Other factors that influence parents' role constructions include the parents' personal experiences with schooling and prior experience with involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Along with role construction, the model also argues that a second personal motivator of parental involvement is self-efficacy, or belief in one's abilities to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes. This includes the belief that personal actions will help the child learn (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Influencing these perceptions and role construction includes invitations to involvement from the school, teacher, and student, and elements of life context including knowledge, skill, time and energy. Invitations to involvement serves as an important motivator because they suggest to the parent that participation in the child's learning is welcome, valuable, and expected by the school and its members. Invitations from important others at school may also contribute significantly to more active parental beliefs about personal role and increasingly positive beliefs about the effect of

one's actions (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). For example, parents who reported higher levels of home-school conferencing and greater self-efficacy were more likely to be in congruent, positive relationships with teachers. This is important as cordial parent-teacher relationships produce positive child outcomes (Minke, Sheridan, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014).

Other variables influencing parent's perception of involvement include parents' perceptions of their knowledge and skills. This shapes perceptions about the kinds of activities that may be possible for them to undertake with a reasonable likelihood of achieving success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). In addition, factors such as parents' educational aspirations for their children, their perceptions of the value of particular educational activities and their own successful school experiences may also predispose them to feel confident and competent when communicating with the school (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

2.2. Importance of parents' voice

Over the years, parents and professionals have worked together to advocate on behalf of children's rights. Child advocacy is any individual or cooperative action that works towards enriching the lives of children. This can include promoting proper educational services for children, sufficient funding for support services and promoting overall welfare (Royea & Appl, 2009). However, Lawson (2003) has suggested that parents often lack the resources to make their voices heard.

To increase engagement with parents' voice, Tveit (2009) has suggested that parents should be thought of as a resource that can be utilised to help a child's learning and contribute to knowledge about children's learning needs. Furthermore, Phillips (2005) has also postulated five reasons why it is important to engage with parents about their child's education:

1) Parents will support the work of teachers'

2) Parents will be able to help teachers understand better individual children's needs

3) Parents will be able to suggest improvements to the school

4) Parents will help schools respond to diverse cultures and communities

5) Parents involvement will empower the disadvantaged

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has also recognised the value of the parents' voice through outlining and encouraging ways in which teachers can engage with parents. This includes encouraging communication between parents, the teacher and principal, encouraging parents to have their say and to be the voice for their child through asking for the support and services the child may need at any time (Ministry of Education, 2016b).

Further highlighting the importance of parents' perceptions and voice, is research that has shown correlations between parent involvement and student educational success. The following section will discuss previous research around parent involvement in both the international and New Zealand context.

2.3. Parents' involvement in their child's education

Research has also documented the significant role parents play in determining the success of their child's inclusion in the classroom and how their perceptions can inform professionals in knowing how to best work with their child (Gallagher et al., 2000). Furthermore, the importance of a collaborative relationship between parents and the school has been well documented in relation to students' behaviours and success in the classroom (Yssel, Engelbrecht, Oswald, Eloff, & Swart, 2007).

Internationally, studies have supported the role parental involvement has played in educational outcomes for children. According to Hornby and Witte (2010),

parental involvement is correlated with improvements in attitudes, behaviour, mental health and attendance at school for children. Furthermore, it improves parent-teacher relationships, parental confidence in parenting and the school climate. These outcomes have been seen across gender, ethnic groups and all age groups. Parent involvement has also been found to be more critical in determining academic attainment than family background, family size or parental educational levels (Ogilvie Stalker, Brunner, Maguire, & Mitchell, 2011). For example, one study looked at parental involvement, socioeconomic status and placement in general classrooms versus special education classrooms. While focusing on Polish schools, they explored 429 parents' perceptions and found that parental involvement in schools mediated the effects of socioeconomic status on school achievement (Szumski & Karwowski, 2012).

A meta-analysis based on 100 independent effect sizes from 46 studies also supported the relationship between learning outcomes of children and educational involvement of parents. Similarly, the analysis found a positive correlation between learning outcomes and parent involvement regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity or parent's education level. The analysis also suggested that involvement in behavioural management at home and school, home supervision and home-school connection were the key predictors for a stronger relationship between parental involvement and learning outcomes. This indicates that educational policy and practice that promote parental involvement in children's education should be continuously developed (Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu, & Yuan, 2015). Similarly, one small-scale study of two Hong-Kong Australian families also found that consistency in family and school practices, effective communication and two-way accommodation were key elements for productive home-school relationships (Wong, 2012).

2.3.1. New Zealand Context

The New Zealand government, through its Schooling Strategy, has also recognised the role of parental involvement in improving education outcomes for all children. Improving parent involvement was listed as one of the three priority areas (Ministry of Education, 2014). Biddulph, Biddulph, and Biddulph (2003) summarized local New Zealand reports, theses and international literature on the effective partnerships between parents and schools and their positive impact on educational outcomes for children. However, a review by the Education Review Office (2008) reported nearly 75% schools needed to improve engagement with parents and 25% were advised to improve the quality of engagement with parents in New Zealand.

A small-scale study investigated school-based parent involvement in New Zealand with twenty-one primary school principals. They found only four schools had written school policies on parental involvement, however, multiple ways in which parents acted as a resource were listed. This included help in the classroom, preparing teaching materials, helping with sports coaching and listening to students read. This indicated acting as a resource was an important role that parents can play. Furthermore, student reports and parent teacher meetings were seen as the main form of communicating student achievements and parents' reportedly reinforced school programs through homework participation. Lastly, opportunities for parents to obtain support from teachers were provided through parent-teachers meetings, informal meetings and meetings with senior staff (Hornby & Witte, 2010).

More recently, the Education Review Office (2015a) found various relationships between schools and parents of students who needed extra support. Most schools provided parents with regular and frequent reports on progress and achievement. Schools with parent learning-centred relationships involved setting goals, developing

curriculum priorities, and regularly reviewing their working relationships with parents.

Other schools had positive relationships with parents but not learning-centred

relationships. For example, parents were only involved in activities such as sport

management. There were also schools that did not seek ways to improve parental

involvement including for at risk students of underachievement. These schools held the

view that "teachers know best".

This highlights the important role parents' play in their child's education

including within inclusive education classrooms. In order for inclusion to be successful,

this suggests parent involvement and collaboration is essential.

2.4. Parents' views of inclusion

International studies examining inclusive classrooms have found mixed

perspectives of parents of students with special educational needs. One study by

Chmiliar (2009) explored how five students with learning disorders, their teachers, and

their parents experienced inclusion in Canada. Parents in this study described in detail

the difficulties their child experienced in the early grades, expressed negative attitudes

toward school personnel and described difficulties accessing support for their child.

Similarly, Yssel et al. (2007) compared the perceptions of parents of primary

and high schools students regarding inclusion across United States and South Africa.

Thirty-two parents in South Africa and ten parents in United States responded. Despite

the differences in context, the perceptions and experiences of parents were similar.

Views expressed included concerns that experienced teachers may be less inclined to

adapt their classrooms and practices and that collaborative practices, such as

Individualised Education Plans (IEPs), were highly valued provided meetings weren't

cut short and parents were given opportunities to help develop the IEPs.

Another international study, on the transition process into school from forty parents' perspectives, found similar challenges regarding services and support in the United States. Many children did not have access to qualified support staff when they started school and parents reported a 50% rate of fulfillment for the promised supports made prior to transition (Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron, & Hughes, 2008). Furthermore, Starr, Foy, Cramer, and Singh (2006) found that when parents of 209 children with special educational needs in Canada were asked what would better meet the needs of their child, the three most cited supports were more education for professionals, more time with an educational assistant, and having a better IEP for their child.

In New Zealand, research over the years has suggested parents face challenges and barriers within the inclusive system. A study of fifteen fathers of children with special educational needs, revealed issues related to the organisation and delivery of resources and support, including a professional failure to deliver information, support, and services. However, positive indicators of successful inclusion that emerged from the interviews included: regular and predictable contact with professionals, sharing information and a sense that parents and teachers were problem solving together (Ballard, Bray, Shelton, & Clarkson, 1997). These researchers also found parents' experiences with the school systems had the potential to profoundly influence families. When a school failed to provide support, the family was placed under stress and additional demands were made on the emotional and physical resources of the family (Ballard et al., 1997).

More recently, Kearney (2009) explored twelve parents' views about their children's experiences of school exclusion both from school, and within school in New Zealand. The views included being denied enrolment and/or full-time attendance at

school, barriers to accessing the curriculum, inappropriate educator beliefs and practices in relation to funding, and limited teacher knowledge and understanding.

2.5. Parents' views on inclusion for children with certain special educational needs

Consistent with the above research, studies have also found similar views for parents of children with specific educational needs.

2.5.1. Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Both international and New Zealand research has explored parents' experiences of inclusion for their child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Parsons, Lewis, and Ellins (2009) compared the views of parents of 144 children with ASD and parents of children with other special educational needs in Canada. Results showed that the views were more similar than different in relation to both positive aspects of provision as well as areas for improvement. Parents were mostly satisfied with their child's current educational provision and concerns only raised regarding transitions between and beyond school.

Similarly, Whitaker (2007) also explored the views of 173 parents or carers of a child with ASD within one English county. Sixty one per cent of respondents reported satisfaction with the provisions for their children and this was based on the understanding of school staff of ASD and their child's challenges. These parents made an explicit link between levels of staff understanding and the ability to deploy appropriate teaching and management strategies.

