

**How do parents and preschool educators  
perceive children's experiences of preschool  
in a time of policy reform?**

**Sarah Wight**

BTeach(JP) *UniSA*, BEd(JP/P) *UniSA*,

GradCertCathEd *UniSA*, GradCertSpecEd *Flin*, MEd *Flin*,

**School of Education**

**Flinders University of South Australia**

**Doctor of Education**

**2015**

## **Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

**Signed**



## **Acknowledgements**

Many and sincere thanks to Dr Susan Krieg for the many rereads, rewrites and your patience as I tried to find my way,

Dr Kerry Bissaker for the critical appraisals and insightful questions which always made me step up,

and both for your guidance and supportive encouragement when it was most needed.

Thank you to Dr Paddy O'Toole for welcoming me onto the path,

The parents, preschool educators and children of the four research sites who contributed so richly to the research with honesty, generosity, commitment and passion for early childhood education.

Thank you to Judy who always was and is the sort of educator I strive to be, for being prepared to vouch for my potential to take on and complete this body of work.

Thanks so very much to ever scholarly Marie and super sharp Kate for your reading, intellect and friendship. Your advice is always thoughtfully given and gratefully received.

To my gorgeous friends, particularly Ros and Jess, who've always believed that one day this will be finished. Thank you. You gave me no choice.

Thanks are also due to dear Bob and Lorraine for your generosity, always saying yes and your listening ears.

Thanks to Mum for always encouraging me to finish what I've started and your unending faith and pride in me, Dad for the work ethic and my ever loyal sisters, Di and Ju for always seeing more than I see.

For the everyday reality of doctoral study, my heartfelt thanks to my incredible family, Dave, Alice and Tommy. You know why. I couldn't have done this without you behind and next to me. I appreciated so much all the cups of tea that appeared in my hand and the times you cried 'epistemology' and made me laugh. You make me better in every way.

And finally this thesis is dedicated to two very special people, always remembered, never forgotten,

for treasured Tracy who would have shone in the classroom as she did in life,  
and my dear friend Helen, always an inspiration and a shining light.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>List of Appendices</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
i. Background	3
ii. Definition of Relevant Terms	5
iii. Statement of the Problem	5
iv. Purpose of the Research	8
v. Significance of the Research	9
vi. Research Questions	10
vii. Summary	11
<b>Chapter 2 Review of the Literature</b>	<b>12</b>
i. Parent Decision-Making About Preschool	12
ii. Purposes of Preschool	13
iii. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: National Quality Framework	15
iv. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: Early Years Learning Framework	16
v. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: Same First Day	18
vi. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: Universal Access	18
vii. Integrated Centres as a Successful Model	19
viii. Enrolment and Attendance at Preschool	20
ix. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: Early Brain Development	21
x. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: The Impact of the Home Learning Environment	22
xi. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: Educational Disadvantage	23
xii. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: Children's Time Usage at Four Years of Age	24
xiii. Summary	26

<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Methodology and Methods</b>	<b>27</b>
	i. Theoretical Perspective	27
	ii. Epistemology Underpinning Research	28
	iii. Methodology	29
	iv. Research Design	30
	v. Method	30
	a. Organisational Framework for the Research	30
	b. Data Collection Timetable	31
	c. Research Population and Sample	32
	d. Research Population and Sample: Phase 1	33
	e. Research Population and Sample: Phase 2	34
	f. Overview of Phase 1	35
	g. Overview of Phase 2	37
	h. Data Analysis Procedures	39
	i. Reliability and Validity of the Data	42
	vi. Ethical Research Practices	43
	a. Informed Consent	43
	b. Sharing Information with Participants	43
	c. Minimising Disruption to Research Sites	43
	d. Reciprocity	44
	e. Using Ethical Observation Practices	44
	f. Maintaining Confidentiality	44
	g. Collaborating with Participants	45
	vii. Limitations	45
	viii. Delimitations	46
	ix. Summary	47
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>48</b>
	i. Instrumental Case Studies	48
	a. Case Study 1 – Jane	49
	b. Case Study 2 – Anwar	52
	c. Case Study 3 – James	55
	d. Case Study 4 – Eva	58
	ii. Analysis	59
	iii. Discussion	63
	iv. Conclusion	64
	v. Summary	65

<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Observations of Preschools and Semi-Structured Interviews of Preschool Educators</b>	<b>66</b>
i.	Observations	66
a.	Site A	67
b.	Site B	71
ii.	Interview Transcripts	75
a.	Data Summary from Site A	75
b.	Data Summary from Site B	77
iii.	Description of Interviews from Sites A and B	77
iv.	Analysis	82
v.	Discussion	83
a.	Findings on Research Question 2	84
b.	Additional Findings	87
vi.	Summary	88
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Parents' Perceptions of Preschool Experiences and Policy</b>	<b>90</b>
i.	Background Information of Phase 2 Questionnaire	90
ii.	Parents' Decision-Making	94
iii.	Purposes of Preschool	95
iv.	Enrolment and Attendance	99
v.	Preschool Access	103
vi.	Children's Time Usage	105
vii.	Discussion	107
a.	Findings on Research Question 1	108
b.	Findings on Research Question 3	109
viii.	Conclusion	115
viv.	Summary	116
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Discussion and Conclusion</b>	<b>118</b>
i.	Parents' Perceptions of Preschool Purposes and Decision-Making Associated with Preschool Choice and Attendance in a Time of Policy Reform	119
ii.	Preschool Educators' Perceptions of the Purposes of Preschool in a Time of Policy Reform	120
iii.	Children's Access and Experience of Preschool in a Time of Policy Reform	122
iv.	Conclusion	125
v.	Summary	127
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>129</b>
	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>142</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>144</b>
	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>145</b>

## **List of Figures**

<b>Figure 3.1</b> <i>Organisational Framework for the Research</i>	<b>31</b>
<b>Figure 3.2</b> <i>Layers of Data Handling– Site A</i>	<b>40</b>
<b>Figure 3.3</b> <i>Layers of Data Handling– Site B</i>	<b>41</b>
<b>Figure 4.1</b> <i>Case Study 1 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>50</b>
<b>Figure 4.2</b> <i>Case Study 1 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>51</b>
<b>Figure 4.3</b> <i>Case Study 2 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>53</b>
<b>Figure 4.4</b> <i>Case Study 2 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>54</b>
<b>Figure 4.5</b> <i>Case Study 3 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>56</b>
<b>Figure 4.6</b> <i>Case Study 3 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>57</b>
<b>Figure 4.7</b> <i>Case Study 4 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>60</b>
<b>Figure 4.8</b> <i>Case Study 4 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods</i>	<b>61</b>
<b>Figure 6.1</b> <i>Frequency of Decile as Per Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage</i>	<b>91</b>
<b>Figure 6.2</b> <i>Mother's Education Level</i>	<b>92</b>
<b>Figure 6.3</b> <i>Father's Education Level</i>	<b>93</b>

<b>Figure 6.4</b> <i>Parent Responses to Importance of Preschool Education in Preparing Children for School</i>	<b>96</b>
<b>Figure 6.5</b> <i>Parent Responses to Perceived Happiness of Child at Preschool</i>	<b>97</b>
<b>Figure 6.6</b> <i>Parent Responses to Perceived Motivation of Child at Preschool</i>	<b>98</b>
<b>Figure 6.7</b> <i>Hours of Preschool Enrolment</i>	<b>100</b>
<b>Figure 6.8</b> <i>Hours of Preschool Attendance</i>	<b>101</b>
<b>Figure 6.9</b> <i>Parent Responses to Adequacy of 15 Hours of Preschool for School Preparation</i>	<b>103</b>
<b>Figure 6.10</b> <i>Parent Responses to Ease of Access of Preschool Education</i>	<b>104</b>

## **List of Tables**

<b>Table 3.1</b> <i>Timetable of Data Collection</i>	<b>32</b>
<b>Table 4.1</b> <i>Background Information</i>	<b>62</b>
<b>Table 4.2</b> <i>Time Usage</i>	<b>63</b>
<b>Table 5.1</b> <i>Key Observations – Site A</i>	<b>68</b>
<b>Table 5.2</b> <i>Key Observations – Site B</i>	<b>73</b>
<b>Table 5.3</b> <i>Data from Interview Protocol – Site A</i>	<b>76</b>
<b>Table 5.4</b> <i>Data from Interview Protocol – Site B</i>	<b>78</b>
<b>Table 6.1</b> <i>Factors Influencing Parents' Decision-Making When Choosing a Preschool</i>	<b>95</b>
<b>Table 6.2</b> <i>Hours of Preschool Enrolment</i>	<b>99</b>
<b>Table 6.3</b> <i>Hours of Preschool Attendance</i>	<b>102</b>
<b>Table 6.4</b> <i>Parent Responses as to Activities in Which Children Participate</i>	<b>107</b>

## **List of Appendices**

- A1** Phase 1: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (English)
- A2** Phase 1: Questionnaire (English)
- A3** Phase 1: Information Sheet for Observation (Site B only)
- A4** Phase 1: Consent for Observation (Site B only)
- A5** Phase 1: Observation Tool
- A6** Phase 1: Narrative Observation Tool
- A7** Phase 1: Site Map (Site A)
- A8** Phase 1: Site Map (Site B)
- A9** Phase 1: Interview Protocol
- A10** Phase 1: Interview Transcript (Site A)
- A11** Phase 1: Interview Transcript (Site B)
- A12** Phase 2: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (English)
- A13** Phase 2: Questionnaire (English)
- A14** Phase 2: Qualitative Response to Phase 2 Questionnaire (English)
- A15** Phase 2: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (Dari)
- A16** Phase 2: Questionnaire (Dari)
- A17** Phase 2: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (Hindi)
- A18** Phase 2: Questionnaire (Hindi)
- A19** Phase 2: Information Sheet (Vietnamese)
- A20** Phase 2: Questionnaire (Vietnamese)

## **Abstract**

The research explores how a cohort of South Australian parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of local and national policy reform.

Four preschools in metropolitan Adelaide were purposely selected as sites for the primarily qualitative research. The perceptions of preschool educators were explored through semi-structured interviews. Four families agreed to participate in more in depth case studies to determine how their preschool children spent their time in and out of preschool. Two preschool sites were observed to better understand the nature of the learning environment. Finally, a quantitative questionnaire was completed by parents from the four preschool sites to complement other data and provide opportunities for triangulation.

The research concluded that socio-economic, and parental education factors, and children's life experiences away from the preschool setting result in differences in children's access and experience of preschool in a time of policy reform. The investment and interest in early childhood education was welcomed by parents and educators alike as educators sought to adapt to changes brought about by the converging reforms of the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Educators expressed concerns about additional workload and whether the result of the reforms would be genuine improvement for all South Australian children eligible to attend preschool education in South Australia. The research argues that further investment in early childhood education by the Commonwealth government is timely, but the success of this commitment must be measured by increased enrolment and attendance of children at preschool and tangible improvements within early childhood settings to ensure that every Australian child has access to excellent early childhood education.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

Early childhood education in South Australia has a long and established history as evidenced through South Australia's provision of preschool education for children; from the opening of South Australia's first free kindergarten in 1906 by Lillian de Lissa to what is known and recognised today as an important and common experience for most South Australian children prior to school entry (Butler, 2007; Government of South Australia, 2011; University of South Australia, 2012). The early childhood sector now finds itself undergoing significant change through the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Dowling & O'Malley, 2009; Government of South Australia, 2007; Harrington, 2008). In congruence with international definitions, this research defines early childhood as lasting from birth to age eight (Shearer, Snodgrass & Butcher, 2008) but deals specifically with the preschool experience of children prior to school entry.

The research undertaken for this thesis explored how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform and in doing so, focuses on the diversity and commonality of experience for children in and outside of their preschool setting.

This first chapter describes the South Australian preschool context and the nature and extent of policy reform currently occurring in early childhood settings. The chapter outlines the converging changes specifically associated with the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and a new national curriculum for early childhood, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Policy and curriculum reforms are first defined, and then implications associated with their implementation are discussed.

In Chapter 2, an overview of relevant literature is explored and gaps in the literature are identified which this research seeks to address. It will be argued that this thesis contributes to the body of research about preschool education by exploring in a time of policy reform, parents' perceptions of the purposes of preschool and their

decision-making associated with choice of preschool and attendance; preschool educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool; and children's access and experience of preschool.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods employed to collect data to respond to the research questions from preschool educators and parents. This summary includes an explanation of how and why data was collected via parent questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with preschool educators and case studies informed by parent responses to 24 hour diaries about children's time usage. Chapters 4-6 present the data and analysis. The first stage of the data collection involved gathering educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool, observations of working preschool environments, and case studies illustrating children's experiences of preschool. Once analyses are completed, it will be argued that the current period of policy reform makes this area worthy of further study as preschool settings grapple with and accommodate changes brought about by the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

Chapter 4 presents case studies of four children attending preschool in two culturally and socio-economically diverse settings and provides examples of how children access and experience preschool in a time of policy reform. Perceptions of preschool educators are explored in Chapter 5 as to the purposes of preschool in a time of policy reform and this is achieved through examining data collected from semi-structured interviews.

In Chapter 6, responses to questionnaires completed by parents of four preschools are examined more closely by critical analysis of the quantitative data. Finally in Chapter 7, the most significant findings of the research are discussed. It will be argued that socio-economic and parental education factors, and children's life experiences away from the preschool setting result in differences in children's access and experience of preschool in a time policy reform. The chapter also concludes that preschool educators had mixed perceptions about the National Quality Framework (NQF) with some perceived benefits, but also some reservations as to its ability to affect real and genuine improvement for all South Australian children enrolled and attending preschool education.

**i. Background**

In 2008, all Australian governments made a commitment through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) that every Australian child will have access to quality early childhood education delivered by degree-qualified teachers in the year before school commencement (Dowling & O'Malley, 2009; Harrington, 2008). The National Quality Framework (NQF) is a reform intended to provide greater consistency in early childhood education between different jurisdictions in Australia and to improve education and care across long day care, family day care, preschool, and outside school hours care (ACEEQA, 2013b).

The National Quality Standard stipulates seven quality areas which services are assessed against to better inform parents and educators about the performance of providers of early childhood education with a view to improvement. Changes have also been made under the National Quality Standard to staff-to-child ratios, staff qualification requirements and the establishment of a national body to oversee the sector, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) (COAG, 2009; Fenech, Giugni & Bown, 2012). The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for children from birth to five years of age took effect in all South Australian preschools from January 2012 (DEEWR, 2009) promoting a consistent curriculum for all Australian children from birth to five years of age as per the new national early childhood reform agenda.

The research explores these reforms and inquires into the perceptions of parents and preschool educators as to the purpose of preschool and to what degree they have already experienced subsequent changes. The research examines how preschool parents have made decisions about their children's preschool education, and opinions on the access and provision of their children's preschool education.

Within the Australian context, early childhood education is increasingly regarded as imperative in order to attempt to bridge aspects of disadvantage within Australian society (The Benevolent Society, 2010; Harrington, 2008; Mustard, 2008; Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards & Hayes, 2008; Wake et al., 2008) and to give every Australian child a quality and empowering education. Successful participation in early childhood educational settings translates to better transition to formal

schooling; improved retention, participation and achievement in later schooling; lower levels of criminality in adolescence; and better post-school options generally (The Benevolent Society, 2010; Dockett & Perry, 2008; Mustard, 2008; OECD, 2006; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004; Wake et al., 2008).

Prior to the introduction of Universal Access in 2013, South Australian children were able to access 12 hours of preschool per week. Universal Access is the provision of The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) that from 2014 (DECD, 2014), “All four year old children will have access to 15 hours per week of preschool, for 40 weeks of the year before they attend school.” This research explores the implications of the uptake of the 15 hour provision within this sample.

The research compares the enrolment and attendance data of four groups of preschool children with the previous enrolment and attendance data to determine if changes brought about Universal Access were evident.

In summary, the research seeks to provide a snapshot of how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform. The research adds to the body of early childhood research in terms of:

- More in depth understanding of the impact of policy reform on the current South Australian preschool context.
- Use of qualitative and quantitative data collection to bring together children's home and preschool settings to explore how four groups of four year old children in metropolitan South Australia experience preschool in the year prior to school commencement.
- The response of parents and preschool educators to issues related to preschool education in South Australia in a time of policy reform.