An international study in Canada surveyed the perceptions of 144 parents of children with ASD about their child's education in a public funded school. One concern noted from parents was the educators' capacity to deal with more difficult behaviours and the rate of school suspensions. Parents also reported the lack of an appropriate

education program and highlighted the importance of effective communication and
collaboration (Starr & Foy, 2012).

More recently, Reupert, Deppeler, and Sharma (2015) explored the views of
fourteen Australian parents with children diagnosed with ASD, regarding what they
considered to be the enablers for inclusion. There was diversity across the responses
indicating the importance of an individualised and flexible approach for support.
Parents identified the importance of a safe space, structured learning and free time,
flexibility around timetable, curriculum and staffing. Parents also highlighted the
importance of collaboration with others, including teachers, other parents and
professionals. The collaborative relationship that parents described was reciprocal in
nature, with information and support coming to and from parents.

A New Zealand study investigated Māori perspectives of ASD through
consulting with parents and whānau of nineteen children. Numerous barriers were noted
including a lack of services and funding and difficulty accessing services. The parents
also emphasised a need for educators and professionals to improve their understanding
of ASD to ensure their child was provided with appropriate programmes. Two out of
the nineteen parents also commented on the ORS funding process. They noted that they
had to organise all the supporting evidence and did not feel comfortable that the
application was all written and the decisions made by someone they would never meet
(Bevan-Brown, 2004).

However, these parents also noted positive experiences with some teachers who
had arranged special educational assessment and services, fought to get resources for
their children, arranged additional finance to increase teacher-aide time and made it a
priority to up-skill (Bevan-Brown, 2004).

2.5.2. Parents of Children with Hearing or Vision Impairments

Nagel and Stobbs (2006) explored eighty parents' perspectives (eighteen fathers and sixty-two mothers) of education services for children who are blind or have low vision in New Zealand. The children were found to be receiving a wide range of services and nearly all had a Resource Teacher Vision. Parents discussed difficulties in also finding services, funding and negotiating service provision. They expressed that the resourcing currently reaching their child was inadequate and channelling funding to hands-on teaching and interaction with each child was a priority for parents. Parents also indicated the importance of a collaborative team and wanted an educational system that is constructed and centred on the child.

One United States study also researched eleven parents' perceptions of physical activity for their child with visual impairments in school. The results found that parents valued the physical activity provided for their child, however, they believed that there were barriers to overcome. These barriers included lack of opportunity for active participation, and the physical education teachers' lack of communication and knowledge of visual impairments. Parents discussed the need for adaptations to reduce these barriers (Perkins, Columna, Lieberman, & Bailey, 2013).

McKee and Vale (2014) also explored the language use of deaf and hearing-impaired children and families within New Zealand. 112 parents identified several barriers to achieving language goals directly related to educational provision. These barriers included limited resources, funding and curricula for New Zealand Sign Language. A lack of teachers and teacher aides fluent in sign language at school was also mentioned as a barrier. Parents also discussed the difficulties in accessing Speech and Language Therapists. Similar to parents of children with ASD, another barrier to inclusion was a lack of understanding from teachers about their child's needs.

2.5.3. Parents of Children with Intellectual Disabilities

An Austrian study by Gasteiger-Klicpera, Klicpera, Gebhardt, and Schwab (2012) found differences in experiences of 840 parents' of children with mild intellectual disabilities and those with children who had more complex and severe needs. Parents of children with mild needs reported that the general classroom teacher provided more understanding and attention to their child compared with teachers in special schools. However, parents of children with higher needs often felt that demands placed on their child's capabilities were too high and their child appeared to receive less attention within a general classroom then what they received within a special school.

Starr et al. (2006) explored educational provision in Canada through comparing the views of parents. Parents of 209 children with ASD, Down syndrome or learning disabilities ranging in age from four to twenty-one years were surveyed. The authors found very few differences between groups with the majority of parents satisfied with their child's provision and only parents of children with learning disabilities reported to be less satisfied. All parents agreed that they wanted teachers to be knowledgeable about specific disabilities or conditions and adequately trained to support their child's individual learning needs.

While there are no studies regarding parents' perspectives on ORS itself, the above research suggests limited understanding about how we are supporting our children within general education classroom. Given the importance of parental involvement in a child's learning needs, previous research highlights the need to utilize their role as a primary stakeholder to promote successful inclusion.

The following sections explore past research regarding parents' perspectives on the supports provided by ORS funding including specialist support, additional teacher support and teacher aides.

2.6. The supports provided through ORS funding in New Zealand schools

2.6.1. Specialist Support

Allocated time with specialists are also resources provided by the ORS funding scheme. The New Zealand Ministry of Education's list of approved specialists for ORS includes:

- Physiotherapist

- Occupational Therapist

- Speech Language Therapist

- Educational Psychologist

- Maori or Cultural Advisor

- Conductor in Conductive Education Programme

- Orientation and Mobility Instructor

- Special Education Advisor

- Sign Language Interpreter

- Teacher with additional tertiary qualifications in learning, vision or hearing

- Registered Music Therapist

- Advisor on Deaf Children

Access to these approved specialists is based on an individual need and they must have appropriate qualifications and/or professional registration, abide by their professional Code of Conduct and maintain standards through ongoing supervision and professional development (Ministry of Education, 2016e).

Educational Psychologists.

Psychologists working in schools have the ability to promote inclusion by influencing support provisions and by developing training programs for teachers (Anderson, Klassen, & Georgiou, 2007). However, studies have raised concerns around

this support in the classroom. A survey into 162 teachers' perceptions of school psychologists in Australia, found that only ten percent of teachers noted psychologists as having a role that supports inclusion and only four percent requested additional psychologist time. The researchers concluded that there was need for psychologists to be more proactive in supporting teachers and providing teacher strategies that are meaningful (Anderson et al., 2007).

In a review of the role and contribution of educational psychologists in the United Kingdom, the views of a range of different stakeholders were explored around the work that educational psychologists do. Over 90% of the ninety-one parents that participated valued the contribution made by the psychologists to the outcomes for their child. However, some parents mentioned delays in accessing their involvement, and that they expected a more directed intervention by the educational psychologists (Squires et al., 2007).

Mohangi and Archer (2015) also explored the ways in which five mothers of children with attention deficit and hyperactive disorder (ADHD) experienced the support provided by educational psychologists in South Africa. The researchers found that the mother's expected that educational psychologists would collaborate with educators and other stakeholders to enhance overall support.

Other Specialist Support.

A United Kingdom study explored parents' views relating to the educational provision for their children with speech, language, and communication difficulties. Fifty-one parents reported that provision was often scarce and the education provided for their child depended more on luck than need. It was also noted that professionals do not always have the necessary time, knowledge and skill to assist their children (Paradice & Adewusi, 2002).

In New Zealand in particular, a review by the Ministry of Education on public views found there was the perception that specialists needed to be more knowledgeable about the curriculum and the education context. They also found the public expressed a need for specialists to be clearer about their practices and what they intended to achieve and to be available on a more flexible basis to ensure allocated time could be used efficiently (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Palikara, Lindsay, Cullen, and Dockrell (2007) discussed the need for an integrated system of support including shared aims, consistent criteria for support provision and a sharing of knowledge and skill systems. One integrated system that has been developed has been Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Within New Zealand, IEPs have become a method of planning instruction that works to support the government's vision of a fully inclusive education system. An IEP is a written plan that sets goals for students with special learning needs and identifies how they will be supported to meet these goals (Ministry of Education, 2011).

International studies have explored the role parents have played in the IEP process. Tucker and Schwartz (2013) explored the nature of 135 parents' perceptions regarding collaboration as stakeholders in the IEP process within the United States. Findings indicated a large number of parents of children reported experiencing difficulties or were not included in the IEP collaborative process. Common barriers included opportunities to provide input, communication difficulties with school teams, and negative perceptions of school professionals. Parents also reported low levels of perceived disability-specific staff knowledge regarding the child's disability. These parents also noted that they valued providing input into their child's IEP including contributing to goals and objectives, input into curriculum and instructional approaches

and bringing outside information to the table (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). This indicates the importance of successful collaboration by including parents as stakeholders in the IEP process.

Similarly, Underwood (2010) explored thirty-one parents' views of the educational experience of children with IEPs to determine how parents are meaningfully involved and engaged in education programs for their children in Canada. All parents were found to read the IEP and report card and felt positive about being kept informed by the school. A small amount of parents also reported that they engaged in direct input into the decision-making and programming goals for their child, including involvement in re-writing the IEP. However, this was the least common role described by parents even though it was the most closely aligned with the role of an 'engaged parent'.

Within New Zealand, Mitchell, Morton, and Hornby (2010) reviewed both national and international literature on the development of IEP processes to contribute to the Ministry of Education's project to review, revise and position the IEP guidelines. In regards to parental involvement, two studies were identified within New Zealand. Thomson and Rowan (1995) found only 55% of parents over a random sample of 36 schools participated in IEP meetings. Bourke et al. (2001) found that there was a trend towards increased parental involvement in IEPs. However, there were varying expectations around parental involvement within and across schools.

As a result, in 2011 the IEP guidelines were updated to enhance the IEP processes to address the contemporary literature around successful collaboration to support students in school. The focus was on collaborative decision-making and active participation of all key members involved in a student's learning. Every individual who is involved in supporting a student, including their parents, family, teacher, special education staff, specialists and the child themselves is involved in IEP meetings. The

aim is for all members to be united through the sharing of information, identifying outcomes, selecting priorities, planning actions and agreeing on responsibilities (Ministry of Education, 2011).

This research suggested barriers and gaps to successfully supporting children through the use of specialists including concerns over allocated time, communication between specialists and a lack of direct involvement by the specialists. This highlights the importance of ensuring collaborative processes such as the IEP are used successfully.