## **ii. Definition of Relevant Terms**

For the purpose of this research, the Department for Education and Child Development (2012a, January, p. 1) definition of a preschool programme has been employed,

Preschool is a planned sessional educational program, primarily aimed at children in the year before they start formal schooling. Preschool programs are play-based educational programs designed and delivered by degree-qualified teachers using an approved curriculum framework. (p.1)

The term 'preschool' is used in place of 'kindergarten' and is intended to include all preschool and kindergarten programmes which cater for children aged four in the year prior to school entry.

Children's Centres are defined as those which, "Bring together care, education, health, community development activities and family services for families and their young children from birth to eight years of age" (DECD, 2012, January, p. 1).

Same First Day took effect in South Australia from 2014. This policy mandates one entry day per year for children commencing preschool and school (generally in late January each year). This is a significant change from the previous termly intakes for children as they turned five years of age. As a result of this policy, all children in South Australia will complete at least four terms of preschool and four terms of reception (Government of South Australia, 2014). Children who are born on or after May 1<sup>st</sup> will commence preschool or school in the year following their fourth or fifth birthdays respectively.

## **iii. Statement of the Problem**

This research seeks to better understand how a sample of four year old children access preschool education in South Australia, not only by enrolment but actual attendance. Recently the Australian Government provided extensive funding to increase support and universal access to preschool for all four year old children

and this research seeks to determine the perceptions of educators and parents as to the value of this increase in access. The research examines the uptake of children from the sample in accessing the 15 hour provision and invites parents and educators to discuss its value for the children whom they have in their care.

The commitment of parents in ensuring children's access to preschool will be imperative if the aim of the National Quality Framework (NQF) to provide high quality early childhood education to every Australian child (COAG, 2009) is to be realised. Unfortunately it cannot be assumed that all Australian children attend preschool. Those who do not, are at a much greater risk of poorer cognitive attainment, sociability and concentration on school commencement (Sylva et al., 2004). One in five Australian children do not attend any form of early childhood programme until the age of four (The Benevolent Society, 2010) and then approximately one in ten do not attend preschool in the year prior to commencing school (CCCH, 2011; DECS, 2010).

Access to early childhood education is affected by availability, suitability, quality and cost (Press & Hayes, 2000) and parents must weigh these factors carefully when choosing an appropriate preschool for their children. The research gathers data on children's enrolment and attendance and factors influencing parents' decision-making when selecting preschools for their children.

There is already some doubt whether the National Quality Framework (NQF) has the capacity to deliver on its promise, whether at best the NQF will provide a minimum standard which will not necessarily translate into high quality care and education for all Australian children (Fenech et al., 2012).

In reflecting on issues with the National Quality Framework (NQF), Fenech et al. (2012) argues that the NQF will be unable to deliver transformative change for all Australian children (ACECQA, 2013b); that reforms are not extensive enough to significantly improve staff qualifications and child-staff ratios, and that there are issues even with the rating system itself. Under the National Quality Framework (NQF), in centres with fewer than 25 approved places or 25 children in attendance, a qualified early childhood teacher is required to be present only 20 per cent of the time (ACECQA, 2013a). Research suggests that a core group of educators working together is much more effective in improving teaching and learning outcomes,

relationships and staff stability than one qualified educator working without collegial support from similarly trained peers (Fenech et al, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). The impact of access to a qualified educator for only day per week in small preschool settings is yet to be determined and beyond the scope of this research.

Alongside doubts of whether the National Quality Framework (NQF) will create genuine and measureable change for all Australian children, there is also positive expectation which can be found in the literature (Barnes, 2012; Page, Hydon, Gibbs, Keegan, Bryant & Connell, 2013; Sims, 2013). For example, Patterson and Fleet (2012, p. 6) describe “a catalyst for change which recognises the professional status of the early childhood sector, and offers ongoing possibilities for enriching reflective practice.” If the reform of early childhood education is to be worthwhile and to deliver quality outcomes for all Australian children (COAG, 2009), then such discourse, reflection and informed research is needed on the NQF with consideration given to the actual change which it genuinely delivers. Broad data collection will also have its place in informing the discussion about how children are accessing preschool, such as the Annual Census of Children's Services (ACCS) in South Australia.

When this research was undertaken, the Annual Census of Children's Services (ACCS) provided a snapshot of preschool education taken over the course of one week a year. Whilst highly useful and most certainly an essential measure of aspects of early childhood education and its delivery in South Australia, there were difficulties with its lack of inclusion of non-DECS preschools who were not compelled to participate in the ACCS (DECS, 2010). Whilst many did so voluntarily, the data provided was still not entirely inclusive and representative of preschool education in South Australia. The ACCS informs other data collection measures such as *The National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection* (ABS, 2012a). The data released within *Preschool Education Australia* (ABS, 2013a) from *The National ECEC Collection* has addressed issues with data quality and rigor with previous collections and as a result, is no longer labelled experimental as previously and provides a much more accurate view on preschool education in South Australia (ABS, 2013a).

In South Australia, the collection date for *The National ECEC Collection* related to this research was August 3, 2012 and data was collected over a two week period to accommodate the fortnightly cycle (ABS, 2013a). The estimated population of four year old children in South Australia in 2012 based on the 2006 Census data was 20,518 children (ABS, 2013a) and the disparity between population estimates and the number of children known to be enrolled and attending preschool is consistent with other published data (CCCH, 2011: DECS, 2010) which again illustrates that there are children not attending preschool in South Australia. Until these children access preschool, Universal Access is not fulfilling its ambition of providing high quality early childhood education for all Australian children (DECS, 2011, May). There were a total of 18,837 four year old children enrolled in a preschool programme in South Australia in 2012 with 14,551 (77 per cent) enrolled in a government or non-government preschool and an additional 4,286 (23 per cent) enrolled in long day care with a preschool programme (ABS, 2013a).

The introduction of the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) see the early childhood sector undergoing significant change. It is relevant to consider whether these changes translate to better outcomes for children, parents and preschool educators. Parents and preschool educators are best positioned to discuss how children access and experience preschool in a time of policy reform and their responses are fundamental to the outcomes of this research.

#### **iv. Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of the research is to give a voice to parents and educators about current practice and changes in preschool education as those most informed to do so, and to specifically explore how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform.

Universal Access has brought about changes to the amount of time children access preschool and in the ways in which individual preschools deliver this additional time. The research explores how children who are enrolled in preschool access this provision and the nature of their other daily experiences when not in

attendance at preschool. Another purpose of the research is to contribute to the literature around understanding early childhood experiences and exploring how this reflects the aims of new policy reforms.

#### **v. Significance of the Research**

The research contributes valuable data to generate a detailed story of how preschool educators and parents perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform and invites discussion about preschool education in South Australia. In addition, to date no other research of this design has been undertaken to capture a snapshot of pre-schoolers' experiences in and out of preschool during this specific period of policy reform.

It is through quality early childhood education that disadvantage can be addressed, a genuine partnership fostered between home and preschool and recognition of the rights of the child (Rinaldi, 2012, March). With current reforms impacting on early childhood education across Australia, the present research seeks to better understand the sum of children's experience by exploring how four year old children from the sample currently spend their time when not engaged in preschool education. The research looks for consistencies with the findings of Baxter and Hayes (2007) using the data of *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* which explored overall activity patterns of children in the year prior to school commencement and related these to parent characteristics. It is thought that understanding children's experiences when away from preschool can provide a better understanding of them within the preschool environment and how they access and experience preschool in a time of policy reform. This is perhaps of greatest importance to those children most at risk of educational disadvantage, specifically those not enrolled or attending preschool and those from financially disadvantaged homes (Ludwig & Sawhill, 2006; Mustard 2008; Sylva et al., 2004).

Children need the support of their parents to be enrolled and attending preschool so the decision and commitment of parents to the preschool enrolment and attendance of their children is relevant to the research. Access to early childhood care and education settings by four year old children and their families was explored

by Rodd (1996) as too were the factors influencing parents' choices. The research concluded that most parents took into account their own perspectives and that of their children when choosing an early childhood education and care setting, with child-focused reasons dominating their decision-making. Rodd's study was conducted in Victoria and many of its recommendations for more integrated delivery of early childhood care and education from the 1990's should be addressed if the goals of the National Quality Framework (NQF) are to be realised, making this relevant to the research but not current to the many reforms which have taken place since. The current research whilst exploring similar factors of parent decision-making about early childhood education as Rodd (1996) differs not only in time and context, but also in the intent and focus of the research.

The impetus for this research comes from a quest to specifically understand how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform. The research argues its significance lies in developing a better understanding of the nature of preschool children's experiences during such a critical time in their development, and that of their parents and preschool educators.

## **vi. Research Questions**

The research was designed to answer the following questions:

- a. What are parents' perceptions of the purposes of preschool and their decision-making associated with choice of preschool and attendance in a time of policy reform?
- b. What are preschool educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool in a time of policy reform?
- c. How are children accessing and experiencing preschool in a time of policy reform?

In order to address the research questions, variables explored within the research included:

1. Cited reasons of parents for preschool choice, enrolment and attendance.
2. Stated opinions of preschool educators on the purposes of Universal Access and preschool.

3. Stated time by parents of children's enrolment and attendance at preschool.

Stated time by parents of hours spent on activities out of the preschool setting.

In order to address the research questions, operationally defined variables explored within the research were:

1. Preschool choice by parents.
2. Purposes of preschool.
3. Hours spent at preschool.

Hours spent on activities out of the preschool setting.

## **vii. Summary**

Early childhood education in South Australia is undergoing significant change with the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF), the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), Universal Access, Same First Day, the South Australian Government's inclusion of *Every Child, Every Chance* within its seven strategic priorities; and the release of Professor Carla Rinaldi's *Re-imagining Childhood*. It is argued within this chapter that there is value in exploring what is implicit within these larger changes by specifically mapping how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform. A review of literature relevant to the policy reform in early childhood education is presented in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature in order to contextualise the research. The literature review identifies gaps in the literature which this research seeks to address. The chapter first explores literature about parent decision-making regarding preschool and its relevance to the present research.

It begins with a discussion regarding the polarised perceived purposes of preschool with reference specifically to perceptions of parents and preschool educators. The national and South Australian policies and documents driving key changes in preschool education are outlined and include: The National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Literature is discussed which supports integrated centres as a successful model of early childhood education and care. The chapter then explores literature about Australian children's enrolment and attendance at preschool. The importance of the sum of children's early experiences in relation to how they come to experience and learn about the world will be argued here. Consideration of the literature is discussed exploring the impact of early brain development, home learning environment, educational disadvantage and children's time usage at four years of age.

#### **i. Parent Decision-Making About Preschool**

It is parents who elect where and the frequency with which their children will attend preschool. The decisions which parents make about early childhood care and education are coloured by their own experience and perceptions of preschool and this can be influential in how they value different early childhood settings (Noble, 2007). Noble's (2007) study of 23 single semi-structured interviews of mothers of children from four local early childhood services in regional central Queensland found that local knowledge, the impact of significant others outside of the family as well as more practical concerns influenced parents' decision-making as to where they chose

to enrol their children for early childhood education and care. Rodd's (1996) study into children's access of early childhood services found that whilst parents consider educational and social-emotional factors, their decision-making was also influenced by parent needs and geographic factors.

Perceptions and subsequent decisions which parents make about their children's early childhood experience are to be understood from within the social context from which they live (Noble, 2007). Children cannot attend preschool without the support and commitment of their parents and subsequently understanding the value parents place on different factors illustrates how such decisions may be made. Factors explored within this research include educational programme; proximity to home; parents' work or child care setting; familiarity through other children within the family or of friends attending the same preschool; or its co-location with a primary school campus.

As discussed, inherent within such decision-making is the value parents place upon aspects of preschool education. Therefore, how children and the purposes of preschool are perceived by parents and preschool educators is relevant to this discussion. What is believed about children determines what a society affords them in the way of educational and life opportunities (Rinaldi, 2013).

## **ii. Purposes of Preschool**

Parents, preschool and primary school educators' different perceptions as to the purposes of preschool are well documented (Dockett & Perry, 2008; Elliott, 2006). At times these opinions are polarising; is preschool to be viewed as a transition to formal education or is its value far greater in the development of dispositions for learning in the young person and positive partnerships with families? Moss (2012) discusses the 'schoolification' of the early childhood education setting where it is suggested the demand for measureable learning outcomes can narrow and limit the view of learning. An attitude of equality and mutual respect for the early childhood education and school setting is the ideal whereby each educational setting is valued for what they do, with one not merely being regarded as a precursor to the other (Moss, 2012).

Elliott (2006) further explains that:

At the core of a good preschool learning program is building thinking and problem-solving skills, imagination and creativity and ensuring that every child has the social, cognitive and emotional capacity to optimise learning in the school years. Good preschool programs are not about prescriptive school readiness or early academic skills programs, although preparation for school is important. (Elliott, 2006, p. 50)

Different understandings regarding the purposes of preschool are enacted in many ways, one of which relates to the physical environment. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the National Quality Standard call on preschool educators to consider the physical environment of the preschool beyond its functionality and practicality but also to assess how it reflects the philosophy and pedagogy (Touhill, 2011). If it is desirable for children to be able to operate independently with a high degree of autonomy, how is this evident within the preschool environment? Does practice reflect the philosophy of preschool educators? For such conclusions to be drawn, thoughtful, honest observation and reflection need to occur. How preschool staff and children develop and maintain relationships and interact within this space is also highly relevant as these relationships determine to a large degree the quality of education and care children experience (Touhill, 2011).

As well as polarised opinions about the purposes of preschool, the perceived division between care and education within the early childhood sector is also well documented (Elliott, 2006; Rinaldi, 2013; Rodd, 1996). Can care and education really be mutually exclusive? Will policy reforms in early childhood unify the sector and acknowledge the work of early childhood educators in different settings as worthwhile? Further research into the future can contribute to the discussion.

### **iii. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: National Quality Framework**

The National Quality Framework (NQF) is a national system intended to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children using education and care services (ACECQA, 2013b). The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is a national body established to oversee the sector and the state regulatory bodies who manage the delivery of early education and care in their relevant jurisdictions. A considerable commitment between the states and the Commonwealth is required (Dowling & O'Malley, 2009) to ensure that targets set down by the NQF are achieved and that the investment in early childhood education in Australia fulfils its goal of bettering outcomes for all Australian children in the early years (COAG, 2009).

The reforms instigated with the National Quality Framework were badly needed. Funding of early childhood education has not kept pace with that of many other member nations of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) including Denmark, Iceland, the Russian Federation, Argentina and Mexico (OECD, 2011). Australia's spending on early childhood educational institutions as a percentage of GDP is actually below the OECD average (OECD, 2012a) and in fact 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 34 member nations. Current initiatives undertaken nationally and at state level should in some way bear testimony to the investment of the Commonwealth and the states. It will remain to be seen how this compares with the commitment of other OECD nations.

The savings to Australian society are thought to be considerable when greater investment in early childhood education is made with the cost of the investment offset by reducing the necessity to attempt to remediate difficulties during and post school (Mustard, 2008). The partnership between the home learning and early childhood environments is an important beginning (Sylva et al., 2004) and quality education which involves a learning community of children, parents and educators, responsive to the needs and rights of the child must be the goal (Rinaldi, 2012, March). The national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) underpins the work

of early childhood educators in ensuring that all children experience quality teaching and learning (DEEWR, 2009). This is further discussed in the following section.

#### **iv. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: Early Years Learning Framework**

The introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) in 2010 provided a document to early childhood educators which conveys expectations for children from birth to five years and provides broad direction to educators as to how best facilitate children's learning (DEEWR, 2009). The EYLF is a significant component of the National Quality Framework (NQF) intended to elevate the status and competence of early childhood professionals and the quality of early care and education for young children across Australia (Connor, 2011).

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) has five guiding principles intended to underpin the work of early childhood educators in the delivery of quality early childhood experiences for all Australian children. These are:

- Principle 1: Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
- Principle 2: Partnerships
- Principle 3: High expectations and equity
- Principle 4: Respect for diversity
- Principle 5: Ongoing learning and reflective practice

(DEEWR, 2009, pp. 12-13).

An emergent curriculum grows from the intimate knowledge of a child and community as well as other sources such as staff interests and community events, and has the capacity to reinvigorate educators who begin from the image of the child as competent and filled with potential (Nimmo, 2002; Patterson & Fleet, 2011). A planning cycle of questioning, planning, acting and reflecting assists early childhood educators in addressing learning outcomes. The five learning outcomes of the EYLF are as follows:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

(DEEWR, 2009, p. 8).

The purpose of preschool must incorporate the realisation of these outcomes for children, with more specific purposes relevant to children, families and communities guiding decisions about curriculum, children's learning and engagement (DEEWR, 2009).

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) promotes a play-based programme and pedagogy (DEEWR, 2009). Play-based learning can be understood as, "A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 46). This is of course influenced by the culture of home and preschool, and the value placed upon it in these settings. Play is understood to be important in the development of children's social competence, cognitive development and language development (Fromberg, 2002). Children need to have the capacity to play for their own purposes (CCL, 2006). Patterson and Fleet (2011) suggest that the EYLF calls on educators to find a balance between acknowledging children's voices in their learning and planning as an intentional educator for ways to extend children's learning in meaningful ways.

The practice of early childhood educators as espoused by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is to encompass holistic approaches; responsiveness to children; learning through play; intentional teaching; learning environments; cultural competency; continuity of learning and transitions; and assessment of learning (DEEWR, 2009, p. 14).

Early education is about what is worthwhile in children's lives, having meaningful experiences and making good citizens (Fromberg, 2002). The use of the EYLF by high quality childhood settings is seen as a way of developing sound foundations for life-long learning (Connor, 2011). The EYLF seeks to professionally recognise early childhood educators for the importance of the work which they do, encouraging competence and professionalism, supported by intelligent educational leadership to achieve positive outcomes for children (Connor, 2011). Successful

transitions by way of collaborations between settings, educators, education leaders and families are regarded as imperative to achieve the best outcomes for children in early childhood (Connor, 2011).

**v. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: Same First Day**

Commencing 2014, South Australian children entering preschool and school did so at the beginning of the school year. This is a change from the previous system of termly intakes after children's fifth birthdays. Previously most South Australian children would complete four terms of preschool and between three to six terms of reception dependent on when they commenced school. Same First Day ensures that every child will have four terms of preschool and reception (DECD, 2013, August). Potential issues associated with Same First Day may be parents of children whose start to school will now be delayed needing to find alternative early childhood placements for their children; preschool settings needing to cater for children aged between three years and eight months and five years and six months, and similarly school settings catering for children aged between four years and eight months and five years and six months.

Changes brought about by Same First Day to children's entry into both preschool and primary school will require the consideration of early childhood educators to accommodate for children of differing ages and development within the learning environment. Within the research, preschool educators from two of the four participating preschools were invited to share their perceptions on the purposes of preschool and Universal Access. This coupled with time spent in observation in the preschool setting generated a comprehensive understanding of the context in which children are spending their preschool hours and their levels of engagement.

**vi. Policies and Documents Driving Key Changes: Universal Access**

*Universal Access to Early Childhood Education* is a commitment by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to provide all children with access to 15 hours per week of quality early childhood education programme in the year prior

to school commencement, delivered by university trained early childhood educators (DECS, 2011, May). This provision sees an increase for South Australian children attending preschool in government-funded preschools from 12 to 15 hours per week with flexible entry still available for Indigenous children, children under the guardianship of the Minister and children with additional needs. Where all eligible South Australian children have the opportunity to access 15 hours of quality preschool education, their participation in a preschool setting is dependent upon the decision-making and commitment of their parents. Some children may attend more than one early childhood setting or may attend a private preschool, so may not access the full 15 hour provision to which they are entitled. Unfortunately there are other children who may not be enrolled or attending an early childhood setting at all and it is these children where the greatest inroads must be made to find ways to encourage and support families to give their children regular and consistent access to quality preschool. The value of integrated centres are discussed next as a successful model for early childhood education where early childhood services are offered to families and support given as needed within their own communities (DECS, 2012, December).

### **vii. Integrated Centres as a Successful Model**

The quality of a preschool is significant and has a bearing on children's performance such as reading in cognitive tasks when they begin school (Sylva et al., 2004). High quality care of young children is characterised by positive adult-child relationships, coupled with well-trained staff who have an understanding of children's development and a developmentally appropriate curriculum with an educational focus (Bennett, 2007; Elliott, 2006; Melhuish, 2003, as cited in CCCH, 2008; Press & Hayes, 2000). Poor quality care has no or negative effect on the educational development of children (Elliott, 2006).

Integrated centres where preschools exist within school communities have been found to be the most effective at ensuring intellectual progress for children (Sylva et al., 2004, as cited in Dowling & O'Malley, 2009; OECD, 2006; OECD 2011a). Providing early childhood education within an integrated centre may

provide a means of outreach to families who may otherwise not commit to preschool education for their children (Sylva et al., 2004) whilst also supporting the family unit and parents' place within it (Hilferty, Redmond & Katz, 2010). Such a model of delivery is evidenced by the new government Children's Centres and existing non-government preschool and school campuses in South Australia. Four such settings participated as research sites for the research. The enrolment and attendance of preschool-aged children nationally and within South Australia is discussed next.

### **viii. Enrolment and Attendance at Preschool**

This research explores access attendance of four groups of four year children in preschool education in South Australia, including the uptake of the fifteen hour provision of Universal Access by the Australian Government. Enrolment rates of four year old children in early childhood education in Australia as a nation enrolled in part time and full time capacity in public and private institutions as per the OECD data sees Australia 34<sup>th</sup> of 38 OECD member nations and below the OECD average (Roberts, 2012).

*The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)* as reported in CCCH (2011) found that of those Australian children in non-parental care, 64.5 per cent attended preschool and 23.7 per cent attended long day care with a preschool programme, leaving a remaining 11.8 per cent unaccounted for and not attending preschool. The data from *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* specifically exploring children's access to preschool education in the year before full-time school determined that from the K cohort (n=2,661) of Wave 1, and B cohort (n=3,221) of Wave 3, 91 per cent and 81 per cent respectively of children were enrolled in a preschool programme with some 5 to 7 per cent of Australian children not attending any preschool programme at all (Maguire & Hayes, 2011). Waves refer to the periods of data collection of the *LSAC* with Wave 1 occurring in 2004 when the K cohort was four to five years old, and Wave 3 occurring in 2008 when the B cohort were four to five years of age (Wake et al., 2008).

When looking specifically at enrolment and attendance of preschool-aged children in South Australia in 2012, 84 per cent of eligible children in South

Australia were enrolled to attend preschool for 15 hours or more and 56.1 per cent of children attended for 15 hours or more (ABS, 2013a). The disparity between enrolment and attendance data may be attributed to many factors which are not explored in depth within this research, but certainly it can be seen as indicative that whilst children may be enrolled to attend 15 hours of preschool as per Universal Access, they may not actually attend their full provision. This research however does examine whether the enrolment and attendance data of the children from the sample is consistent with the existing dataset.

The importance of the sum of children's early experiences in relation to how they come to experience and learn about the world will be argued next, using literature which explores the impact of early brain development, home learning environment, educational disadvantage and children's time usage at four years of age.

#### **ix. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: Early Brain Development**

Research into early brain development has established the relationship between the early experiences of young children and the very way in which 'the architecture and function of the brain' is developed (Mustard, 2008, p. 13). These experiences which shape the way a young brain functions are of paramount importance as what is laid down early in the development of neural pathways are difficult to change, even by the time a child commences school (Mustard, 2008). Up to 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurs in the first five years of life with any gaps in development, learning and health becoming more difficult to close over time (Mustard, 2008). Conversely, as Fromberg (2002, p. 29) explains, "Enriched educational experiences create stronger structural connections and pathways within the brain." Experiences in early childhood education and care often centre around relationships and this is reflected within the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009).

Secure and supportive relationships are fundamental to children's healthy development (The Benevolent Society, 2010) and the role of the parent and the home as children's first educators cannot be underestimated (Sylva et al., 2004). Not all

children share similar prior to preschool experiences. For some families food, shelter and safety are not assured (Hill, Comber, Loudon, Rivalland & Reid, 1998) and this colours the home experiences of young children and how they come to experience the world and their place within it. Less advantaged children may be further disadvantaged through their lack of access to high quality early education such as that inspired by a Reggio Emilia philosophy. It is concerning when less advantaged children participate within a 'catch up' curriculum as opposed to one with richer, more genuine learning experiences enjoyed by their more advantaged peers (Means & Knapp, 1991).

Children encounter a diversity of experiences in early childhood and even within a prosperous country such as Australia, educational disadvantage exists and does so amongst even the youngest members of society (CCCH, 2009; Vinson, 2007; Wake et al., 2008). The National Quality Agenda of which the National Quality Framework (NQF) is a key part, is accompanied by the commitment of COAG (DECS, 2011, February-March) that 'By 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and the nation'. What is not yet known and beyond the scope of this research, is whether the changes which the NQF delivers, will improve delivery and access of quality early childhood care and education, responsive to the needs of all Australian families. The NQF has much promise and it is the most marginalised children within Australian society who potentially have the most to gain. If the NQF does not realise its potential, must it follow that these marginalised children may also not realise their own?

#### **x. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: The Impact of the Home Learning Environment**

The quality of parent interactions and the home learning environment is a powerful contributor to a child's learning and development (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Children who experience supportive home learning environments at 15 months are likely to continue to do so at five years of age and similarly the lack of stimulating experiences for children who are at risk at 15 months do not seem to change and children's trajectory stays much the same until school commencement

(Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). This emphasises parents' role as first educators and home as the first classroom, and how the quality of these early experiences impact in real terms on how children learn and develop.

Literacy activities which children and parents share, the quality of parent-child interactions and the resources available to children are all important features of home learning environments (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Socio-economic status does not have to dictate the quality of the learning which goes on at home, nor does parent education, but obviously connections do exist between parent experience and what they know to provide for their children at home in the way of learning experiences (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). The home learning environments of children from within the sample are explored in an effort to better understand children's experiences when not attending preschool.

#### **xi. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: Educational Disadvantage**

Participation in quality early childhood education can help offset aspects of educational disadvantage, such as that brought about by poverty and can help in some way to redress the inequality which exists in Australian society (CCCH, 2009). *LSAC Outcome Index* (Wake et al., 2008) includes measures of many aspects of children's early development, and sees most Australian children in fact doing well but there are also those who remain marginalised. Girls were found to have more positive outcomes as did children from homes with higher family income, higher parental occupation status, with mothers with higher levels of education, and in the absence of financial stress. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had poorer outcomes than their peers, except in the physical domain and children who spoke a language other than English also displayed poorer outcomes (Wake et al., 2008). Children found to experience difficulties transitioning to school were from four distinct groups: financially disadvantaged families, Indigenous families, families with children who have a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families (Rosier & McDonald, 2011). The family learning environment and the attendance of children in pre-Year 1 early education programmes demonstrated higher overall and learning outcomes (Wake et al., 2008). In a developed country

such as Australia, it is concerning that there are children so disadvantaged early in their young lives.

One quarter of Australian children are struggling in some areas of development by the time they commence school (CCCH, 2011) with 1.7 per cent of postcodes and communities across Australia accounting for more than seven times their share of major factors that are associated with entrenched and concentrated disadvantage (Vinson, 2007). Unfortunately the children who are most at risk of experiencing educational disadvantage are also the least likely to attend an early childhood setting (Rosier & McDonald, 2011). Where social disadvantage becomes entrenched, any genuine intervention must be systemic, ongoing and persistent for it to be worthwhile (Vinson, 2007a).

Genuine partnerships between early childhood educators and families are important in averting any potential problems children may have in settling in and capitalising on the learning opportunities on offer (Rosier & McDonald, 2011). Learning experiences should be responsive to student needs, but also be culturally relevant to the children of the preschool (Á Beckett, Konakov & Robertson, 2012). A responsive learning programme requires as outlined by Elliott (2006, p. 50), "Careful planning for and investment in quality pedagogy." Semi-structured interviews with preschool educators and observations within the research sites provided a genuine opportunity within this research to understand the learning experiences on offer to children in preschool during a time of policy reform.

## **xii. The Sum of Children's Early Experiences: Children's Time Usage at Four Years of Age**

The way in which children spend their time is relevant when exploring children's participation in preschool and the diversity of experiences which children bring with them into the preschool learning environment. Baxter and Hayes (2007) explain that, "The ways that children spend their time both reflect and contribute to developmental changes and to developmental differences between children at a given time." Parental employment, education and children's preferences have a significant

impact on children's time devoted to structured and unstructured activities (Baxter & Hayes, 2007).

In a study of Victorian four year old children (n=175), Rodd (1996) found that approximately half participated in extra-curricular activities including swimming, ballet, jazz ballet, gymnastics, and athletics. Parents responded that they spent an average of 3.4 hours a day with their children with some of this time devoted to domestic chores, but most parents of the sample were still able to identify some time spent with their children, most commonly reading, watching television and playing games (Rodd, 1996). Rodd's conclusion was that the four year old children within the study spent only a small part of each day directly interacting with their parents, in part due to their participation in early childhood settings, extra-curricular activities, as well as other family commitments (Rodd, 1996). The present research explores whether the experiences of preschool children and their parents from the participating preschools are consistent with that of the relevant literature.

Girls, children with more highly educated mothers and fathers and children of mothers not employed spent more time engaged in 'achievement-related activities' such as colouring and looking at books during the week (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). Children spent less time in exercise than they did in other play activities with girls spending less time than boys engaged in exercise during the week and on the weekend (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). Children without siblings spent the least time devoted to exercise generally (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). It is clear from data of *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* that family factors impact upon the type of experiences children encounter away from early childhood settings and the time devoted to them (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). Children who spent more time on 'achievement-related activities' were those who received higher learning domain scores whilst the children who watched the most television, also had the lowest learning domain scores (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). This illustrates how the home learning environments of young children impact on their learning and development during this critical time. The research explores children's time usage when not attending preschool with a view to understanding the sum of preschool children's experience in a time of policy reform.

### **xiii. Summary**

It is widely understood that quality early childhood education has significant returns not only for the individual or family, but for society as a whole (The Benevolent Society, 2008; Mustard, 2008; OECD, 2009; Sylva et al, 2004; Wake et al., 2008). Converging changes to early childhood education in South Australia may mean that as proposed, the outcome is improved access and quality of early education for all children in the early years. However, these changes may also spawn other implications which can only now be surmised. It is of great importance that key stakeholders, most particularly educators and policy makers, are genuinely informed about current practice and the changing nature of early childhood education. Children must be at the heart of the work of early childhood educators (DEEWR, 2009; Government of SA, 2013; Rinaldi, 2013). The research seeks to explore how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform and in doing so provide some insight into the impact of some of the changes brought about by the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) within the South Australian context. Chapter 3 introduces the research design and methods employed to answer the research questions.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology and Methods**

The use of a qualitative research design with an informative quantitative component was thought to provide the best means of addressing the diverse research questions and collecting data accordingly. The qualitative aspect of the research sought to tell a story of how children experience preschool in a time of policy reform through the perceptions of parents and preschool educators. The quantitative component intended to address particular research questions (Creswell, 2008) relating to children's access and experience from the four participating preschools. This chapter outlines the methods employed to collect data from preschool educators and parents to respond to the research questions.

#### **i. Theoretical Perspective**

The research employs the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism as conceived by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) which sees each person as a social being, coming into being through interactions with others as part of society (Crotty, 1998). The value of the individual and individual experience is evident within the research through the value placed on semi-structured interviews with preschool educators and the more detailed stories of preschool children's experience of preschool as provided by the case studies. The cultures of home and preschool are understood to be relevant and important in children's experience of preschool. The value of the sum of these experiences is acknowledged within the scope of the research.

Symbolic interactionism sees culture as a 'meaningful matrix that guides our lives (Crotty, 1998, p. 71). This thesis seeks to give a voice to and share the perspectives of those who directly contribute to the culture which children experience in their time at preschool. The voice of parents is significant for they exercise choice over which preschool their children attend and subsequently what sort of preschool culture their children come to know. This decision is significant as

the quality of a preschool is important in children's development as learners (Sylva et al., 2004). The contribution of preschool educators informs the thesis on how children experience preschool in a time of policy reform.

In summary, participants within the preschool have their own specific culture and learning is constructed through interactions by learners within this context (Oldfather & West, 1999). The research is informed through the responses and stories of parents and preschool educators who are valued for their specific insights about children's preschool experience. The theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism sees learning influenced by children, educators, environments, families and community. The scope of the thesis seeks to provide a meaningful view into the culture of preschool and to highlight how parents, preschool educators and children contribute to and experience preschool in a time of policy reform.

## **ii. Epistemology Underpinning Research**

The research is underpinned by a social constructivist epistemology whereby meaning is not discovered, but constructed (Crotty, 1998). The way in which the researcher constructed meaning from the many data sources within the research to contribute to one picture of preschool education in South Australia, may in fact be different from how others would. The observations, semi-structured interviews and parent questionnaires all provide dimensions of this view on South Australian preschool education during a time of policy reform. It is through the sum of all parts that knowledge is constructed. The perspectives of parents, preschool educators and that of the researcher all significantly contribute to this view on preschool education as purported in the research.