2.6.2. Additional Teacher Support

A student supported by the ORS funding scheme may also be allocated additional teacher time in addition to what the school is already entitled to. Additional teaching time is allocated directly to the school for each student at half a day a week (0.1 full time equivalent) for high needs and one day a week (0.2 full time equivalent) for very high needs. For students verified as having a vision or hearing impairment, the staffing entitlement is allocated to resource teachers specialised in hearing or vision. These resource teachers are provided through the Kelston Deaf Education Centre, the Van Asch Deaf Education Centre, or the Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (Ministry of Education, 2016a).

When employed, an additional teacher supports the classroom teacher by either teaching the student directly or assisting indirectly through releasing the classroom teacher, getting specific resources, training others or co-supervising the teacher aide (Ministry of Education, 2016e). Wherever possible, this additional teacher has training, professional development and experience in the student's special educational requirements. These special education teachers hold a three or four year teaching

qualification and a qualification in specialist teaching (New Zealand Government, 2015a).

A Resource Teacher: Vision works with a range of students with vision impairments including working in partnership with families, teachers and communities. They support students through assisting in adapting the curriculum and learning environments, working with other specialists and preparing resources and programmes (Ministry of Education, 2015c). Similarly, a Resource Teacher: Hearing supports students through developing language and communication skills in the context of the curriculum, identifies needs and goals and maintains and checks hearing technology (Ministry of Education, 2015c).

International studies have found mixed results surrounding special education teachers or co-teaching. One study based on two years of interviews and observations in a general education classroom explored perspectives of two special education teachers. Shared accountability for student success and development was seen as a benefit when the school culture promoted collaboration and opportunities to explore expertise of other teachers, specialists and colleagues (Eisenman, Pleet, Wandry, & McGinley, 2011). Similarly, Bhroin (2013) found the resource teacher assisted with promoting teaching strategies to connect with the individual learner and to connect the learner with the curriculum while the co-teaching practices of both teachers assisted in working on whole-class tasks.

One study exploring special education teachers in general classrooms found a request for professional development in areas including training in relation to specific learning and behavioural needs, assessment techniques and teaching strategies. These teachers also reported their specialist courses as inadequate (O'Gorman & Drudy, 2010). A study on the frequency of co-teaching found classroom teachers also lacked a belief

in the instructional value of co-teaching and reported difficulties in finding common planning time and finding a suitable co-teacher (Saloviita & Takala, 2010).

As previously discussed, parents themselves have indicated the need for school staff to know etiology specific information and the corresponding practice teaching methods relating to children with special learning needs (Starr et al., 2006). Similarly, Falkmer, Anderson, Joosten, and Falkmer (2015) reviewed twenty-eight studies and found parents perceived schooling to be inclusive when teachers used their understanding of their child's disability to inform classroom adaptations.

Limited research has been available involving additional teacher time and their roles in New Zealand. One older study found additional support teachers commonly worked with teachers in curriculum adaption to better support the needs of individuals in the class but concerns were raised over the specific training support teachers were given in special education (Moore, Glynn, & Gold, 1993).

A more recent study that explored eighty parents' perspectives of education services for their children who are blind and low vision in New Zealand found positive reviews for Resource Teachers Vision. Parents wanted more recognition to be given to these resource teachers and felt their teaching gave their child ready access to the curriculum (Nagel & Stobbs, 2006).

Past research has shown mixed results regarding this ORS support. Teachers and parents have acknowledged the ability for additional teacher time to enhance curriculum access and promote teaching strategies. However, concerns have also been raised around adequate training for resource teachers in relation to specific learning and behavioural needs, assessment and teaching strategies.

2.6.3. Teacher Aides

Teacher aides are another support provided for children with special educational needs through the ORS funding scheme. A teacher aide supports a child's classroom teacher to include a child in everyday classroom learning and activities. The class teacher works with the teacher aide to use specific strategies that will support a child's behaviour, build independence and work with specialists to set goals specific for each child (Ministry of Education, 2012). There is no specific requirement to become a teacher aide in New Zealand, but a relevant qualification such as a certification or diploma in education support, may be preferred by employers (New Zealand Government, 2015b).

Past research has presented mixed views surrounding the perceptions of teacher aides as a support within the classroom. Williams and O'Connor (2012) found parents and children in the UK talked enthusiastically about the teacher aides' in their school and viewed them as an integral part of the whole school workforce. Furthermore, classroom teachers reportedly see additional personnel support as being important for the successful inclusion of students with different levels of educational needs (McNally, Cole, & Waugh, 2001).

In contrast, Symes and Humphrey (2012) found students who are supported by a teacher aide were less likely to work independently, less likely to support their classmates and have fewer opportunities for interacting with their peers. A study by Falkmer et al. (2015) also found that whilst parents identified the advantages of having a support person in the classroom, they also acknowledged that this meant there was a risk that the teachers felt relieved of the need and opportunity to more directly facilitate the child's inclusion. Similarly, Giangreco, Yuan, Mckenzie, Cameron, and Fialka (2005) acknowledged the benefits of teacher aides including assisting students with

personal care needs, allowing teachers to spend more time instructing students and facilitating social skills and positive behaviour supports. However, they also discussed concerns with relying on teacher aides. These concerns were based on research that linked unnecessary teacher aide support with dependence and interference with peer interactions and lower levels of teacher engagement.

Concerns have also been raised about assigning the least qualified staff, the teacher aide, to provide the bulk of instruction for students with the most complex learning characteristics. No strong conceptual basis has supported this role of a teacher aide and there is no research to suggest that students with special educational needs learn more or better with teacher aide support (Giangreco et al., 2005).

Highlighting this concern, results from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff project found that students receiving the most teacher aide support made less progress than similar students who received little or no teacher aide support. This relationship was found consistently in seven year groups across english, mathematics and science, in a sample of 8200 students over 153 mainstream primary and secondary schools (Blatchford, Russell, & Webster, 2012).

Rubie-Davies, Blatchford, and Webster (2010) also examined the differences in the types and quality of interactions teacher aides have with pupils, compared with teachers in the same classrooms. The results showed that both the teachers and teacher aides engaged in questioning, promoting engagement/ motivation, organization of pupils, responding to pupils' answers, and behavior management. However, teachers had a formal style of delivery, while teacher aides were more informal, chatty, and more likely to use colloquial language with pupils. Teachers also spent more time explaining concepts while teacher aides explanations were sometimes inaccurate or confusing; teachers used prompts and questions to encourage thinking and check understanding,

while teacher aides more frequently supplied pupils with answers; teachers tended to use feedback to encourage learning, while teacher aides more often were concerned with task completion. This raises further concerns with assigning the least qualified staff to provide instruction for students with the most complex learning needs.

The discussed research has presented mixed results around the support provided by teacher aides. Parents and teachers have agreed that a teacher aide assists as an additional support person for their child. However, concerns have been identified including lower teacher engagement with the student, interference with peer interactions and assigning the least qualified staff to provide instruction for students with the most complex needs.

This review of the literature presented has highlighted both benefits and concerns about how the ORS funding scheme can support children with special educational needs. These benefits have included the importance of being able to access support, an individualised and flexible approach to the support and the importance of effective collaboration. While there are limited studies on the funding scheme itself, general research exploring the role of teacher aides, specialists and additional teachers have suggested we may not be successfully supporting our children within their classroom environments. These concerns include a lack of direct involvement from specialists, concerns around the training of resource teachers in relation to specific learning needs and the lower teacher engagement created by having a teacher aide assigned to a student. Past research has indicated that parent perceptions and behaviours related to their child's education influences student outcomes. As a result, this study will explore parents' perceptions of the supports funded by the ORS funding scheme in three primary school classrooms in Central North Island to gain a further understanding how we support our children with special educational needs.

2.7. Research Aim

What are parents' perceptions of the supports funded by the ORS funding scheme for children in three regular primary schools in New Zealand?

2.8. Research Questions

(1) How are their children supported through the ORS funding in regular classrooms?

(2) What are the strengths of the support(s) received by their children in regular classrooms?

(3) What are the limitations of the support(s) received by their children in regular classrooms?

Chapter Three: Methodology and Method

This section explores the methodology and theory supporting this study and the ethical considerations relating to this research. Finally, methods used to both collect and analyse the data are discussed.

3.1. Epistemology and Methodology

The epistemological stance of this research was based within a social constructionist paradigm. Epistemology is the study of knowledge and concerns itself with what is knowledge and what it means to know something. Social constructionism is therefore based on the understanding that knowledge and reality is constructed within social interactions between people and their worlds (Crotty, 1998). This involves working with conversation and text as data with the belief that the very meaning of events comes about through the way in which these events are talked about (Tuffin, 2005). A research methodology that fits within this philosophy was needed to frame the study.

Methodology describes the research design and the plan of action. It includes what constitutes knowledge and establishes a framework of beliefs that guides the research (Glesne, 2006). For this research, a qualitative methodology enabled the researcher to attempt to make sense of and interpret phenomena in relation to the meanings that people bring to them within social constructionism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It was chosen based on the key characteristics of qualitative research; it is naturalistic, data collected is descriptive, it is concerned with both the process and outcomes, and qualitative research places an emphasis on meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Davies and Logan (2012) see a qualitative methodology being used when little is known about a topic. The use of a qualitative approach to research inclusive education

has also been supported in the literature. For example, Danforth and Morris (2006) found that qualitative research can get to the centre of the possibilities and limitations of daily practice in schools that seek inclusion.