Whilst the researcher has attempted to be objective throughout the research process, by its very nature the research is inherently influenced by the personal experiences of the researcher, and those of a professional nature as a school-based early years educator. Coming into the research, the researcher carried assumptions about the nature of preschool education, its purposes and the role of preschool educators, parents and early childhood education providers. The idea of school preparedness and the perceived role of preschool in this, guided the development of

parent questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observation tools. The researcher recognised and acknowledged this bias, most particularly when faced with the insights of preschool educators and what was gleaned through observation of the working preschools. The very nature of the research forced the researcher to face where the researcher was positioned within the research. The lens of preschool educators was persuasive in encouraging the researcher to see another view through their passionate advocacy for preschool to be viewed as its own entity, worthy and important in each child's educational journey.

Each semi-structured interview and observational opportunity added richness and depth to the research which again is evidence of how knowledge was constructed from the perspectives of many contributors. The research not only contended with how meaning was constructed by participants as they set out to 'interpret and reinterpret their social realities' (Crotty, 1998, p. 56), but was also heavily influenced by how the researcher construed meaning from these social realities.

### **iii. Methodology**

Social constructivism sees meaning constructed by individuals participating as part of the 'interactive human community' (Crotty, 1998, p. 55). The thesis reflects this assumption and acknowledges the interactions which occur within the preschool between the child, educator, environment, child's family and community for meaning and learning to be constructed (Oldfather & West, 1999). The value of individual experience in contributing to the culture of the preschool informs the research and reflects its theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism which sees each person coming into being through interactions with others (Crotty, 1999). The stories and insights of participants through the use of observations of the working preschool, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and case studies provide insight into how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform.

#### **iv. Research Design**

A qualitative research design with an informative quantitative component was undertaken in an effort to better understand and respond to the research problem (Creswell, 2008). During the first phase, the researcher undertook observations using observation tools (**Appendix-A5, Appendix-A6**) within two preschool settings, sites A and B. Data gleaned from a parent questionnaire which included a 24 hour diary completed over a 24 hour period at half hourly intervals, formed the basis for four case studies from the two preschool sites. Semi-structured interviews with preschool educators further contributed to what was understood about the context and nature of each research site. The researcher acknowledges that the version of account of each research site is merely one version of the world amongst others (Hammersley, 2002).

The second phase then involved undertaking a wider cross-sectional survey of a sample of families with children aged four who were due to start school in the year following data collection from four participating preschools (sites A, B, C and D), two of which also participated in the first phase (sites A and B). The benefit of this design is that the first phase of the research (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) assisted the researcher in identifying themes to be explored through the second phase (cross-sectional survey) which contributed to the development and refinement of an appropriate instrument to measure how children access and experience preschool in a time of policy reform (Creswell, 2008).

#### **v. Method**

The method for the research undertaken is discussed next.

##### **a. Organisational Framework for the Research**

The organisational framework for the research (**Figure 3.1**) connects the research questions with their corresponding data sources. It is argued that the two phase study provided a wealth of data with which to respond to the research

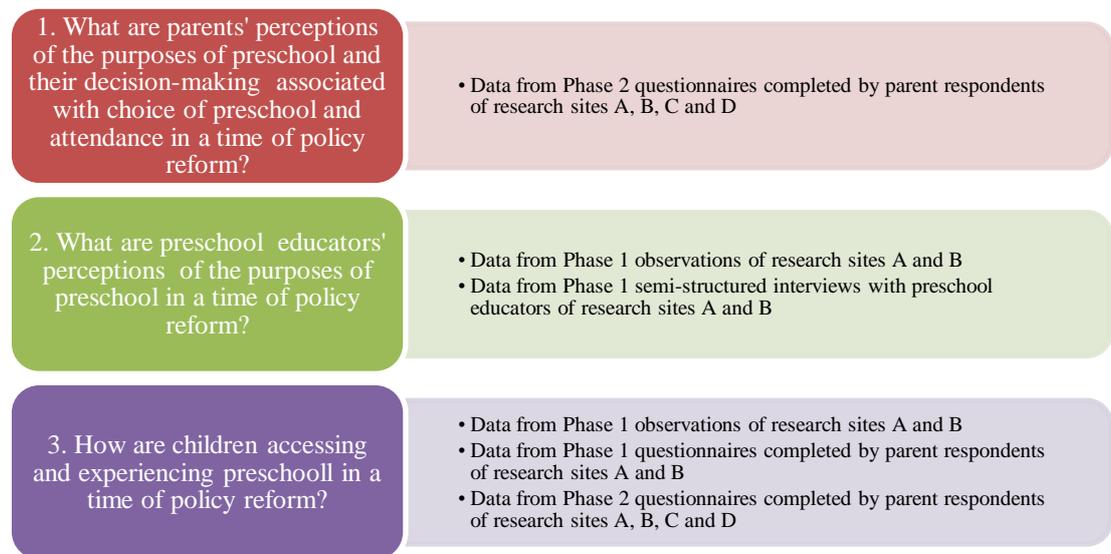
questions. The research was conducted in two phases to efficiently organise and manage data collection.

Phase 1 consisted of researcher observation at research sites A and B, case studies of four preschool children, and semi-structured interviews with preschool educators from these same research sites.

Phase 2 involved the completion of a questionnaire by parent respondents from research sites A, B, C and D.

Figure 3.1

*Organisational Framework for the Research*



**b. Data Collection Timetable**

Data was collected in the final preschool term of 2012 (**Table 3.1**) for Phase 1 (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) and Phase 2 (cross-sectional survey). All data collection took place between Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October and Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December. Though it would have been ideal for data collection to take place at the same time within the four research sites, commitments within the preschools, of the preschool educators themselves, as well as those of the researcher meant that the data collection took place and was completed at mutually convenient times within Term 4, 2012.

Table 3.1

*Timetable of Data Collection*

<b>How do parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform?</b>				
<b>Site</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>A</b>	Observation of preschool environment	22/10/12 Term 4 Week 3	Phase 2 questionnaire of preschool parent community	31/10/12 Term 4 Week 4
	Semi-structured interview with preschool educators	16/10/12 Term 4 Week 2		
	Phase 1 questionnaire of willing parents within the preschool parent community	22/10/12 Term 4 Week 3		
<b>B</b>	Observation of preschool environment	20/11/12 Term 4 Week 7	Phase 2 questionnaire of preschool parent community	15/10/12 Term 4 Week 2
	Semi-structured interview with preschool educators	20/11/12 Term 4 Week 7		
	Phase 1 questionnaire of willing parents within the preschool parent community	15/10/12 Term 4 Week 2		
<b>C</b>	Not applicable	N/A	Phase 2 questionnaire of preschool parent community	08/11/12 Term 4 Week 5
<b>D</b>	Not applicable	N/A	Phase 2 questionnaire of preschool parent community	05/11/12 Term 4 Week 5

**c. Research Population and Sample**

There were two primary groups of participants; 1) parents of children aged four years and, 2) preschool educators. The target population was identified as parents of children aged four years in South Australia at the time of the research. Reasons for selecting children from this age group included their eligibility for preschool enrolment and attendance; that they as a group were experiencing the year prior to school entry; and that most share in a particular social experience (James et al., 2004) in preschool.

The basis for recruitment of parents is that they were the most appropriate informants to answer the research questions related to how their children accessed and experienced preschool education in a time of policy reform. The parent

communities of four preschools (two government and two non-government preschools) were invited to participate in the second phase (cross-sectional survey).

The four research sites were selected on the basis of their willingness to participate, socio-economic factors and the ability to provide a balance of government and non-government preschools. For the purposes of this research, the preschools identified are as follows:

- 1 government preschool from a low socio-economic area (Site A).
- 1 non-government preschool from a high socio-economic area (Site B).
- 1 non-government preschool from a low socio-economic area (Site C).
- 1 government preschool from a high socio-economic area (Site D).

(ABS, 2008a)

Participants within the research sites were then sampled by convenience and by participating they indicated that they were willing, able and available to do so.

The target population of preschool educators within South Australia were those who were degree qualified and employed at the time of the study within a preschool setting.

#### **d. Research Population and Sample: Phase 1**

Two preschools (one government and one non-government) were identified for inclusion in the first phase of the research. These sites were situated within vastly different socio-economic areas of metropolitan Adelaide with one serving children and families from lower socio-economic backgrounds and the other, high (ABS, 2008a). Cultural diversity was also a point of significant difference between the two sites (ABS, 2007). Both espoused a Reggio philosophy, highly topical (Government of South Australia, 2012; Rinaldi, 2012, March) within the South Australian context at present. The Reggio Approach is internationally recognised as a leading example of exceptional early education (Bruner, 2000; Dahlberg, Moss & Dence, 1999; Gardner, 2000; Katz, 1998; "The Ten Best Schools" 1991, as cited in Cadwell, 2003). A gatekeeper (Creswell, 2008) known to the researcher's supervisor at the government site was used to facilitate access, with the non-government site accessed through its relevant education authority.

A sample of four parents was achieved for the instrumental case studies. The parents of one female and three male students from the two identified research sites elected to participate and complete the Phase 1 questionnaire.

Preschool directors from the two preschools were invited and chose to participate in semi-structured interviews. The two directors assisted in recruiting one other preschool educator from each research site to also contribute to the study.

#### **e. Research Population and Sample: Phase 2**

The sample achieved for the parent questionnaire of the second phase included 66 parents of four year old children from four metropolitan preschools located within metropolitan Adelaide. Four preschools were sought to participate in Phase 2 to maximise returns of the parent questionnaire.

##### **Site A**

Site A is a preschool located within a children's centre with a culturally diverse enrolment of children and families and located on a Birth-Year 7 campus to the north of the city of Adelaide. Using *The Index of Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage* (ABS, 2008a), Site A was considered less advantaged with a decile of 1 (with 1 considered disadvantaged and 10 advantaged). Seventy children were enrolled to attend the preschool at the time of the study.

##### **Site B**

Site B is a preschool situated in a suburb east of the city of Adelaide, also on site with a school campus. Physically and by enrolment the school where Site B is co-located is much smaller than that of Site A. Using *The Index of Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage* (ABS, 2008a), Site B was considered more advantaged than Site A with a decile of 9 (with 1 considered disadvantaged and 10 considered advantaged). At the time of the study, 55 children were enrolled to attend the preschool, 11 children to attend a programme for three year olds, and approximately six families were enrolled to attend play group.

### **Sites C and D**

Observations were not completed at Sites C and D as sites A and B adequately provided data for the first phase, but the parent communities of sites C and D were invited to participate in the Phase 2 questionnaire.

Site C is located on site with a Reception to Year 7 school to the north-west of Adelaide and had the largest enrolment of the four research sites with 79 children enrolled in the preschool at the time of the study and an additional 28 children participating in a pre-transition programme. The enrolment of children at Site C was diverse by socio-economic status with families of low and high socio-economic status well represented. The research site itself was located in an area with a decile of 1 according to *The Index of Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage* (ABS, 2008a) with such a decile being indicative of being less advantaged. Cultural diversity was also notable within the preschool, also maintaining a significant number of indigenous enrolments. Indoor space was a generous split-level open plan space. Outdoor play equipment and a large sandpit were features of the outside space.

Site D is situated on site with a Reception to Year 7 school in the Adelaide Hills. The preschool and school setting are spacious and picturesque. Site D is located within a high socio-economic area with a decile of 10, being the most advantaged (ABS, 2008a). Site D featured a less culturally diverse enrolment than Sites B and C. The enrolment at the time of the study was 54 children within the preschool, with an additional 13 children participating in a pre-transition programme. Site D featured an open inside space with direct access to an undercover area which was utilised for play and activities, as well as providing access to the preschool itself.

### **f. Overview of Phase 1**

The researcher obtained permission to use items from the questionnaires of *Growing Up in Australia* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2004) from the Australian Institute of Family Studies' LSAC Project Operations Team and the *Preschool Parent Survey* (DECS, 2009a) from the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) in South Australia. Subsequent acknowledgement has been made as required.

Emic data gleaned from parental responses to questionnaire items which included the completion of a 24 hour diary, formed the basis of two case studies from two preschools. Instrumental case studies were employed to provide insight into preschool participation and life outside of the preschool by looking for shared patterns of behaviour (Creswell, 2008). Parents were invited to participate in the first phase of the research (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) through a notice in the preschool newsletter and collected questionnaires on site.

The questionnaire employed for the first phase of the research (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) was similar to that of the second phase (cross-sectional survey) but used items from *Wave 1 Diary* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2004) as part of *The Longitudinal Study into Australian Children (LSAC)*. The *LSAC Wave 1 Diary* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2004) called on parents of the 4,983 children of the K cohort of Wave 1 to complete a 24 hour diary, divided into 15 minute increments on two days, one a weekday and one a weekend. The present research differs from this process in the following ways, in that the questionnaire of Phase 1:

1. Was completed by only four parents to form the basis of case studies of individual children in order to provide a more in depth and personal account of a day in the life of a four year old.
2. Was only completed by each respondent once on a weekday.
3. Included time increments of 30 minutes in an effort to reduce the burden on respondents.

As with the *Wave 1 Diary* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2004), respondents were able to elect as many activities within each period as was appropriate to best represent their children's activities during that time. Again alike to the *Wave 1 Diary* of the *LSAC* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2004) where parents indicated their child's participation in an activity, it was assumed that the child participated in this activity for the entire period indicated and data analyses reflected this.

Observations were made within the preschool environment and as a reference point, field notes were organised by practices identified in Hill et al. (1998). These practices were evident within each site and relate to environments, resources, time, space, bodies, social norms, language and literate practices (Hill et al., 1998), numerate practices, and specific preparation for school practices (see **Appendix-A5**).

Prompts from Hill et al. (1998) were used to clearly focus on specific happenings and qualities within the research site (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2007). Field notes were employed as a running account of what was observed at each research site and were reconstituted by the researcher at a later date. These were written in third person in an effort to remove the researcher from the setting as much as possible (Emerson et al., 2007).

The researcher sought to be a passive observer within Sites A and B understanding that being present, may in itself have an impact on the way that members within the research sites actually interacted and conducted themselves. In being present at sites A and B, the researcher found children approaching to engage in conversation, to ask questions and seek assistance, recognising the researcher as an adult who may be able to help with practical problems such as tying shoelaces, opening doors and acquiring tissues. The researcher viewed this as positive that many children felt comfortable enough to approach and not regard the researcher with suspicion. The researcher attempted to only become involved when required to gain the desired information (Wolcott, 1999) by being unobtrusive, but responding or interacting when approached. In seeking to derive a sense of the culture within sites A and B, the researcher acknowledges that this is imposed in part by the researcher (Wolcott, 1999).

One-on-one semi-structured interviews with preschool educators were employed with an audio recording made upon their perceptions of the purposes of preschool and the policy reforms presently occurring in early childhood education. The researcher also recorded some brief notes during the interviews using an interview protocol (**Appendix-A9**). Interviews took place at research sites as negotiated with the participants at mutually convenient times.

## **g. Overview of Phase 2**

A questionnaire was employed to gather survey data from members of the sample (Creswell, 2008) of parents and preschool educators. The survey purpose required an appropriate instrument be utilised which would measure children's participation in preschool education, ways in which they spend the balance of their

time outside of the classroom and parents' perceptions of preschool education and its delivery within a South Australian context. The instrument was developed using items from *Growing Up in Australia 3.5B09* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2009), the *Preschool Parent Survey* (DECS, 2009a) as well as items specifically designed by the researcher to address the research questions. The *Wave 1 Diary* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2004), *Growing Up in Australia 3.5B09* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2009) informed the development of items which appear in both questionnaires. The first phase of the research (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) suggested that the instrument could adequately address the research questions without any additional items being required. Items pertaining to the preschool setting which children currently attend and parent satisfaction with quality and service delivery were largely taken from the *Preschool Parent Survey* (DECS, 2009a) as a measure of parents' opinions as to the perceived worth and value of the preschool experience for their children.

For the second phase of the research (cross-sectional survey), an information sheet, questionnaire and stamped self-addressed envelope was distributed to parents via their child's communication pockets at the four research sites. As Site A was particularly diverse by culture, questionnaires and accompanying information was translated by professional translators into Dari, Hindi and Vietnamese. Ethics approval was granted for this modification and questionnaires were distributed accordingly to give every family the same opportunity to complete and return a questionnaire if they chose to.

Whilst the researcher intended follow up procedures to be the same at each site, the nature of each research site, the preference of the director and the existing communication practices at each preschool meant that there were some differences between sites as to how questionnaires were followed up. Each preschool director was given information to place in the preschool newsletter. Sites A and B chose not to do this, with parents being informed about the questionnaire through the information accompanying the questionnaire itself. Sites C and D included items in their newsletters. A postcard from the researcher was distributed to all preschools to follow up all members of the sample thanking them for their contribution and reminding those who had not yet completed the questionnaire that they could still do

so. Parents indicated their willingness to participate in the research by completing and returning the questionnaire as described.

#### **h. Data Analysis Procedures**

Data gleaned from questionnaires of the first phase of the research (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) is represented in pie graphs to visually depict 24 hours in the life of these four year old children. Christensen and James (2000) effectively employed the use of pie graphs in a study undertaken to survey a group of ten year old children in England as to their activities over the course of a week. The use of pie graphs is common with the present research but Christensen and James (2000) required their ten year old participants to complete a pie graph indicating their weekly activities. The present research makes use of data taken from the 24 hour diary within the questionnaire completed by parents of four year old preschool children from the case studies of Phase 1.

Through using a specific research technique, Christensen and James (2000) sought to explore the commonality and diversity of children's experience as being more significant than merely age as a determinant of experience. The visual impact of the children's pie graphs and the apparent simplicity of how they apportioned their time led the researcher to the decision to present the case studies in a similar manner. The strength of the work of Christensen and James (2000) lies in part in the simplicity of the tool which the children used to record their weekly activities but more importantly, the participation of the children themselves as active players within the research. The researcher acknowledges the lack of child-centred methodological contribution (James, Jenks & Prout, 2004) within the research but has sought to capture as faithfully as possible through observation the nature of the preschool environment where children learn and play. The data from the 24 hour diaries has been dealt with sensitively in order to portray what is typical of a day in the life of four year old children from preschools located at sites A and B.

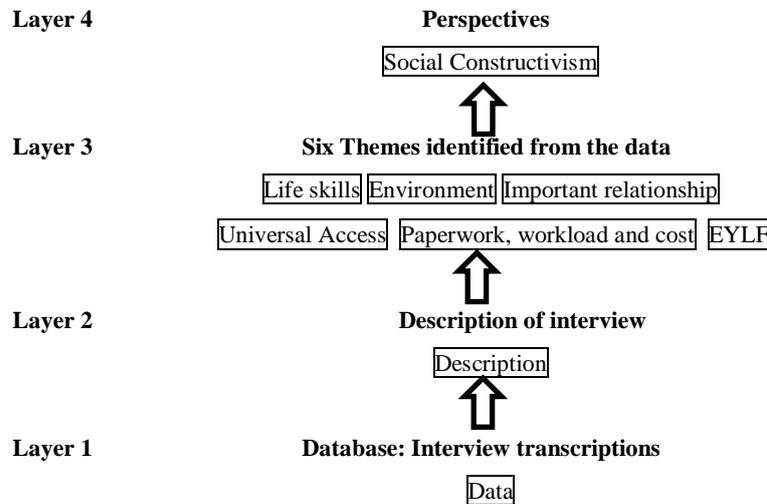
Data from the interview protocols was coded using two or three key words used by the participants as the codes themselves (Creswell, 2008). By locating key words, potential quotes were also identified as were text segments with thought given



the world is perceived and meaning is derived, emphasising the importance of social interactions and being a social being (Burr, 1995).

Figure 3.3

*Layers of Data Handling – Site B*



The child and the language of children was highly regarded within the culture of the preschool that was Site B. The child was seen as competent and able to make choices, to learn and capably interact with others and the environment within the preschool.

Supporting quotes from the interview protocols were attributed to each theme. Observations were revisited to draw connections between the responses of preschool educators and their practice. From here the researcher then sought to report findings using a narrative discussion.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire of the second phase was inputted into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) with a codebook established to assist in analysis of each relevant item. Data was analysed descriptively with reference to the research questions but understood as only generalisable to the sample of 66 parents from the four participating preschools. An important part of the data analysis procedure has been the drawing of inferences between the data sets in an effort to better address the research questions. Due to the involved research design of a qualitative study with an informed quantitative component, it has been important to ensure that connections have been made from the varied data sources

and specifically related to how they contribute to addressing the research questions. Explanation credibility (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) was undertaken to explore how consistent the findings are with current literature and the relevant body of research in early childhood education. Translation fidelity (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) also sought to explore how effective the research design was in responding to the research questions. Commentary on both explanation credibility and translation fidelity of the collected data can be found within the findings.

### **i. Reliability and Validity of the Data**

Member checking was employed to check the accuracy of the interview protocols from Phase 1 to ensure a fair and honest representation was made of the perceptions of preschool educators.

Reliability of the Phase 2 questionnaire was checked using scores from items with continuous variables using the coefficient alpha to estimate the consistency of scores within the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was .879 for 26 items, indicating a high level of internal consistency of the instrument, that scores from the questionnaire were reliable and accurate (Creswell, 2008).

A pilot test of the Phase 2 questionnaire was conducted using a sample of fifteen parents known to the researcher, of children aged four years, highlighting any shortcomings within the instrument itself and assessing its content validity. Pre-testing the questionnaire was important to ensure its effectiveness and appropriateness to gather data (Salant & Dillman, 1994) but the pilot test sample did not represent the diversity of respondents who eventually received the questionnaire at the four research sites. Feedback was largely positive from the pilot test with many of the respondents interested in the purpose of the research. Comments were made as to how accessible some respondents may find the language and information within the attached information sheet; one based on recommendations from the university. The necessity for effective follow up procedures was thought by the researcher to be an effective means to promote the research and encourage potential respondents to make contact if they required further information whilst also fulfilling obligations as a researcher within the university.

**vi. Ethical Research Practices**

Ethics approval (5581) was applied for and granted by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) of Flinders University of South Australia. Ethical practices have been adhered to at all times throughout this research and include informed consent; sharing information with participants; minimising disruption to research sites; reciprocity, using observation practices, maintaining confidentiality; and collaborating with participants (Creswell, 2008).

**a. Informed Consent**

Permissions were sought from school principals, preschool directors, staff within the preschools and from appropriate government and non-government education bodies to conduct research within the research sites. The return of questionnaires for the first (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) and second (cross-sectional survey) phases were accepted as consent by parent respondents (NHMRC, 2007).

**b. Sharing Information with Participants**

Participants were invited through distributed literature to ask any questions regarding the research, its purpose, procedures or results. The researcher understands that participants have a right to access information about their participation and that they may at any time have chosen to withdraw from the research (Creswell, 2008).

**c. Minimising Disruption to Research Sites**

The researcher sought to minimise disruption to the research sites wherever possible. Observations for the first phase (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) occurred on campus at the two preschools at mutually convenient times in negotiation with the directors of each preschool. Questionnaires for both the first

and second phases were returned via either a collection box at the preschools or by mail using the provided stamped self-addressed envelope. This was done in an effort to limit the impact of the research on the research sites.

#### **d. Reciprocity**

By conducting research within government and non-government sites, the researcher in doing so also consents to sharing research findings (DECS, 2009). The researcher understands the privilege of being given access to members of the preschool communities of the four research sites and the time committed to support the research. It is hoped that the research serves to contribute to discussion about how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform.

#### **e. Using Ethical Observation Practices**

The researcher recorded field notes during the first phase of the research (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) from within the preschool environments for the purposes of transcription, interpretation and analysis but attempted where possible to do so discreetly. Additional notes were made where necessary, after each period of observation in an effort to be respectful to the site and its participants. Member checking by preschool educators of interview protocols from the research have sought to provide an honest and fair account (Creswell, 2008) of each site and its participants.

#### **f. Maintaining Confidentiality**

Confidentiality has been ensured by coding data without linking participants to their responses in an effort to de-identify not only the research sites but also the participants themselves. Only the researcher and supervisors have access to this information (Creswell, 2008). Research sites have been referred to as Sites A, B, C and D. All references to participants have been coded and schooling sectors are

referred to only as government and non-government with no further identifying information. Information gleaned from the *Index of Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage* (ABS, 2013b) provided some non-specific background about preschool locations and where participants resided.

#### **g. Collaborating with Participants**

The value and benefit of the research to the participants has been enabling their voices to be heard about the value they place on preschool education and any specific issues which they wished to raise. As previously discussed, the early childhood sector in South Australia, is undergoing significant educational reform. By participating in the research, participants may also have contributed to the discussion around what is valued by parents in choosing an early childhood setting for their children, children's experience of the early years, and the impact of changes brought about by the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

#### **vii. Limitations**

Limitations of the research include:

- Observations within the two research sites for Phase 1 (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) did not occur in consecutive weeks as would have been ideal. Observations were conducted at mutually convenient times and the necessity of obtaining consent from parents in the non-government site (Site B) necessitated more time to gather returns and negotiate entry procedures with the relevant education authority and the director of the preschool.
- The findings from Phase 1 (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) cannot be generalised to other settings but are important in their own right and served to inform the second phase of the research (cross-sectional survey).

- The research design of Phase 1 (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) and its questionnaire to parents (including the 24 hour diary) collected data on one day in children's lives. Where a week would have been preferable to account for differences in preschool days and other family commitments, the burden on participants was considered too great.
- The findings from Phase 2 (cross-sectional survey) are specific to the research sites due to the reduced sample.
- The presence of non-response error or bias as the preschool parents who chose to respond to the questionnaires in Phases 1 (instrumental case studies, interviews, observations) and 2 (cross-sectional survey) may be different from those who did not.
- The possibility of measurement error within the questionnaires with specific items due to weaknesses in question design and respondent error. An example of this is the necessity to exclude a small number of cases from analysis of attendance data, due in part to the framing of the question which was misunderstood by a small number of participants.
- That qualitative data by its very nature was influenced by the researcher's own experiences as an early year educator and colour the way in which the research has been designed and realised.

#### **viii. Delimitations**

Delimitations of the research include:

- The extensive data collection which was undertaken took considerable time and organisation to achieve. The time required to undertake the research needed to also account for the testing of the instruments, as well as the time taken to effectively analyse data (Creswell, 2008).
- The inclusion of only South Australian preschools drawn from within the metropolitan area.
- That members within the population, being parents of children not enrolled in preschool, are missed for the second phase of the research

(cross-sectional survey) due to the sampling procedures employed and the valuable data which could be gleaned from their inclusion is absent from the research.

- That preschool programmes implemented and based in Long Day Care (LDC) have not been explored for the purposes of this research. The reason for this is that secondary data was not available for LDC at the commencement of the research, in the form of the Annual Census of Children's Services (ACCS) within South Australia as conducted by the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD).

## **ix. Summary**

The benefits to children, families and society as a whole of young children's participation in early childhood education and care are well documented. Within Australia, financial investment in early childhood education has been less than many other OECD nations (OECD, 2011). Present educational reforms to the sector with the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and further investment should begin to remedy some of this and shine a spotlight on this important facet of children's educational journey. The chapter reasons that collectively the extensive data collection constructs a rich picture of how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform.

The following chapters present the findings of the research with Chapter 4 focusing on the outcomes of the case studies of four South Australian preschool children, illustrating in greater depth how children are accessing and experiencing preschool in a time of policy reform. Chapter 5 presents findings from the observations conducted in two preschools and interviews with the respective preschool directors. Chapter 6 presents the quantitative data generated from the survey component of the research.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Case Studies**

The chapter draws upon case studies of four children attending preschool in two culturally and socio-economically diverse settings. The chapter illustrates through these examples how children access and experience preschool in a time of policy reform. It is argued that the sum of children's time contributes to the experiences and knowledge which they take with them to preschool and that there are children who are at risk of social and educational disadvantage even by the time they commence preschool. First and foremost, children must be enrolled and attending preschool before disadvantage can be addressed by formal preschool experiences.

#### **i. Instrumental Case Studies**

Instrumental case studies are employed to provide insight (Creswell, 2008) into how children access and experience preschool in a time of policy reform by providing a more detailed view of children's experience both in and out of the preschool setting. The case studies specifically respond to the third research question:

#### **How are children accessing and experiencing preschool in a time of policy reform?**

Twenty-four hour diaries completed by the parents of four children from Sites A and B provided data for the case studies. Pie graphs present the information gleaned from parents' responses about children's experiences over a 24 hour period. The way in which activities were categorised mirrored those from within *Wave 1 Diary* (AIFS & FACSIA, 2004) as part of *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* on which the Phase 1 questionnaire was based. The first pie graph of each case study represents the categories of activities in which children participated. The visual impact of the first pie graph of each case study provides a simple overview of how children's time was allocated. The second pie

graph of each case study sets out the frequency of activities the case study child engaged in during the 24 hour period as indicated by parent responses which often indicated more than one activity for each 30 minute period. The pie graphs indicate the activities, the frequency the child engaged in each activity and the percentage that this frequency was apportioned over a 24 hour period. The first case study is Jane.

#### **a. Case Study 1 – Jane**

Jane is a four year old girl who attended a government preschool on site with a primary campus in Term 4, 2012. Her mother completed the questionnaire more than three times in one day. Information about the family's circumstances and Jane's access and experience of preschool was collected through the completion of the Phase 1 questionnaire which contained the 24 hour diary.

The highest level to which both Jane's mother and father had studied was Year 12. Jane's mother described her employment status as unemployed whilst Jane's father was employed in a full time capacity of 35 hours or more.

Jane was the only child residing in the family home, where English was spoken. Jane resided in an area considered less advantaged with a decile of 1 (ABS, 2013b). She attended a government preschool on site with a primary campus for five days over a fortnight. One week Jane attended Monday, Tuesday; and the alternate week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. In the week prior to her mother completing the questionnaire, Jane attended preschool for 14 hours. Jane commenced preschool at the age of four and attended a pre-transition programme prior to commencement. The reason given by Jane's mother for the choice of preschool was that a friend already attended the preschool. When not attending preschool, Jane's mother cared for her.

The greatest proportion of time in Jane's day as per the 24 hour diary were the activities which involved *Personal care and well-being*, followed by *Home-based activities* (**Figure 4.1**). *Other* represents Jane's preschool attendance and finally a small proportion of time each day was devoted to *Travel*.