3.2. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a vital part of any research process and serve to reduce the likelihood of harm being experienced by anyone involved in the research process. This also involves recognition of the personal dignity, beliefs, privacy and autonomy of individuals (Massey University, 2015). As a result, informed consent, confidentiality and conflict of interest were the three ethical issues most relevant to this research and were explored below.

3.2.1. Informed consent

One important ethical consideration in this study is informed consent. Informed consent is one of the most fundamental concepts in the responsible conduct of psychological research. It ensures participants make informed, rational, and voluntary decisions about participation (Fried, 2012). Full information was given to all participants in the form of written information sheets (Appendix A). These adhered to the guidelines as set out by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) (Massey University, 2015). Clear contact details were also provided to participants of both the researcher and supervisors in case participants wished to clarify anything about the research.

3.2.2. Confidentiality

Wiersma and Jurs (2009) define confidentiality as the researcher not disclosing the identity of the participants or indicating from whom the data were obtained. Protecting confidentiality reflects the fidelity, responsibility and respect for the participant's right to autonomy and privacy. Furthermore, it helps ensure participants feel secure in providing honest answers to interview questions (Fried, 2012). As a result, the data

collected during the research process was not linked with the name and identity of the participants. Instead, participants were referred to as Participant 1 and Participant 2 and so forth. School's names were also kept anonymous to further protect confidentiality. Information gathered was secured in a locked desk and the researcher transcribed the interviews.

3.2.3. Conflict of interest

Another key ethical issue of this research was the conflict of interest between the researcher's previous employment and participant sample. The participants were selected from three primary schools, one in which the researcher had worked in as a teacher aide two years previously. To minimise this conflict of interest, parents of the child with whom I worked in the past were not included in the research.

3.3. Ethical Approval

Due to the ethical issues considered in this research, a full application was made to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. Special consideration was given to the parent or caregiver's emotions during the interview. All parents were made aware they could bring a support person to the interview and all given the option of terminating the interview at any time. A "safe" location was also provided within the school to complete the interview if the parents wished. This study was approved by the *Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (MUHEC)* (Massey University, 2015) (Appendix B).

3.4. Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was used in the study, in which personal contacts of the researcher were used to identify a school in which a principal was able to select participants with particular characteristics that enabled a detailed exploration of the phenomena being studied (Frost, 2011). In this study, five parents and or primary

caregivers, of children over three primary schools in the Central North region were recruited. A small sample size was chosen because the focus was to understand the participants and their experiences in depth (Pistrang & Barker, 2012). One school was a special character school, another was a small rural school and the third school was in an urban area that had a large special education unit.

The researcher contacted principals of three primary schools in Central North region in New Zealand where she had earlier professional connections. The principal's knowledge of their students and their families were used to guide the selection of participants. Both the principal and Board of Trustees were provided with information sheets (Appendix C). The principal provided a list of names of parents who met the selection criteria below to the researcher. The researcher then contacted the participants by phone to introduce herself and explain the study prior to sending out the information sheets (Appendix A) and consent forms (Appendix D). The researcher contacted all the parents who consented and provided the option of either a face-to-face interview or an interview via Skype at a time and/or location most convenient to them. The interviews were audio taped with the permission of participants. All interviews were conducted face-to-face.

3.5. Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for this research was that the participants had a child or children who was receiving ORS funding; and that the researcher had no prior contact with the child in her previous employment as a teacher aide.

3.6. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews lasting from 30-45 minutes were used as the method to collect data in this study. This type of interview involves the researcher deciding the focus of the interview and using predetermined broad questions based on that focus

(Burns, 2000). The method of data collection enabled the researcher to use open-ended questions while creating a more natural encounter for participants (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2012). It was useful for eliciting respondents' own ideas and opinions on the topic and, therefore, sensitive to the social context. The method was also flexible in that the researcher could follow up on points of interest while the participant provided information based on their perspective (Burns, 2000). One disadvantage of the semi-structured interview approach is the risk of unconscious or conscious attempts to mislead participants in their answers, which limits the quality of interview data. Diefenbach (2009) found that using the same interview questions across the different participants minimized this risk. As a result, this approach was adopted in the study. All participants were aware the interviews were to be recorded by audiotape as per the information sheet and consent form. The transcripts were sent to participants for checking accuracy along with the Transcript Release Form (Appendix E).

The interviews commenced by thanking the participants for their willingness to participate in the study followed by reiterating the purpose of the study explained to them in the information sheet.

The following broad questions guided the interviews:

- What supports have been provided by the Ongoing Resource Scheme for your child?

- Do you consider these supports to be a strength? If so, how?

- Do you consider these supports to be limited? If so, how?

- Could these supports be improved? If so, how?

- Are there other supports that you consider would help your child?

The following probe question was also used if necessary.

- Tell me a bit about these supports and how they have supported your child?

3.7. Data Analysis

The method chosen for data analysis was a thematic analysis approach. This method was chosen for its ability to identify, organise and report themes or collective patterns of meaning within data. Within the social constructionist approach, patterns within data are identified as socially produced through the participants' use of language. Thematic analysis also enables successful organisation and description of the data set in rich detail while enabling an insight into various aspects of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

3.7.1. Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with the data

Firstly, audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed verbatim shortly after the interviews. The researcher who had the intimate familiarity with the interviews transcribed these. All participants were given the option to review the transcripts for accuracy. For those who wished to review the transcripts, copies were emailed to the families. Once all transcripts were corrected, authorisation was requested with a transcript release form (Appendix E) for the release of the transcripts in order that the edited transcript and extracts might be used.

The reviewed transcripts were then read and re-read with initial ideas noted down. The aim was to become intimately familiar with the data set's content and to notice things that might be relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

3.7.2. Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Initial codes of interesting features of the data were generated with full attention given to each data item that may form the basis of repeated themes across the data set. The criteria for the initial codes were to show diversity and patterns within the data and to appear across more than one data item. The codes were placed in relevant places in the

margins of the transcripts. Potential quotable passages were also highlighted (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). Please see Appendix F for an example of this coding phase.

3.7.3. Phase 3: Searching for themes

The coded data was reviewed to identify areas of similarity and overlap that were developed into potential themes including main themes and sub-themes relevant to the research questions. These potential themes were checked to ensure they firstly worked in relation with the coded extracts and secondly whether they accurately reflected the collective meanings seen in the data set as a whole. This phase ended with a thematic map outlining the potential themes, sub-themes and quotes from the transcripts to support the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). Please see Appendix G for an example of the final thematic map for one main theme.

3.7.4. Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes

The themes were reviewed in relation to the coded data to ensure they meaningfully captured the data set. Each theme was explored to confirm data supported the theme, the theme told something useful about the data set, and research questions and the theme was coherent (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

3.7.5. Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The next step involved refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, including clear definitions and names for each theme. Extracts were selected to present and set out the story of each theme including providing a clear example illustrating the theme. They also provided structure for the analysis of the data and it's meaning connected to the broader research questions. It was important each theme captured something about the data in relation to the research questions and represented a patterned response and meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

3.7.6. Phase 6: Producing the report

The report or results was then produced with attention given to the order of the themes to ensure they connect logically and meaningfully to tell a coherent story about the data. The whole analysis is also linked to the research questions and literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

3.8. Summary

This section has provided an exploration of the methodology in which this research has been framed. This study was based on a qualitative methodology within a social constructionist framework in which semi structured interviews were used to collect data and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The following section presents the findings of the study.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the research findings from the thematic analyses of the corresponding data. Themes from the parent interviews are presented with examples from the interview transcripts. These themes address the three research questions including how children are supported by the ORS funding scheme, and the strengths and the limitations of these supports.

4.1. How are children supported through the ORS funding in regular classrooms?

4.1.1. The Three Supports Provided by ORS

Parents identified teacher aides, specialists and additional teacher time as the supports provided by the ORS funding. Parents talked about the teacher aides as the main support received through the ORS funding,

> *The ORS package for me is just some weekly hours that you use for a teacher aide, that's what it is for me* – Participant 2

> *So they have a pool of teacher aides…he has at least three teacher aides associated with him* – Participant 4

Parents discussed their experiences with the specialists provided through the ORS funding, with Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) and Occupational Therapists (OT) the most common specialists providing support.

> *She has a Speech and Language Therapist…so she's doing assessments and more of a background role of actually teaching the teacher aide* - Participant 1

> *This SLT will come and they will look at C maybe for an hour, maybe once or twice a year maybe, if you are lucky, and then they will make some recommendation to the teaching staff and school about what they might do and that's when it gets built into the IEP* – Participant 3

> *E also has an OT so he's got somebody who comes in who assesses particular chairs that might be good for him* – Participant 5

Parents identified additional teacher time as another support provided by the ORS funding.

She gets a resource teacher vision from BLENZ who are contracted to an organisation that provide blind and low vision support – Participant 2

He *gets um his mainstream teacher and then he gets an additional resource teacher* – Participant 5

4.1.2. Funding Variation

Differences between schools on how the ORS funding supports are used became

apparent throughout the interviews. For example, differences were noted in how the

schools handle a shortfall in teacher aide hours.

Yea so now I top up B's teacher aide hours, and really there is ORS funding but I think the school probably should do something but might not, or won't, so that's why I do yea - Participant 2

It was the school who suggested I go for high needs but that was because they were already providing him with that funded without being reimbursed for it… so he has at least three teacher aides associated with him and that also means if one is sick someone else can go in there – Participant 4

S*o the school gets this package of hours and they say great we get, I don't remember what it was but say it was 20 hours, and the school have to work out who the teacher assistant is going to be, and from that they have to work out how much they are going to pay that teacher assistant per hour and it's that that decides how many hours in the classroom C will get, so it's not nearly as simple as it seems* – Participant 3

S*till doesn't cover a child to have a teacher aide with them all the time… And I think that's another advantage…they make every effort and supplement if they feel a child needs additional resources then they will basically provided that whether it's covered by ORS funding or not* – Participant 5

Parents were also very perceptive about schools' orientation towards students

who were ORS funded.

B*ut yea we changed schools for many reasons, and they already knew some of the ropes within the ORS system, so we were able to grab hold of those* – Participant 1

But there are schools in X that do not accept and they are obvious by their absence when you look at those schools, when you think actually they haven't got a single special ed needs, not even a little tiny special ed needs, that's really interesting – Participant 3

> *You soon find out what schools are supportive and you chose based on how you are you, if you are willing to fight you can send your child to any school... we put D in a school that never had ORS funding before and a few people said that's not a great idea and we soon found out it wasn't* – Participant 4

Additionally, parents identified that very high needs ORS funding provided more support than high needs.

> *So in the beginning there weren't enough hours and it was very obvious as school started that there weren't enough hours and there weren't enough hours as C is deemed to be high needs she wasn't very high she was high... so we applied, the school applied, and they managed to get some additional hours* – Participant 3

> *So he got just high needs then and a year or two ago they upped him to very high needs because he couldn't access any of the curriculum without it being altered* – Participant 4

> *Um was given very high needs which I am pleased to say is no longer reviewable its ongoing now* – Participant 5

4.2. What are the perceived strengths of the supports received by the ORS funding?

4.2.1. Accessing ORS Funding

Parents explained how their ORS funding experience started when their child was still at kindergarten or child care. A Ministry of Education key worker assisted in applying for the funding which was perceived as a support by parents in this application process,

> *I was really lucky, at kindy we got a really really lovely person through the Ministry of Education, and she said no this is what needs to happen and she pushed and pushed* – Participant 1

> *It sort of started really when C was four...at the point the Ministry of Ed were heavily involved because they had been involved since she was three, we were very fortunate I think* – Participant 3

> *I think they started the ORS funding process when he was at kindy... you have someone from group special education who's the key worker who sorts stuff while they are at kindy, so they did that along with their teachers...yea that was a pretty seamless process for us* – Participant 4

He was assessed I am guessing at age 4 for yea his ORS and um was given very high needs…you get assigned someone who coordinates it all so we had someone on board from an early period to help with that, and um she was the one who literally wrote the application well in conjunction with us and um just she was the one who liaised with us about the process – Participant 5

Parents also expressed the importance being able to include their child in a mainstream classroom and how the ORS funding assisted in ensuring this was possible.

Most of the time she is the classroom, it's something that we have asked for though we wanted her quite mainstream and just support her… So when we moved her we said she needs to be a part of the classroom she's not different… they were quite happy to support us with that – Participant 1

The confidence I gained from that, knowing that that was the philosophy from ORS, that that's what it is all about, that that is ensuring your child is engaged in the curriculum – Participant 3

I found that E is included in as much of the school as possible and going to same assemblies and importantly at morning tea and lunch time he is with everyone else – Participant 5

4.2.2. Teacher Aides Support

Parent's expressed the value of the teacher aide hours their child received.

S*he is there most of the time, we are quite lucky with our school as all the junior classes have a teacher aide anyway which is funded by the board of trustees…so in one class she's got three teachers so that's really awesome* – Participant 1

And the hours have always um I mean obviously it's never enough… and to be honest, I mean of course everybody wants more hours – Participant 2

They managed to get some additional hours…there's very few periods of the day that she hasn't got somebody who is there for her, there's a little period during the day and that's hard for the teacher – Participant 3

4.2.3. Additional Teacher Support

Parents were appreciative of the support from the specialist teacher.

She gets a resource teacher vision from BLENZ… Yea it's been successful with the same person, she's very good. It's all about the person you have isn't it so yea she's very good – Participant 2

He gets um his mainstream teacher and then he gets an additional resource teacher, it's called um so she's the one attached to room 9… it's like a day a week it might be a point 5 but T seems to do more than that which is wonderful – Participant 5

At the same time they were unsure of the role the additional teacher played in supporting their child.

But there is another lady out there I don't know what her role is exactly but she's sort of above the teacher aides – Participant 1

You get an ORS teacher, C gets a point 1 I think and it's an ORS Teacher…a teacher…an ORS staff member I want to say, I don't quite know what they are called by the Ministry of Ed, but the point of that is to provide release time so that the teacher can actually unpack the curriculum or they help with unpacking the curriculum so I think they are meant to be teachers – Participant 3

4.2.4. The Value of Collaboration

Parents expressed appreciation for having a support team working together to support their child.

So there is a good seven or eight of us around the table. Which is really nice to know, you hear a lot of stories that people don't get that, so I feel lucky that we have managed to be well supported – Participant 1

You get a whole range of people and yea in our case it has been very good – Participant 2

Felt we were in those sorts of capable hands, I was very relaxed about the fact that I had picked a good school, I knew it was a good school, I knew the staff were excellent – Participant 3

Very well coordinated, so again there's E's mainstream teacher, his additional teacher, um the SLT, the OT, um who else oh the sort of coordinator the ministry coordinator person and um she's been brilliant, all those people and then me and um E's dad, so we all get together, the process has been good – Participant 5

Parents also expressed the importance of communication within their child's support team,

My mum picks her up and my partner drops her off in the morning um and yea every morning and afternoon they get spoken to about A's day, cause she can't come home and tell me about it… So um it's quite nice to get more feedback

through that and we have quite an open thing, we just email between teachers um if we need to so that's good – Participant 1

We usually have a form sent home in advance for us, as a prompt to fill out any issues things like…so those sorts of things very very open – Participant 5

This included the ability for parents to have their own voice in their child's education.

So when we moved her we said she needs to be a part of the classroom… so yes that's something we pushed for and they were quite happy to support us with that – Participant 1

I was never planning to be a hands off parent and they knew that because I was very clear at the beginning I was going to be in partnership with them and they appreciated that and they continue to appreciate it as difficult as it might be but I am not a silent partner in this if there is anything – Participant 3

Having a voice included being able to discuss any issues with members of a child's support team.

Obviously I am her advocate but I think it's more about that teachers don't do well at, confronted is not the right word, but being challenged I guess, teachers a lot of teachers don't do well at that, and a lot of principals don't like their teachers being challenged or them themselves being challenged and in those situations you know it's been it has got heated at times - Participant 2

We had a teacher that was very consequences, very rigid consequence system, and it didn't work … it was a disaster, so that then we did end up going into the school but only if there is a clash like that that we end up - Participant 4

But certainly if I had a concern she's extremely approachable, certainly emphasise that so if I ever had a particular concern or question um then I know I could ask and she would arrange a particular time during her weekly visit so that's really good – Participant 5

4.3. What are the perceived limitations of the supports received by the ORS funding?

4.3.1. Deficit Model in Application Process

Parents discussed their perceptions relating to the ORS application process itself. Parents found the ORS application to be a negative experience but understood that is was necessary in order to obtain the funding,

But yea the application was pretty horrible, it's very truthful you read it going this is horrible, my child sounds like an absolute monster...it was quite daunting to go through, but I do understand that that had to be that way, to get that funding – Participant 1

I don't think people appreciate how distressing it is for parents by the time you finish the ORS application you are ready to go outside and howl under a tree for a week probably, it's just so so soul destroying – Participant 3

4.3.2. Lack of Specialists and Clarity around Roles

Parents weren't always sure of the role or involvement a specialist had with their child

and gaps or shortages were often identified.

Yea BLENZ sort of do the whole package, but there has been a shortage of O&M, orientation mobility people in NZ so yea that was sort of a big gap for a few years – Participant 2

Well they have, um ed psychs are more impossible to get hold of I think XX don't have any, SLTs have also been really hard to get hold of – Participant 4

Thought that there would be some speech language therapist from this ORS fund you know, that a speech language therapist would turn up and actually do something with C, but actually that doesn't really happen. Because they don't have that many speech language therapists – Participant 3

Yes um there's a speech language therapist that comes in once a week...but she has to see everybody or every child who she feels needs to be seen so that might be a disadvantage, I could be wrong about this I don't know if she comes in and sees E from 2 to 2.30 or basically she spends the day in room 9 observes and has one on one time...we might have more regular and specific meetings if we didn't have this set up – Participant 5

However, like the additional teachers, parents also valued the support provided by the

specialists.

I would consider the best SLT from special ed – Participant 4

Occupational Therapist came from another boy that is out there and A joined in with him...But that's been huge for her, it's changed a lot in her motor skills, so lots of hands on bits and pieces and she's not as clumsy which is really nice – Participant 1

4.3.3. Dependency on Teacher Aides

However, parents did acknowledge the ability for a student to become dependent

on the teacher aide.

> S*o if you are looking at you know, obviously a social aspect, yes maybe there's um at times you don't need as many teacher aide hours* – Participant 2

> *So they have a pool of teacher aides they try to make sure that each child doesn't just have one teacher aide cause they can get really absorbed so he has at least three teacher aides associated with him* – Participant 4

4.3.4. Reduced Teacher Engagement

Parents also acknowledged the concern that the teacher aide took more of a lead

role than the classroom teacher,

> I*t seems to be in these cases that the teacher aide has a good workload with the child, the resource teacher, the specialist has a really big role, the classroom teacher often has a back set, but in actual fact they should be the one driving it but too often it's not it's left up to the others* – Participant 2

> *Yup, I am pretty sure the teacher aides aren't undertaking things themselves, a lot of what I read in probably chat rooms with other parents, some places it's the teacher aide really delivering everything to the child, while I think at XX it is an unusual school in that it's so well organised and it's known as a special needs school so there teacher aides are being told what to do by the special needs teachers cause obviously they have teacher with training for special needs* – Participant 4

4.3.5. Transparency

Parent's expressed the need for the ORS funding to be clear and felt that not

having knowledge about how the scheme worked disadvantaged their child in being

fully supported.