Figure 4.1

Case Study 1 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods

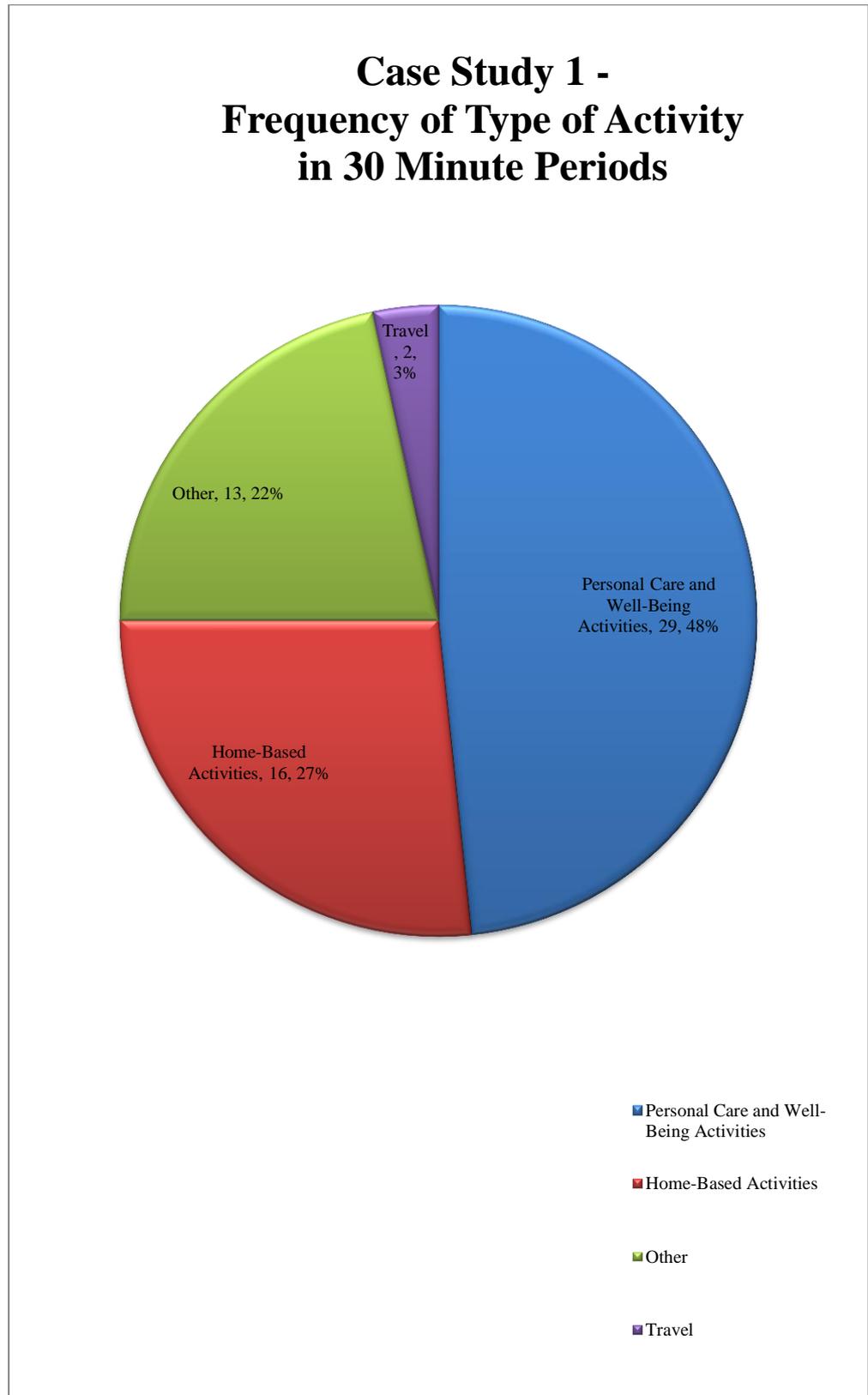
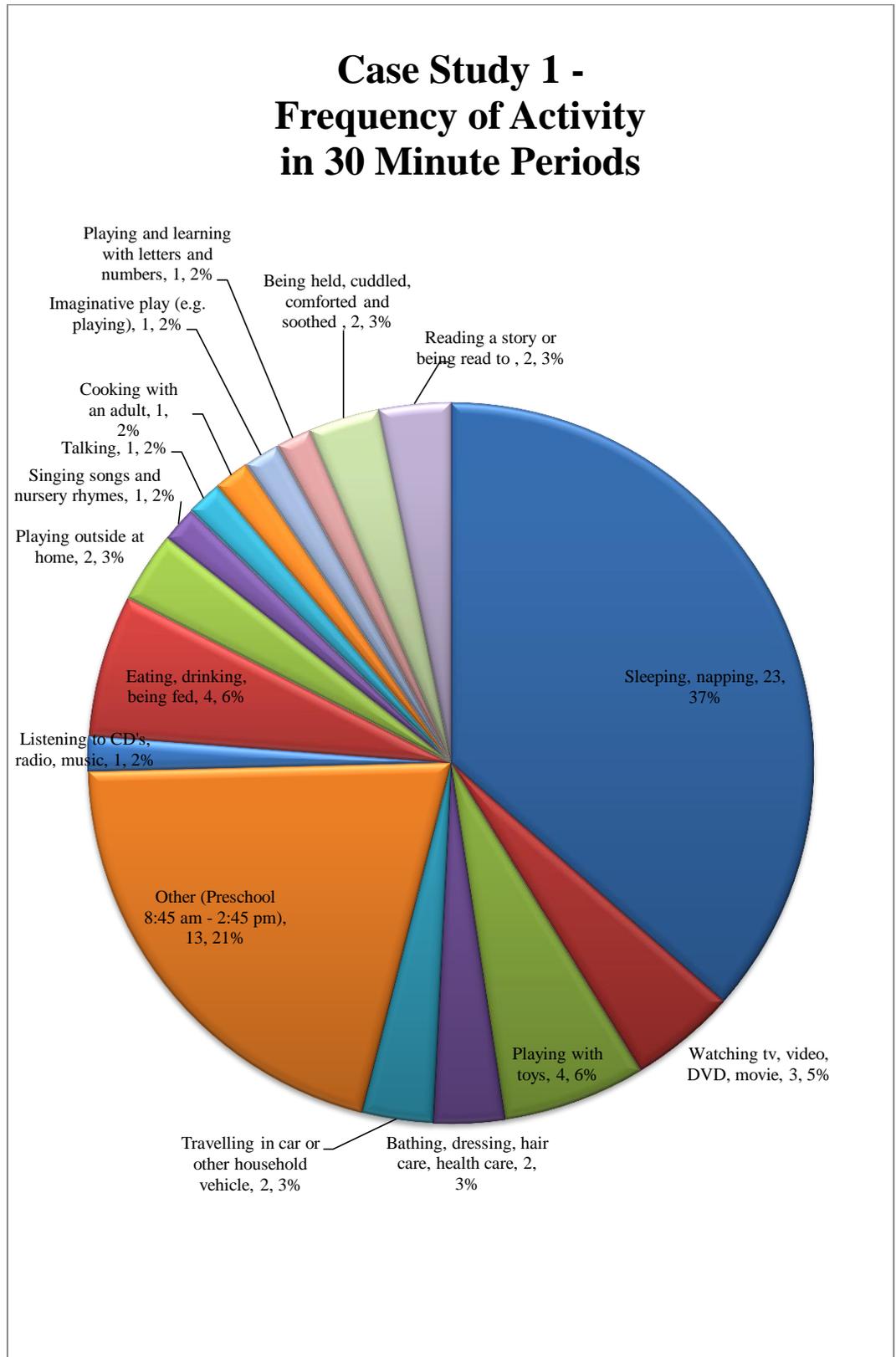


Figure 4.2

Case Study 1 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods



Jane spent 11.5 hours asleep between 7:30 pm and 7:00 am (**Figure 4.1**). Three hours were devoted to other *Personal care and well-being activities*, such as eating, drinking, being fed (2 hours); bathing, dressing, hair care, health care (1 hour); and being held, cuddled, comforted, soothed (1 hour).

*Home based activities* included those which involved interaction with an adult such as reading a story or being read to (1 hour); cooking with an adult (.5 hour); and playing and learning with letters and numbers (.5 hour). *Other Home-based activities* included watching television, video, DVD or movie (1.5 hours); playing with toys (2 hours); playing outside at home (1 hour); singing songs and nursery rhymes (.5 hour); and talking and imaginative play (.5 hour).

#### **b. Case Study 2 – Anwar**

Anwar was four years old in Term 4, 2012 and attended a government preschool situated on site with a primary campus. Anwar's father completed the questionnaire and 24 hour diary which provided the data for the case study about how Anwar accessed and experienced preschool.

Anwar's mother completed primary education and his father completed Year 12 as the highest level of study. Both Anwar's parents were not in paid employment with Anwar's father further explaining that Anwar's mother was 'mum' to Anwar and a male sibling also residing in the family home. Anwar's mother cared for Anwar when he was not attending preschool. Dari as well as English was spoken in the family home.

Anwar resided in an area with a decile of 1 (ABS, 2013b) considered less advantaged as per *The Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage*. He was enrolled and attended 15 hours of preschool in the week prior to completion of the questionnaire. Anwar commenced preschool at the age of four but did not complete a pre-entry transition programme. Reasons given by Anwar's parents for their choice of preschool were proximity to home and that his older brother had also attended the preschool and had a positive experience.

Figure 4.3

Case Study 2 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods

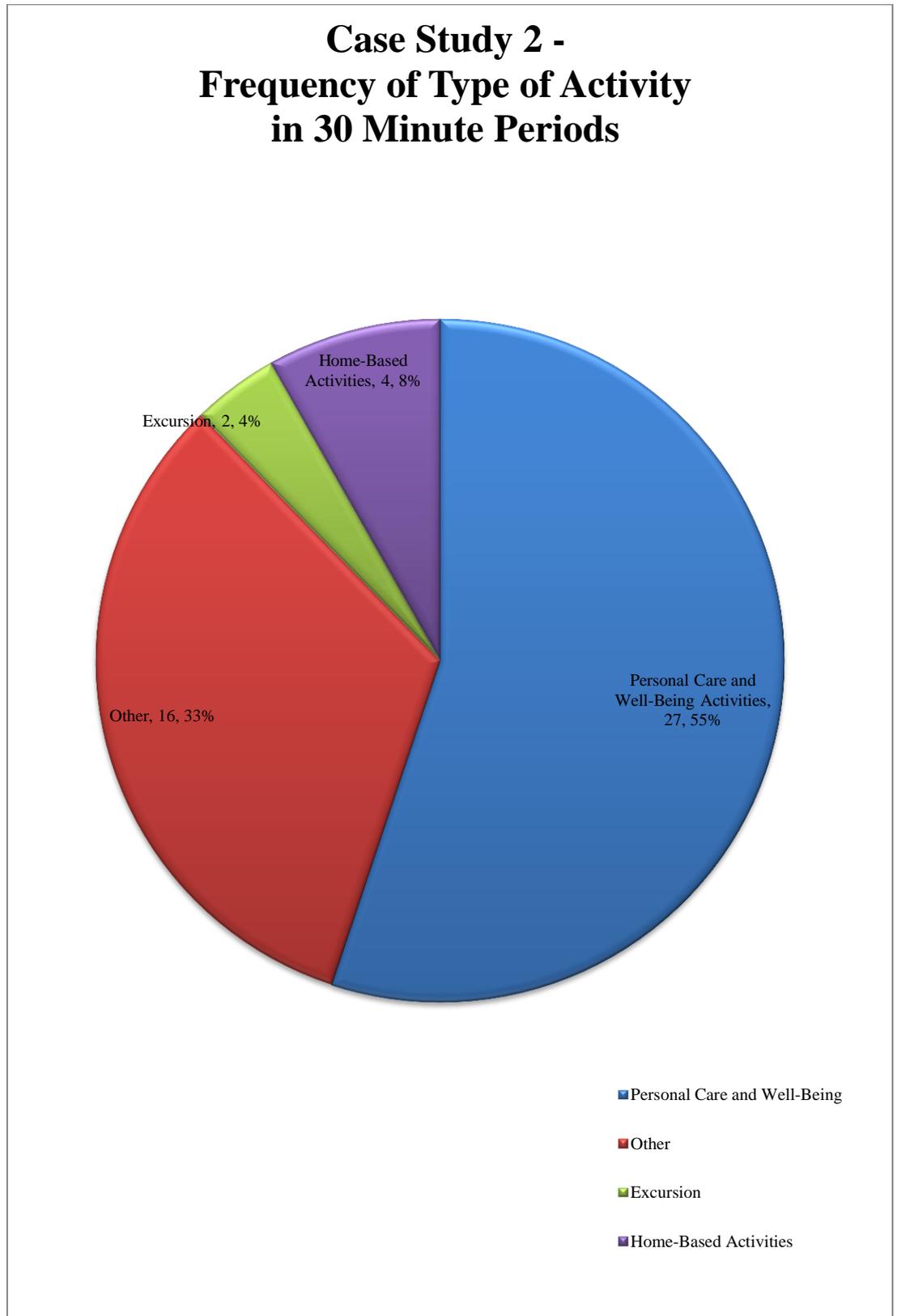
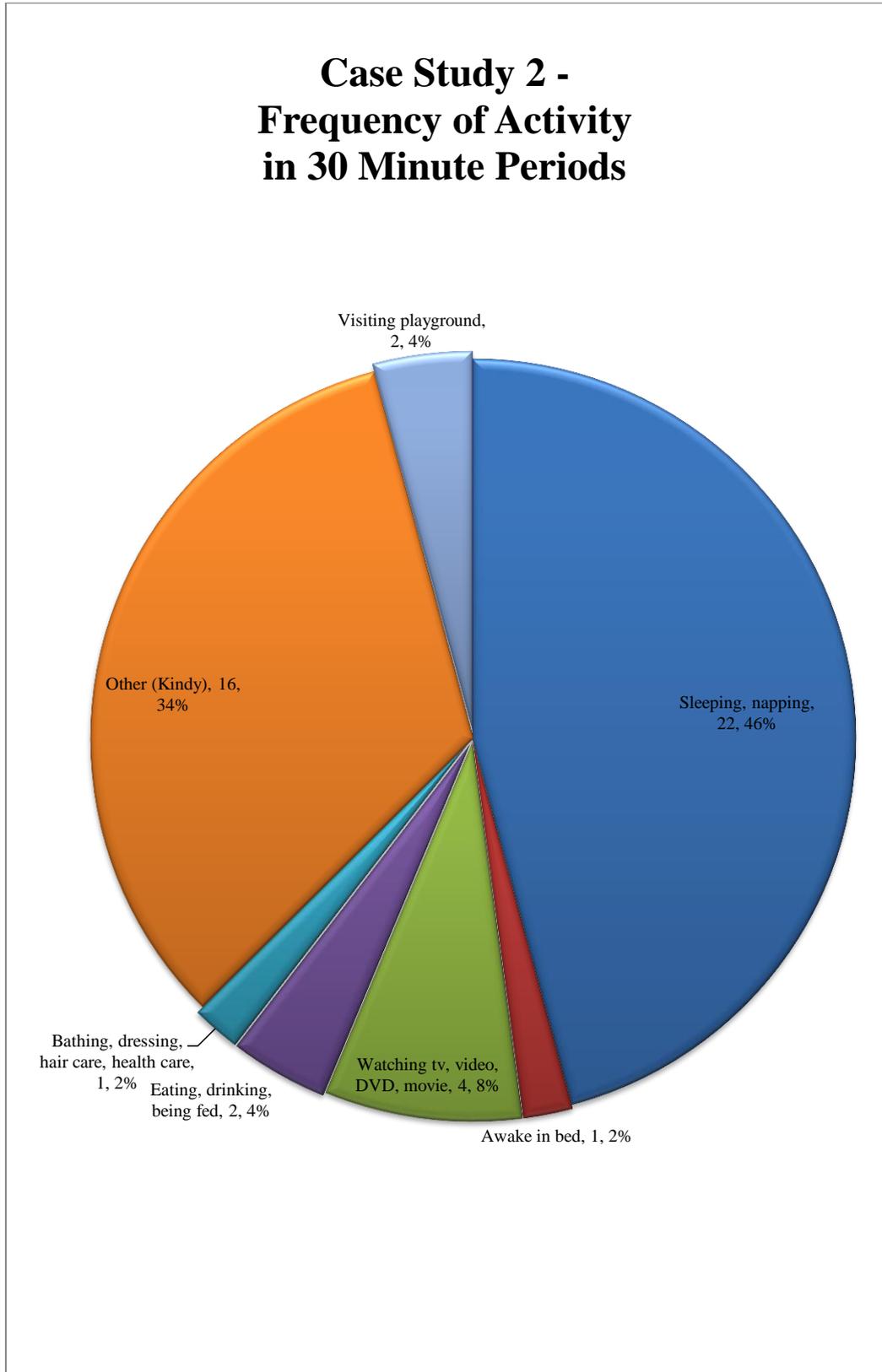


Figure 4.4

Case Study 2 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods



*Personal care and well-being activities* were the most prevalent time-wise for Anwar as recorded within the 24 hour diary. His participation in preschool was significant (**Figure 4.3**), spending 6.5 hours at preschool within the 24 hour period. Anwar participated in *Home-based activities* and *Excursion* during the 24 hour period.

Sleeping/napping accounted for the largest amount of time given to *Personal care and well-being activities* in which Anwar participated in (**Figure 4.4**). Other activities such as eating, drinking and bathing, dressing, hair care, and health care were evident and Anwar also participated in an excursion to a playground.

*Home-based activities* featured watching television (1.5 hours) with *Personal care and well-being* accounting for over half of Anwar's time in the 24 hour period. This was predominantly sleep (11 hours) and being awake in bed (.5 hour). Bathing, dressing, health care, hair care (.5 hour) and eating, drinking, being fed (1 hour) were also noted by Anwar's father.

### **c. Case Study 3 – James**

James was four years of age when the questionnaire was completed. He had a sibling also residing in the family home. James' mother completed the questionnaire once he had gone to bed. She indicated that the highest level of education she had received was a trade certificate and James' father had completed Year 12. James' mother was not currently in paid employment and his father was employed in a full time capacity.

James' family home was located in an area considered less advantaged by the Bureau of Statistics' *Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage* (ABS, 2013b). James attended a government preschool on site with a primary campus and was enrolled to attend preschool 15 hours per week. The week prior to the questionnaire being completed, James attended preschool for 12 hours. This was because the preschool he attended had structured attendance time as three days one week and two days the next to accommodate the 15 hour provision for all children per Universal Access (DECS, 2011, May).