> *I would probably like more knowledge, I am relying on the people that work with her to tell me where else to go if I had a bit more knowledge around how the system works or what is actually accessible um then maybe I could be going well do we need to go down this* – Participant 1

> I*f we had left her where she was, would we have missed out on a lot of these things because we didn't know about them* – Participant 1

It's just I mean clarity, transparency around how the hours are set and in terms of what that would look like as the years go on – Participant 2

It doesn't need to be a state secret. Parents should be able to work out how come their child gets this many hours and what does it mean in a way that is much more meaningful to them I think – Participant 3

One parent also acknowledged that not having this transparency often created

expectations that were not met in reality.

You get all this information that tells you, that tells you all the things your child will get, this lovely wrap around service with you know, occupational therapy and physiotherapy… but what is surprising is that those things actually don't really happen they don't happen in the way that you think that they are going to happen – Participant 3

4.3.6. Flexibility

Parents also suggested that ORS would be more beneficial if more funding could be

provided to begin with and then tapered off as the child progresses.

I think in an ideal world your child would be fully supported, you know like fully supported because…if you provide full support at the beginning and your child doesn't fall behind, so the curriculum is seriously unpacked…then I think you probably would save a lot of money at the other end but I don't think anybody ever thinks like that – Participant 3

Just somehow some flexibility or some ability to vary hours depending on age and I know that people would say that yes we do that already or what have you – Participant 2

I am the only one thinking it, the idea that you'd actually say we need to put it all in the front and take it away as need be, so front load it, and as children are demonstrating that they don't need it we remove it – Participant 3

Chapter Five: Discussion

This study explored parents' perceptions of the supports funded by the ORS funding for children in three regular primary schools in New Zealand. The discussion follows on from the identified themes in Chapter Four including the ORS funded supports and their strengths and limitations. It focuses on the ORS funding process, the support team it funds and how transparency and flexibility can improve the ORS funding scheme with reference to previous research. It also discusses the implications and limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research. It concludes with a final summary of the current research.

ORS is managed and allocated through Ministry of Education: Special Education (formerly Group Special Education) who is the "fund holder" for students identified on this scheme. ORS is used to fund specialists such as speech-language therapists, additional teachers, teacher aides and funding for items such as computer software or braille machine paper (Ministry of Education, 2016d).

Consistent with the provisions that ORS funding can resource (Ministry of Education, 2016e), parents identified teacher aides, specialists and additional teacher time as the supports provided by the ORS funding. Parents perceived the teacher aide allocated hours as the main support to come from the ORS funding, while Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational therapists were identified as the most common specialists providing support.

5.1. Team effort and the strength of collaboration

Parents perceived the main strength of the ORS funding to be the support of the team working with their children. In previous New Zealand studies, parents have expressed the need for funding to go towards hands-on teaching and interactions with their child and stressed the importance of a collaborative team (Nagel & Stobbs, 2006).

In line with the literature, this current study found that parents' perceptions valued the role of the teacher aide, additional teacher and specialist who worked with their child and reported positive experiences with collaboration.

Parents described teacher aides as the main support to be provided through the ORS funding and valued the allocated hours they received to support their child in the classroom. These parents' perceptions on the role of the teacher aide were consistent with the Ministry of Education's (2012) role description, where a teacher aide supports a child's classroom teacher to include a child in everyday classroom learning and activities. It is also consistent with Williams and O'Connor (2012) who reported that parents and children in the United Kingdom talked positively about teacher aides' as an integral part of the whole school workforce.

Parents in this study also perceived the additional teacher provided by the ORS funding as valuable in providing learning support for their child. Previous research has found parents expressed the need for school staff to know etiology specific information and the corresponding teaching methods relating to children with special learning needs (Starr et al., 2006). Similarly within New Zealand, concerns were raised over the specific training support teachers were given in special education (Moore et al., 1993). However, parents in this study did not identify these concerns and instead spoke positively about the learning support provided by the additional teacher. This included one parent acknowledging that the additional teacher time allowed the curriculum to be adapted for their child. This is consistent with Bhroin (2013) and Nagel and Stobbs (2006), who found the resource teacher assisted with promoting teaching strategies to connect with the individual learner and to connect the learner with the curriculum.

Parents' perceptions of both the teacher aides and additional teacher role with their child are consistent with the Ministry of Education's role description. However,

parents' perceptions of teacher aides as the main support was inconsistent with previous studies that identified concerns in regards to assigning the least qualified staff, the teacher aide, to provide the bulk of instruction for students with the most complex learning characteristics (Giangreco et al., 2005). This was not a concern for parents in this study and they valued the number of teacher aide hours that was provided. As research has yet to support the effectiveness of a teacher aide's role, this raises concerns that we may be providing supports to children with special learning needs without fully understanding the outcomes of having teacher aides to support the learning of some students (Blatchford et al., 2012).

Consistent with previous research, parents did acknowledge the possibility of their child becoming dependent on the teacher aides. This is consistent with Symes and Humphrey (2012) who noted that students who were supported by a teacher aide were less likely to work independently and had fewer opportunities for interacting with their peers. Having more than one teacher aide in a classroom or allocated to a child was perceived to decrease the concern a student may become dependent on this support in such a way that would create negative impacts. This suggests that rotating teacher aides within a school may be beneficial for students who are allocated teacher aide hours.

Previous research has also found that having a teacher aide often resulted in less teacher engagement. As discussed previously, Falkmer et al. (2015) and Giangreco et al. (2005) found that whilst parents identified the advantages of having a support person in the classroom they also acknowledged that this meant there was a risk that the teachers felt relieved of the need to more directly facilitate the child's inclusion. In contrast to previous research, only one parent noted that having a teacher aide did mean less teacher engagement. This suggested that less teacher instruction may not be a concern for these parents and having teacher aide's as an additional support was more important.

Parents also valued the support provided by the specialists. Previous research in New Zealand by the Ministry of Education (2010) reported that specialists needed to be more knowledgeable about the curriculum and the education context. The parents in this study did not identify this as a concern and instead discussed what the specialist had done for their child. However, parents did acknowledge that there is a shortage of specialists available and this is consistent with previous New Zealand and international research around the difficulties and delays in accessing specialists (Mckee & Vale, 2014; Squires et al., 2007).

In addition to valuing each team member provided through the ORS funding, parents also expressed their appreciation towards the successful collaboration and communication they experienced within the team. Research has documented the significant role parents play in determining the success of their child's inclusion in the classroom and how their perceptions can inform professionals in knowing how to best work with their child (Gallagher et al., 2000). The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has also recognised the value of the parent's voice through outlining and encouraging ways in which teachers can engage with parents (Ministry of Education, 2016b). However, a review by the Education Review Office (2008) reported nearly 75% of schools needed to improve engagement with parents and 25% were advised to improve the quality of engagement with parents in New Zealand.

Throughout this study, parents expressed appreciation for having a support team collaborating to support their child. Within this support team, parents also identified the importance of communication and felt they had the ability to have their own voice to discuss any issues. This view is important as it suggests parents are being included within the collaboration process as recommended by the Education Review Office (2008).

Previous research by Tucker and Schwartz (2013) also identified barriers to the IEP collaborative process including opportunities to provide input, communication difficulties with school teams, and negative perceptions of school professionals. Parents in this study did not report any of these barriers within the IEP support team. As discussed earlier, within New Zealand, the IEP guidelines were updated with a focus on collaborative decision-making and active participation of all key members involved in a student's learning (Ministry of Education, 2011). This research suggests that these parents did feel supported and informed within the IEP team and felt comfortable to have discussions with any team member involved. Communication was perceived to be reciprocal in nature suggesting the collaborative process for these parents were successful. This finding is also significant as Lawson (2003) highlighted that parents often lack the resources to make their voices heard. The parents' perceptions in this study suggest that the meetings are being used successfully to allow the parents to have a voice regarding their child's education and support. This is important as collaborating with parents can provide further insight into a child's needs (Tveit, 2009).

In one study, the three most cited supports requested by parents was more education for parents, more time with an educational assistant, and having a better IEP for their child (Starr et al., 2006). The present study is consistent with the latter two where parents valued the teacher aide hours and the collaboration process within their child's IEP team.

5.2. Parents' perceptions of process and provision

For the parents in this current study, the experiences with the ORS funding scheme started when their child turned four. These parents described accessing the ORS funding as a positive experience. Parents perceived the Ministry of Education key worker to be the main support in the ORS funding application process who was

described as the person who drove and coordinated the process and ensured parents were informed. This is consistent with international research that has highlighted the important role of a key worker in bringing coherence to the provision of support for children and providing relevant information relating to required supports (Mengoni et al., 2015; Webb et al., 2008).

Additionally, parents in the current study found the ORS funding assisted with ensuring their child was included within the school. International and New Zealand research have both explored parents' views about their children's experiences of inclusion. Within New Zealand, Kearney (2009) explored parents' views about their children's experiences of school exclusion. The views expressed included barriers to accessing the curriculum, and inappropriate educator beliefs and practices in relation to funding. In addition, ERO has previously noted concerns that schools do not identify the impact of their provisions on the learning outcomes and progress for their ORS students (Education Review Office, 2012). The views expressed by parents in this study described how the ORS funding has assisted with inclusion for their children, which provides insight into its value within the New Zealand educational system.

However, completing the application itself was described as a negative experience. Parents described the need to focus only on their child's deficits to create a problematic picture of their child in order to ensure the application for ORS funding is successful. This is consistent with Bartlett (2009) who emphasised the need to adopt a negative deficit perspective when completing the ORS application to increase the chance that funding would be granted.

In a New Zealand study that investigated Māori parents and whānau perspectives of ASD, two out of the nineteen parents noted that they had to chase up all the supporting evidence and did not feel comfortable that the application was only in

written form and the decisions made by someone they would never meet (Bevan-Brown, 2004). This finding and this current study continue to emphasise the problems with completing the ORS application and suggest this process requires improvement to ensure the funding is based on objective criteria.

Furthermore, to be able to receive ORS funding a student must meet certain criteria indicating very high or high needs (Ministry of Education, 2016c). A few parents additionally described how they were originally allocated high needs funding and were then later supported by the school to apply for the very high needs funding. These parents found that very high needs ORS funding provided more support to their child in the classroom including more teacher aide hours compared with the high needs funding. This supports the anecdotal evidence that has suggested that students may not receive ORS funding due to a weakness in schools' ORS applications rather than the student's actual level of need (Education Review Office, 2010).

The New Zealand public has already raised concerns that the application relies heavily on strong writing skills (Ministry of Education, 2010) and parents have indicated that the application process negatively impacts their wellbeing. Parents' perceptions support the need for clearer criteria that is more consistently applied and to include use evidence such as video footage to personalize the nature of the process (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Once the ORS funding was provided, parents perceived differences between schools in how the ORS funding supports were used. For example, differences were noted in how the schools handled a shortfall in teacher aide hours. Some parents expressed the difficulty for teachers when there were not enough teacher aide hours and one parent chose to supplement the teacher aide hours at their own expense. In contrast, other parents described how the school had several teacher aides and if there was a short

fall the school would provide a teacher aide whether it would be covered by ORS funding or not.

Parents perceived this difference to be based on a school's experience with ORS funding and the number of ORS funded students. Parents identified some schools that did not have a single child with special needs and some parents were warned about sending their child to a school with no ORS funded students. This is consistent with a recent report by the Education Review office (2015b) where only three quarters of the schools in the sample were mostly inclusive. Parents also identified schools that had experience with ORS funding and a larger number of students receiving this funding as more successful in supporting their children. Perceptions included these schools being more informed about the ORS system, knowing the best professionals/specialists and having more additional teachers and teacher aides available at the school all the time.

As discussed earlier, in 2004 and 2005, the Education Review Office (ERO) evaluated how effectively schools used ORS funding to improve outcomes for students. ERO found that the majority of schools managed and used the ORS funding and supports well to improve outcomes and had well-developed consultative practices with parents. However, they also found a small group of schools that did not manage the ORS funding effectively (Education Review Office, 2007). This study is consistent with these findings suggesting that how the ORS funding is used is not consistent across schools and raises a concern for how children may be supported.

5.3. Parents' perceptions on building transparency and flexibility

Highlighted throughout the above findings is the uncertainty parents had around the involvement and role of staff members within their child's education. This also included the role the specialist had with their child. Parents initially thought the specialist would be directly involved with their child but found they had more of a

consulting role within the school. This finding is consistent with Squires et al. (2007) who found that parents expected a more direct intervention by the specialist and delays in special involvement were reported. Within New Zealand, the Ministry of Education also found a need for specialists to be clearer about their practices and what they intended to achieve (Ministry of Education, 2010).

In addition, parents expressed the need for the ORS funding itself to be clearer as not having knowledge about how the scheme worked disadvantaged their child in being fully supported and created false expectations. This is consistent with the Ministry of Education (2015e) findings that more transparent access to support was identified as an area for improvement. This lack of transparency about what ORS funding provides, and the uncertainty around involvement of staff that is provided through the funding, may affect how parents perceive this support. If parents felt they were informed about what the funding provides, different perceptions may be seen in relation to the supports themselves.

Parents also expressed the need for ORS funding to be increased at the beginning and slowly tapered off as a child progresses through the school years. Flexibility with how the ORS funding is used may assist in improving the support provided for their child. Parents suggested that if a child was fully supported when they first enter the education system then it may prevent further problem behaviour, as their child got older. It was identified by parents, that there might be a missed opportunity to support a child's development fully from the start. This is consistent with Reupert et al. (2015) who explored the views of Australian parents regarding what they considered to be the enablers for inclusion. The diverse responses highlighted the importance of an individualised and flexible approach for support.

5.4. Implications and recommendations for future research

This study has explored parents' perceptions of the supports funded by the ORS funding scheme for children in three regular primary schools in New Zealand. It has contributed to knowledge through identifying the supports provided by the ORS funding and the perceived strengths and limitations of these supports.

Parents described teacher aides as the main support to be provided through the ORS funding and the more hours allocated by the ORS funding was seen as beneficial to ensuring their child was fully supported. This suggests teacher aides are perceived to be working efficiently within the education system in supporting students with special education needs.

Results from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff project found that students receiving the most teacher aide support made less progress than similar students who received little or no teacher aide support (Blatchford, Russell, & Webster, 2012). In addition, limited research has supported the role of a teacher aide, and parents' perceptions for this study support past research around lower teacher engagement and teacher aide dependency. However, parents have expressed the need for funding to go towards hands-on teaching and interaction with their child and the teacher aide's role fulfills this need. This may be why parents value the support they provide. This poses further questions around the effectiveness of these interactions, if their role does support inclusion and if hands-on teaching is beneficial would a specialist or the additional teachers therefore be more effective in this role. Further research into the efficacy of the teacher aide is essential to explore the aspects of a teacher aide's role to ensure the interactions increase a child's engagement within the classroom and curriculum.

Another issue raised within this current study was parents' perceptions of the differences in how the ORS funding supports are used between schools. Parents were

also warned about sending their child to a school with no ORS funded students. This raises concerns that some schools may be using the ORS funding more effectively than others, especially if they have a higher rate of ORS funded students. Future research will be important to explore how schools use the funding and how the Ministry of Education can ensure the ORS funding is managed appropriately within each school. This is important to ensure there is an equitable process for supporting children receiving funding through the ORS scheme, wherever they are enrolled.

Parents also expressed their desire for transparency and knowledge when it came to the ORS funding and its supports. This has important implications for how the Ministry of Education provides ORS funding information to parents. It suggests we may need to develop further parent resources to ensure the ORS funding is clear regarding what supports are provided and the role these supports will play. This need for transparency also poses further questions around how this lack of knowledge may influence parents' perceptions. Perceptions can be influenced by prior experiences, existing beliefs, knowledge, attitude, motivation and personality (Edgar & Edgar, 2016; Pickens, 2005). If parents had further knowledge on what the ORS funding provides and the role of each support then their perceptions may be more informed and markedly different to what this current study has presented.

5.5. Limitations

A small sample size was chosen because the focus was to understand the participants and their experiences in depth. However, a small sample size from one geographical location limits the generalizability of these findings to other schools and settings. Future research will need to include a more representative sample. In addition, the study relied on the perceptions of parents therefore no assurances can be made as to the reliability of the findings and no other evidence was available to back up data

related to the findings. There is also a possibility of bias, parents were self-selected and only those who wanted to share their perspectives participated. Additionally, all three schools shared one similarity in that the principal was open to research. Despite this, the findings from this study align closely with international and New Zealand literature.

This study provides insight into parents' perceptions of how their child is supported by ORS funding within three general classrooms. Exploring the perceptions of principals, teachers and other key stakeholders of a child's education will increase further understanding around how ORS funded children are supported. Examining and comparing multiple perspectives is important to gain a comprehensive understanding of how we are supporting children with special education needs

5.6. Conclusion

This study explored parents' perceptions of the supports provided by the ORS funding scheme for children in three regular primary schools in New Zealand. Within this study, parents identified teacher aides, specialists and additional teacher support as the supports provided by the ORS funding. Strengths included successful collaboration with their child's support team and each staff member's role valued. Teacher aides were perceived as the main support provided by the ORS funding but parents did acknowledge the risk of less teacher engagement and teacher aide dependency. Limitations perceived by parents included the deficit model in the ORS application process, differences in how the ORS funding was used between schools and shortage of specialists in New Zealand. Parents also expressed the importance of transparency around the ORS funding and its supports and flexibility in how the ORS funding can be used.

Based on the current findings and previous studies, future research is important to explore the efficacy of the teacher aide role, how we can ensure the ORS funding is

managed and allocated equitably and how the Ministry of Education can develop

transparency to ensure the ORS funding and the role of the supports are clear.

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Appendix A Parent Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MATĀURANGA

Exploring parents' perceptions of supports for children with special learning needs in a regular primary classroom.

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jessica Reilly and I am currently a student at Massey University completing my Masters of Educational Psychology. As a part of this qualification, I have chosen to interview parents of children with special learning needs about their experiences of support in regular classrooms. The purpose of the research is to gain insight into how children are supported and the strengths and limitations of these supports. Both my supervisors Dr Julia Budd and Dr Vijaya Dharan have experience with working, teaching and researching in the field of inclusive education.