Figure 4.5

Case Study 3 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods

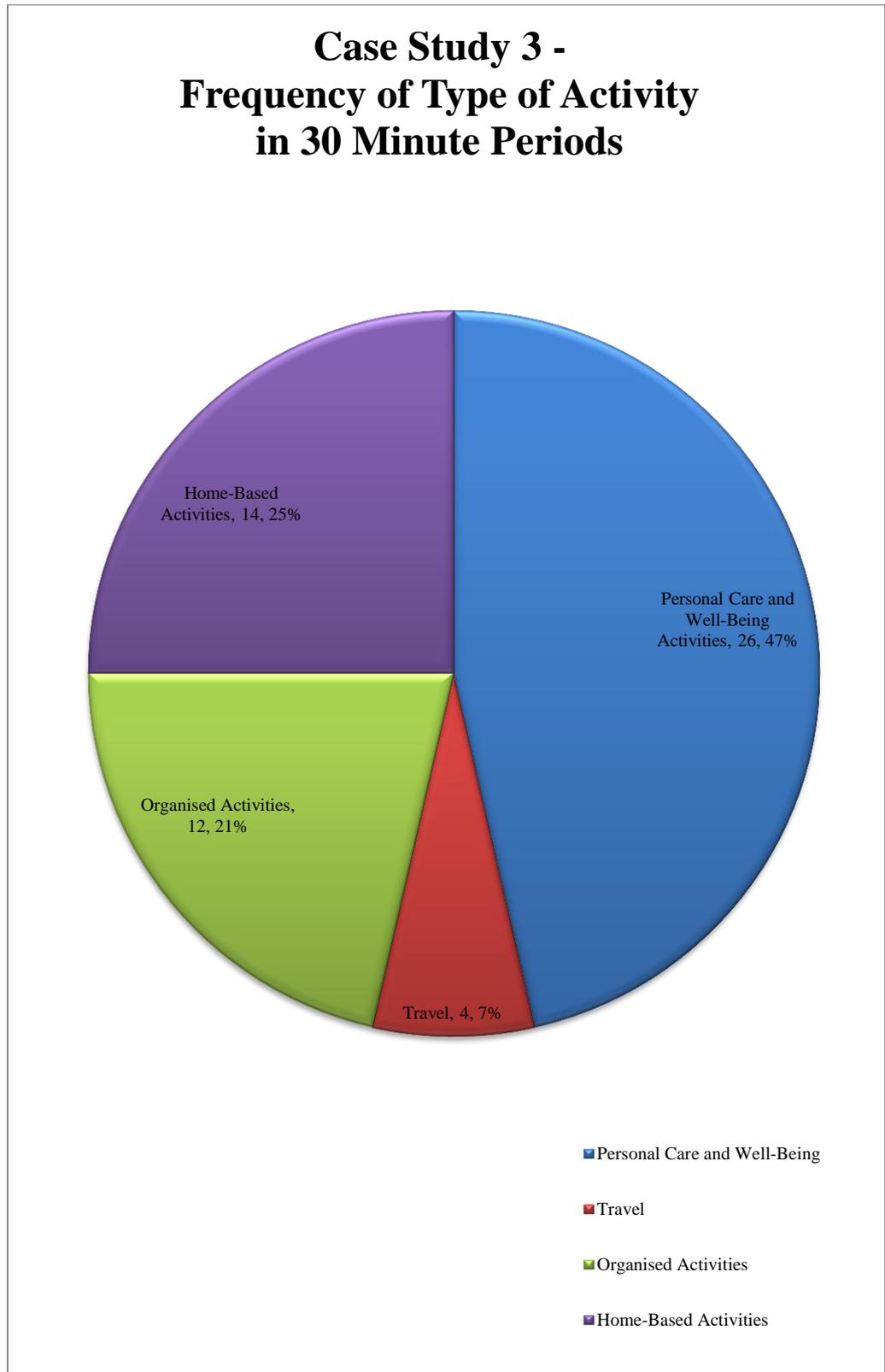
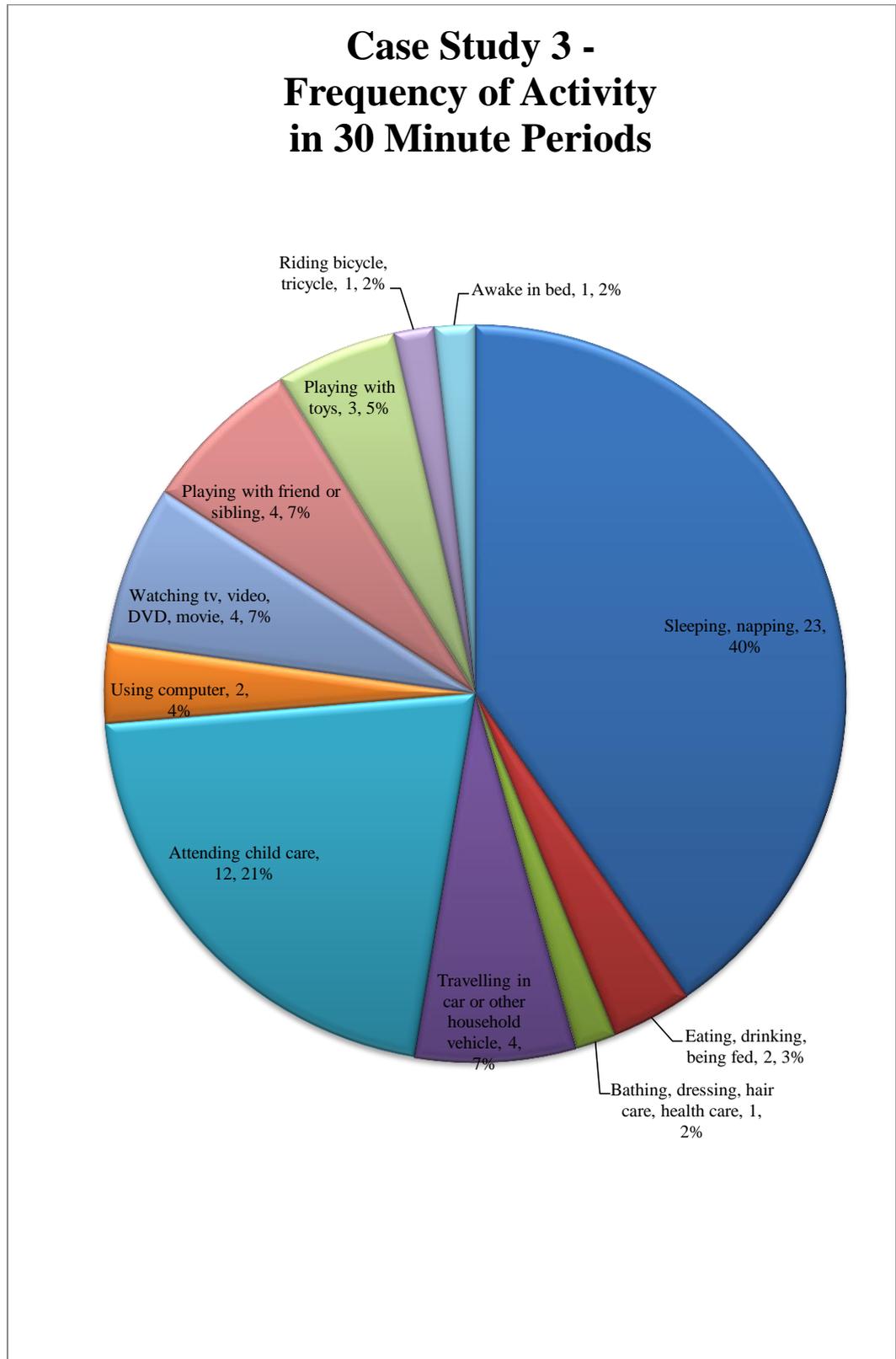


Figure 4.6

Case Study 3 - Frequency of Activity in 30 Minute Periods



James commenced preschool at the age of three and completed a pre-entry transition prior to his regular attendance. James' mother indicated through the questionnaire that the preschool's proximity to home was the sole reason for selecting the early childhood setting for James to attend. James' mother cared for him when he was not attending preschool.

James' time over the 24 hour period was engaged largely in *Personal care and well-being activities* (**Figure 4.5**). *Home-based activities* accounted for some 25 per cent of James' day. This included riding a bicycle and using a computer. *Organised activities* accounted for just less than a quarter of the 24 hour period and *Travel* for 7 per cent.

Even though James' mother responded through the background items that James did not attend child care, within the 24 hour diary she then indicated that he did so for a significant amount of time in the 24 hour period. It may be that she was in fact indicating his attendance at preschool or that her response previously was incorrect, and that James did in fact attend child care as suggested within the diary entries.

#### **d. Case Study 4 – Eva**

Eva was four years of age in Term 4, 2012. She shared her family home with her mother, father and sibling. Eva's mother completed the questionnaire two to three times within the designated 24 hour period. The highest level of study which Eva's mother had completed was an undergraduate degree and her father, a trade certificate. Eva's mother was on leave from her place of employment and her father was employed in a full time capacity. Her family home was located in an area considered to be more advantaged than that of the children from the other three case studies with a decile of 7 (ABS, 2013b).

In the week prior to the questionnaire being completed, Eva was enrolled and attended 15 hours of preschool at a government preschool which was on site with a primary school campus. Eva commenced preschool at age four and completed a pre-entry transition prior to commencement.

Educational programme, proximity to home and parents' work and being on site with a school campus were all reasons cited by Eva's mother for why the preschool was chosen. Eva's mother and maternal grandparents cared for her when she was not attending preschool.

A substantial part of the 24 hour period in Eva's week was taken up with activities related to *Personal care and well-being* (**Figure 4.7**). Eva spent 10.5 hours asleep at night from 8:30 pm to 7:00 am and spent an hour in bed before going to sleep. *Home-based activities* accounted for 51 per cent of Eva's day. Case Study 4 differs somewhat by the number and diversity of activities which were experienced at home including drawing, early writing and playing outside (**Figure 4.8**). Eva also participated in an excursion to the library, travelling there in a household vehicle.

The diversity of the home-based activities in which Eva participated featured passive activities such as computer use and television viewing as well as more active activities, such as imaginative play and play with toys. Early literacy activities such as singing songs and nursery rhymes and drawing and early writing were evident as was social time with friends and family. Eva's mother also recorded significant periods of talking, emphasising further time given to early language development within Eva's day.

## **ii. Analysis**

Whilst there are commonalities amongst the experiences of children from the four case studies, there are also areas of some difference. Three of the children, Jane, Anwar and James were from less advantaged areas, each with a decile of 1 according to *The Index of Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage* (ABS, 2013b). This as a measure can only describe the area where the children and their families resided and whilst highly useful, it cannot be assumed that it accurately describes their own particular family situation. For the purposes of the research however, it is accepted as informative of advantage and disadvantage within the area in which the children reside. Eva resided in an area which had a decile of 7 (ABS, 2013b) with 1 being least advantaged and 10 being most.

Figure 4.7

Case Study 4 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods

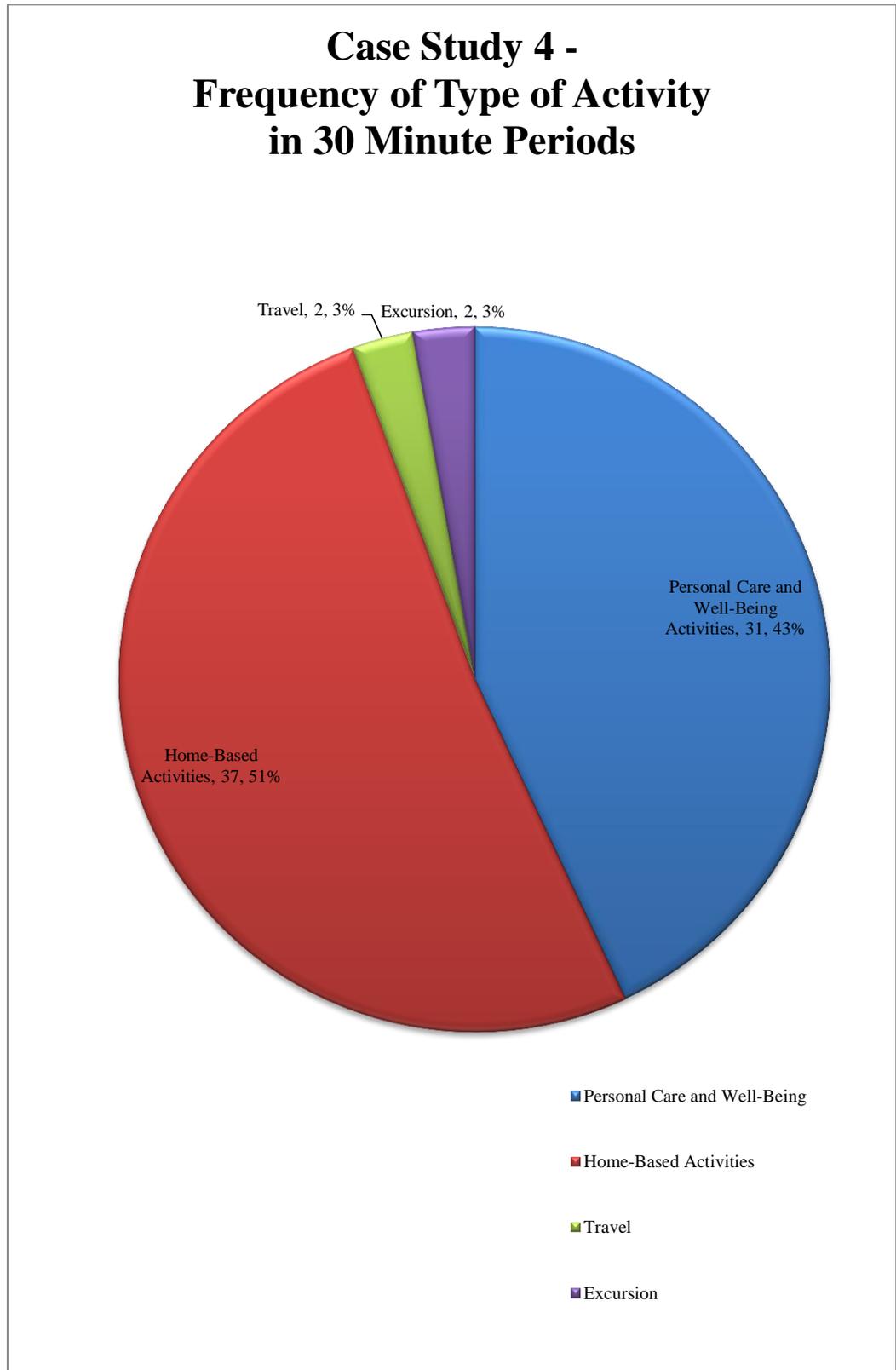
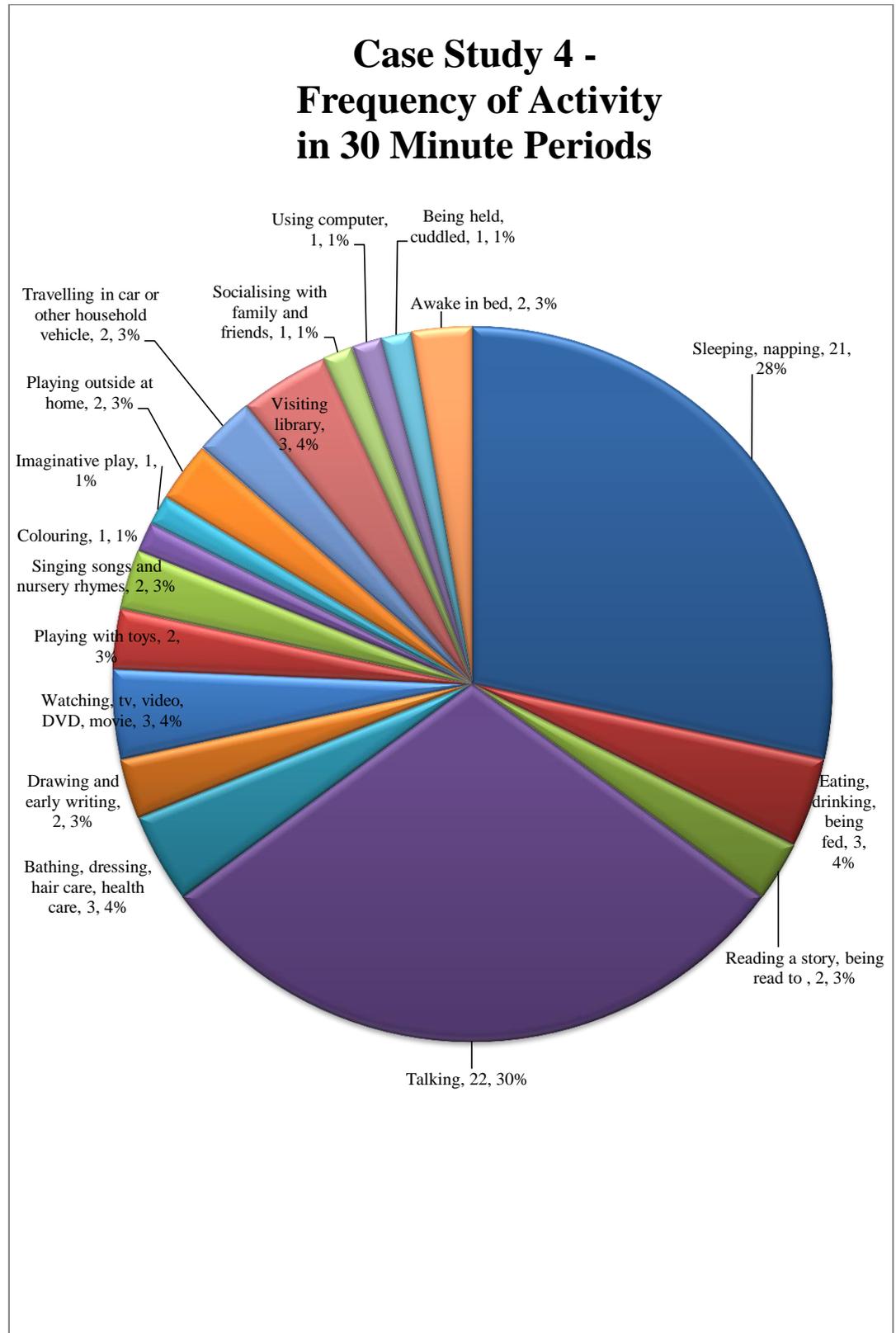


Figure 4.8

Case Study 4 - Frequency of Type of Activity in 30 Minute Periods



All four children were enrolled to access 15 hours of preschool a week and two children attended for this (**Table 4.1**). Data was not collected on why Jane from Case Study 1 only attended for 14 hours but Eva's mother from Case Study 4 explained that Eva attended 12 hours because of the way that her daughter's preschool sessions were structured with three days one week and then two days the next.