In New Zealand, every child should have the support needed for successful learning. This includes students with high and very high needs who make up approximately 3% of our student population. One support is the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS), which funds specialists, teacher aides and items such as computer software. Research has questioned the effectiveness of the funding scheme and its resources. Teachers have indicated an inconsistency between what was received and what was required to successfully include students with special learning needs in their classroom. Barriers have included the organisation and delivery of resources and employing suitable support staff. Furthermore, research has found a lack of support for a child's education places families under stress and demands are made on the resources of the family. This research focuses your perceptions of the support provided for your child. By looking at parents' perceptions of the support in a regular classroom, it is hoped that underlying themes about how your child is supported can be identified providing insights into the strengths and limitations of these supports.

I therefore would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Participant Identification and Recruitment
You and five other parents and primary caregivers of children who have had experience with Ongoing Resource Scheme funding will be invited to participate. The principal of the primary school in Palmerston North will be contacted initially who will then contact yourself and parents within the primary school who have children currently attending.

Project Procedures
I am using semi-structured interviews to gather information. This means that I will ask you a few questions to help prompt you in talking about support for your child in the classroom but will let you describe your experiences yourself. You are also welcome to bring a support person to the interview if you wish. Interviews should take around 30 – 45 minutes. The times and locations of the interviews will be arranged to suit you. Either face to face or Skype are suitable. The staffroom in the hall will also be available if you wish.

I am aware that this is a sensitive topic and you may find some topics to be uncomfortable. If at any stage this does occur, the interview will be stopped.

Data Management

A summary of the research findings will be sent to you via email or mail according to your choice.

A summary of the research findings will also be sent to the school ensuring your confidentiality is maintained.

To ensure your privacy is respected, your name and any other personal information that may be used to identify you will not be included in the research findings.

I'd like to tape-record the interviews and then I will be transcribing these and analysing the transcripts for the major themes and insights. Once the interviews are transcribed, you will be emailed a copy of your transcript to read and verify along with a transcript release form giving your permission for me to use the transcript in my research. Please make changes if necessary and email me your verified transcript within two weeks of receiving them along with the transcript release form. When the thesis is finished the tapes and the transcript will be destroyed 3 years after completion of the research. Until then the only people who will have access to the information will be my two supervisors and myself.

Your rights as a participant:

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study within 30 days of providing your consent;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- you will be emailed or posted a summary of the project findings which it is concluded according to your choice;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts

Researcher: Jessica Reilly
               Mobile: (+61) 400770524
               Email: Jessica.reilly20@gmail.com

Supervisors: Dr Julia Budd, Institute of Education, Massey University
               Work Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84412
               Email: J.M.Budd@massey.ac.nz

               Dr Vijaya Dharan, Institute of Education, Massey University
               Work Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84315
               Email: V.M.Dharan@massey.ac.nz

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the research supervisors, we are more than happy to offer further information.

Yours Sincerely,
Jessica Reilly

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 15/52. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B Ethic Approval Letter

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

23 September 2015

Jessica Reilly
22 Edwards Place
Terrace End
PALMERSTON NORTH 4410

Dear Jessica

Re: **HEC: Southern B Application – 15/52**
        Exploring parent's perceptions of supports for children with special learning needs
        in a regular primary classroom

Thank you for your letter dated 21 September 2015.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc   Dr Julia Budd   Dr Vijaya Dharan
     Institute of Education   Institute of Education
     PN500   **PN500**

     Prof John O'Neill, Director   Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
     Institute of Education   Institute of Education
     PN500   **PN500**

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Research Ethics, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 951 6841; 06 951 6840
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Appendix C Principal and Board of Trustees Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MATĀURANGA

Exploring parents' perceptions of supports for children with special learning needs in a regular primary classroom.

INFORMATION SHEET

Dear (Principals and Board of Trustee's Chairpersons name),

My name is Jessica Reilly and I am currently a student at Massey University completing my Masters of Educational Psychology. As a part of this qualification, I am required to complete a thesis and have chosen to interview parents of children with special learning needs about their experiences of support in regular classrooms. During this research, I will be supported by my supervisors Dr Julia Budd and Dr Vijaya Dharan, who both have experience with working, teaching and researching in the field of inclusive education.

Purpose of the study
In New Zealand, every child should have the support needed for successful learning. This includes students with high and very high needs who make up approximately 3% of our student population. One support is the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS), which funds specialists, teacher aides and items such as computer software. Research has questioned the effectiveness of the funding scheme and its resources. Teachers have indicated an inconsistency between what was received and what was required to successfully include students with special learning needs in their classroom. Barriers have included the organisation and delivery of resources and employing suitable support staff. Furthermore, research has found a lack of support for a child's education places families under stress and demands are made on the resources of the family. This research focuses on your perceptions of the support provided for your child. By looking at parents' perceptions of the support in a regular classroom, it is hoped that underlying themes about how your child is supported can be identified providing insight into strengths and limitations of these schools.

I there would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Participants for the Study
I would like to interview up to six parents or primary caregivers from your school whose child or children are receiving support under the Ongoing Resource Scheme. I therefore, request the Principal to contact parents or primary caregivers of children funding by ORS at your school to discuss their interest in participating in this research. I will then meet with the parents who are interested to provide them with more information about the research before they make a decision as to whether they wish to participate
What the study will involve
The interviews will be 30 – 45 minutes either face to face or by Skype. The interviews will be to gather information on parents' perceptions of ORS support for their child. The times and locations of the interviews will be arranged to suit the parents or caregivers convenience. If possible the parents will also be given the option to complete the interview at a location within

the school such as the hall or staffroom if permitted. As the participating institute, you will also be emailed a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Rights as a participant:
Parents and primary caregivers are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If they decide to participate, they have the right to:
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study within 30 days of providing your consent;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that their name and name of their child's school will not be used unless they give permission to the researcher;
- will be emailed or posted summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts
Researcher: Jessica Reilly
                Mobile: (+61) 400770524
                Email: Jessica.reilly20@gmail.com

Supervisors: Dr Julia Budd, Institute of Education, Massey University
                Work Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84412
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                Dr Vijaya Dharan, Institute of Education, Massey University
                Work Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 84315
                Email: V.M.Dharan@massey.ac.nz

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the research supervisors, we are more than happy to offer further information. I have also attached the research questions for your information.

Yours Sincerely,

Jessica Reilly

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 15/52. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email humanethicssouthb@massey.ac.nz

Research Questions

(1) How are their children supported through the ORS funding in regular classrooms?

(2) What are the strengths of the support(s) received by their children in regular

    classrooms?

(3) What are the limitations of the support(s) received by their children in regular

    classrooms?

Appendix D Parent Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MATĀURANGA

Exploring parents' perceptions of supports for children with special learning needs in a regular primary classroom.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

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

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

I am aware that I can end the interview at any time.

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

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

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

Full Name - printed ....

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MATĀURANGA

Exploring parents' perceptions of supports for children with special learning needs in a regular primary classroom.

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

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

Full Name - printed ....

Appendix F Examples of Coding Phase

So the school has picked up some other stuff so that was really good and

they sort of said, well we actually know this avenue can we follow this,

but I think the <mark>psychologist goes into the school once a term</mark> maybe the

speech and language therapist is a bit more regular and <mark>she does training</mark>

<mark>with the teacher and teacher aide to bring in that stuff</mark>.

Yup, she's doing assessments cause A needs… her sound aren't quite

there so they are trying to figure out which sounds to focus on to get

more words<mark>. So she's doing assessments and more of a background role</mark>

<mark>of actually teaching the teacher aide</mark>. And the occupational therapist

came from another boy that is out there and A joined in with him, now they <mark>are trying to</mark>

<mark>get more funding somewhere in there with the occupational therapists,</mark>

<mark>it's not all funded by the ORS funding not quite enough money there.</mark>

But <mark>that's been huge for her, it's changed a lot in her motor skills, so lots</mark>

<mark>of hands on bits and pieces and she's not as clumsy, which is really nice</mark>.

And how have you found the teacher aide's?

I don't actually know, she is there most of the time, we are quite lucky with

our school as <mark>all the junior classes have a teacher aide anyway which is</mark>

<mark>funded by the board of trustees so they get an extra teacher aide anyway and</mark>

<mark>A gets her own, so in one class she's got three teachers so that's really</mark>

<mark>awesome.</mark>

Margin annotations:

- Frequency of specialist involvement
- Specialists in a consulting role
- Specialists in a consulting role
- Funding influencing specialist involvement
- Benefits of the specialists provided
- Multiple teacher aides available, school funded also

Appendix G Final Thematic Map showing One Main Theme

Sub Themes

Main Theme: Perceived limitations of the supports provided by the ORS funding

Lack of specialists and clarity around roles

e.g. *Well they have, um ed psychs are more impossible to get hold of I think XX don't have any, SLTs have also been really hard to get hold of* – Participant 4

Deficit model in application process

e.g. *I don't think people appreciate how distressing it is for parents by the time you finish the ORS application you are ready to go outside and howl under a tree for a week probably, its just so so soul destroying* – Participant 3

Dependency on teacher aides

e.g. S*o if you are looking at you know, obviously a social aspect, yes maybe there's um at times you don't need as many teacher aide hours* – Participant 2

Reduced teacher engagement

e.g. I*t seems to be in these cases that the teacher aide has a good workload with the child, the resource teacher, the specialist has a really big role, the classroom teacher often has a back set, but in actual fact they should be the one driving it but too often its not its left up to the others* – Participant 2

Transparency

e.g. I*f we had left her where she was, would we have missed out on a lot of these things because we didn't know about them* – Participant 1

Flexibility

e.g. *I am the only one thinking it, the idea that you'd actually say we need to put it all in the front and take it away as need be, so front load it, and as children are demonstrating that they don't need it we remove it* – Participant 3