**Table 4.1**  
*Background Information*

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Child's Name</b>	<b>Decile</b>	<b>Government/ Non-Government</b>	<b>Hours Enrolled</b>	<b>Hours Attended</b>	<b>Reasons for enrolment</b>
<b>1</b>	Jane	1	Government	15	14	Friend had already attended preschool
<b>2</b>	Anwar	1	Government	15	15	Proximity to home Older brother had also attended the preschool
<b>3</b>	James	1	Government	15	12	Proximity to home
<b>4</b>	Eva	7	Government	15	15	Proximity to home Proximity to parents' work On site with a school campus Educational programme

Proximity to home was important to three of the four families in choosing preschool for their children. Familiarity with the preschool because of siblings or friends who had previously attended were also persuasive factors. Only one parent, that being Eva's mother, also cited the educational programme as influencing decision-making about where Eva would attend. Interestingly too, Eva's mother was the only parent who had attained a tertiary qualification; but it is not known whether this was relevant to her consideration of factors other than geography and familiarity with the setting.

Eva from the most advantaged area (ABS, 2013b) was the child with the most diverse experiences at home which included drawing and early writing, reading, singing nursery rhymes and playing with toys (**Figure 4.2**). Whilst Jane was not from as advantaged an area, her home experiences were also varied and included playing with toys; playing outside at home; singing songs and nursery rhymes; and imaginative play.

All of the children slept between 10.5 and 11.5 hours as per data collected from the 24 hour diary. Another common experience was television viewing which all of the children participated in for between 1.5 and 2 hours a day. Interestingly the two boys, Anwar and James, who watched two hours of television each, did not participate in reading activities as recorded in the 24 hour diary, unlike the girls who watched slightly less but also read.

Table 4.2

*Time Usage*

Case Study	Child's Name	Decile	Hours Spent Sleeping	Hours Spent Watching TV	Hours Spent Reading	Hours Spent Playing with Toys	Hours Spent Playing Outside
1	Jane	1	11.5	1.5	1	1.5	1
2	Anwar	1	10.5	2	-	-	1
3	James	1	11.5	2	-	1.5	-
4	Eva	7	11	1.5	1	1	1

**iii. Discussion**

The instrumental case studies provide insight into a particular issue (Creswell, 2008), namely how children access and experience preschool in a time of policy reform. What can be understood from the case studies of Jane, Anwar, James and Eva is that there are common experiences which many children share but that some home learning environments are richer in 'achievement-related' activities (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). Young children's home learning environments can impact on their learning and development during this critical time. Baxter and Hayes (2007) found when exploring data from *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* that children who spent more time on

'achievement-related activities' were those who received higher learning domain scores and the children who watched the most television, also had the lowest learning domain scores (Baxter & Hayes, 2007).

The findings of the *LSAC* were that children from more disadvantaged backgrounds watched more television than their more advantaged peers (AIFS, 2011) with children three years of age and younger from disadvantaged backgrounds watching more television, and that television viewing often displaced reading and literacy-related activities (AIFS, 2011). As can be seen from Eva and Jane who watched less television than James and Anwar, more time was given to reading-related activities. Girls, children with more highly educated mothers and fathers and children of mothers not employed, spent more time engaged in 'achievement-related activities' such as colouring and looking at books during the week (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). The data from the case studies is consistent with this finding.

It is argued here that the sum of children's time contributes to the experiences and knowledge which they take with them to preschool and that there are children who are at risk of social and educational disadvantage even by the time they commence preschool. Similarities in aspects of Eva and Jane's home and preschool experiences highlight the importance of the quality of the home learning environment before socio-economic factors. As discussed in earlier chapters, socio-economic status does not have to dictate the quality of the learning which goes on at home, nor does parent education level but obviously connections do exist between parent experience and what they provide for their children at home in the way of learning experiences (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011).

#### **iv. Conclusion**

There are children who are more advantaged not merely by socio-economic factors but also by the quality of their home learning environments (Baxter & Hayes, 2007; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). The case studies illustrate differences in children's home experiences and the nature of their home learning environments. However, what is particularly encouraging of all the children from the four case studies, is that they were enrolled to attend 15 hours of preschool a week and the

commitment of their parents to their attendance at preschool reflected this. The parents of Jane, Anwar, James and Eva were responsive to the increase in time at preschool for their children as per Universal Access. It should be understood though that the parents who participated in the case studies may be different from those who did not and the case studies should be understood for what they are, representative of the experiences of these particular children and their families.

#### **iv. Summary**

As discussed in earlier chapters, how society perceives children influences what is set aside for them in the way of educational and life opportunities (Rinaldi, 2013). Without the support of parents and families, preschool children cannot access what is their right, a quality education (COAG, 2009). The parents of Jane, Anwar, James and Eva all made a commitment to the early childhood education of their children and where home experiences may differ, their preschool experience was similar. The children at greatest risk of social disadvantage are instead those who do not attend preschool or an early childhood setting at all (Rosier & McDonald, 2011). As evidenced by the case studies, the uptake of most South Australian children in preschool education is very encouraging but any understanding of children's access and experience of preschool in a time of policy reform must also be attentive to those who are most marginalised. Data from the observation of working preschool environments and semi-structured interviews with preschool educators is presented in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5**

# **Observations of Preschools and Semi-Structured Interviews of Preschool Educators**

The chapter commences with an overview of the data collected from observations in two of preschools followed by data from semi-structured interviews with preschool educators. The observational data was designed to better understand the preschool context and to illustrate children's experiences at preschool. Within the semi-structured interviews, preschool educators candidly raised relevant issues to preschool education both in their current settings but also more broadly to the South Australian context. It is argued that preschool educators support the intent of the National Quality Framework (NQF) but are concerned about its associated workload particularly for directors, the process of assessment, and whether its effect will be enough to create genuine change for all South Australian children in the early years. The introduction of Universal Access and Same First Day also raised questions for preschool educators on the practicalities and logistics of catering for children aged between three years and nine months and five years and seven months, as well as those changes associated with one intake of children at preschool per year. It will be asserted here that the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) has been well-received by preschool educators who have found it relevant and accessible to use, particularly with parallels they noted to the philosophy of Reggio Emilia. Finally the chapter summarises preschool educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool in a time of policy reform.

### **i. Observations**

Observations in Sites A and B were employed to in part respond to the second research question:

**What are preschool educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool in a time of policy reform?**

Observations were made from within the preschool setting in order to ascertain how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform. Particular attention was paid to observing key aspects of the teaching and learning programme as described by preschool educators in an effort to observe ways in which practice reflected their asserted pedagogy. The observations in the working preschool setting emphasised the importance of a range of experiences and services being made available to children and their families. This validated the role of preschool in the lives of young South Australian children and supported the increase in access.

**a. Site A**

At Site A, observations were conducted across two days in Term 4, 2012 with the same group of children present both days but with differences in staffing. Thirty children were recorded as attending on day one with 38 enrolled to attend. On the first day of observations, two preschool educators, one SSO (School Service Officer) and a bilingual support worker were present in the preschool. One of the preschool educators was known to the children but one was there in a relief capacity. One educator was responsible for the outdoor learning area while the other was responsible for indoor areas with SSOs and bilingual support workers working alongside preschool educators.

On the second day of observations at Site A, two preschool educators and four SSOs were present. The SSOs worked in support of the work of educators with the learning programme and more specifically with indigenous students, children with speech needs, and those requiring bilingual support. Forty children were enrolled, with 30 actually recorded as attending the preschool that day. Key observations of Site A are presented in table on the following page (**Table 5.1**).

Field notes were recorded during the observation sessions using a framework derived from Hill et al. (1998) which assisted the researcher in focusing on particular aspects of the working preschool environment, its culture and participants: environments, resources, time, space, bodies, social norms, language and literate

practices (Hill et al., 1998), numerate practices, and specific preparation for school practices (**Appendix-A5**).

Table 5.1

*Key Observations – Site A*

<b>Organisers</b>	<b>Key Observations</b>
<b>Environments</b>	Environment as a third teacher Inside/outside play fluid Varied activities outside Outside space open to children – nothing they needed to ask permission for Inside space was divided into different areas with differing purposes Children moved on as they were ready
<b>Resources</b>	Learning spaces were set up ready for children to engage with Home corner contained tactile rice and lentils to interact with Cultural music made available and children played with instruments and scarves outside Music invited children to participate Many tactile experiences were evident for children to choose from Educators, SSOs working together with collegiality Children encouraged to play and learn from each other with minimal interruption
<b>Time</b>	Two mat times – used to transition Cow bell used to end play Small group work occurred with educators and SSOs Children were given opportunities to come in, settle and engage with learning activities
<b>Space</b>	Space was divided into different learning zones Outside space appeared to be used equally by girls and boys Gross and fine motor opportunities could be found inside and outside Educators monitored the number of visitors to the preschool at recess and lunchtime (i.e. siblings and friends) School playground equipment was utilised for play before the end of the day
<b>Bodies</b>	Educators engaged with children as they moved around Children were enlisted to help tidy and clean up at pack up time Children were mostly very independent in how they occupied and used inside and outdoor spaces with both available throughout the day
<b>Social norms</b>	Children given opportunities to make choices Children allowed to exercise initiative Child spoke to another inside, 'No running.' Teacher affirmed. Educators promoted independence Children expected to learn and play together Reminders/cues during floor times from educators Educators guided children with cues when necessary Educators used children's names frequently Most problems were resolved by children (e.g. Child asked another child to leave and child went without making a fuss.)
<b>Language and literate practices</b>	Selection of books in book basket demonstrated diversity Much conversation around social play Bilingual support workers worked with CALD children and communicated with parents Staff encouraged children to greet each other and talk together SSOs worked in with educators Story time incorporated cues for listening by educator Children invited to participate in role play and given opportunity to use props later
<b>Numerate Practices</b>	Small group activities reinforced numerate practices (e.g. '5 Little Ducks') Nurate practices observed incidentally through play experiences Children measured and counted in sandpit Children accessed games on television screen and tablets
<b>Of interest</b>	Some children appeared a little lost at times – staff intervened Tablets available for children to use throughout the day in the preschool

After arrival at Site A, children were greeted by a staff member and they would then choose where they wanted to be and what they wanted to do. Two mat times during the day and one small group time were coordinated by preschool staff. Children ate when they needed to throughout the morning and children were welcome to eat from the bowl which contained fruit brought by families. Lunch was eaten together, with all children then given outside time whilst staff managed their own lunches. Children's lunches were kept in their bags and a number of children required assistance to find lunches, with preschool staff preparing lunch for at least one child. At the end of the day, children were farewelled as a group and parents collected children from inside the preschool classroom.

The outside learning space had a number of features found in many preschools; tables for shared eating times, climbing equipment, sandpit, an outdoor theatre area, painting easels, and a reading area. The outdoor area was fenced with high black tubular fencing with a grassed area inside. Children were able to interact through the fence with older children as they moved through the school and in fact during school break times, siblings and friends of the preschool children were permitted to enter the preschool to interact with their siblings and friends. Staff carefully managed the numbers of children entering and leaving the preschool as it was very popular with school-age children.

The children were relatively free to use the outside space as they wished with staff encouraging children's play. The sandpit was large and equipped with a diverse range of sand play toys and children were able to introduce water through a small waterway and access to taps. The sandpit was well-used and many of the children who chose outdoor play spent some time in the sandpit on the observation days. Staff led some activities with children outside such as the construction of a tepee from large branches and blankets.

Inside spaces of the preschool were divided into different learning spaces by way of furniture arrangement. The ideas of Thornburg (2007) were evident within the preschool classroom as the provision of spaces performed the functions of watering hole (a place to come together); mountain top (a place to share learning); sandpit (a place to play and experiment); cave (a place to reflect); and campfire (a

place to come together). Inside the preschool children played with large wooden blocks; interacted with educators within the home corner playing hairdressers; drew and wrote at tables; read books with educators; and used tablets in the reading and viewing corner. Interestingly the preschool classroom whilst new was very neutral and staff expressed frustration that its design didn't fit with their needs. By creating different spaces within the room itself, preschool educators felt that it was better organised for the type of learning experiences which they wished to facilitate for children.

Time was very fluid with children choosing when to eat and drink throughout the morning and the afternoon, and often when to move on from each activity. Staff didn't often interrupt children's play and structured teaching and learning time was minimal, instead assisting children in finding something of interest when needed whilst promoting independence.

'Intentional' (DEEWR, 2009) learning time as a whole group was at a minimum with the first session coming together in the morning and then again in the afternoon prior to the end of the day. One small group session in the morning saw each small group paired with an educator. Due to the number of staff present, including bilingual support workers, children were able to interact easily with educators within the small group setting. Children and parents were welcomed in the morning by staff as they settled their children for the start of the day. Most children settled quickly and were largely independent of staff as they came into the preschool environment.

Cultural aspects of the preschool of Site A as observed by the researcher included the focus on the environment as a third teacher (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998), the capacity for children to choose how they spent their time, and the value of children's natural play and language in their learning development. Educators interacted and guided children where necessary and children operated within the learning environment with a high degree of autonomy. Whilst many children interacted and played together, there were also many children who chose to work and play independently. Educators and staff supported children individually as needed. One child's experience of preschool could be quite different from that of

his/her peers within the same session depending on how the individual child chose to spend his/her time.

Technology was valued in the learning environment with children able to access applications on a number of tablets throughout the day. Children were invited or could choose to join in with preschool educators sharing books with small groups of children. Social play and children's language development through play were valued highly in the learning environment of Site A. Evidence of the value placed on appreciating the child as part of a family unit could be seen through the way that parents were greeted by preschool staff including bilingual support workers, programmes organised and coordinated through the children's centre to benefit the individual child and family unit. Students from the school campus were able to visit their siblings at recess and lunchtime and this again illustrated the value educators placed on knowing and working with the family of each child.

#### **b. Site B**

Observations at Site B were completed during Term 4, 2013. The researcher visited the preschool for a four hour period. On the observation day, 24 children were in attendance. The preschool at Site B, inspired by a Reggio Emilia philosophy had an enrolment of 55 children at the time of the research who were made up from not only local enrolments but also children from families who commuted significant distances for their children to attend. Children could commence play group at Site B with their parents and upon reaching three years of age could attend sessions on their own with 11 children attending in this way. Occasional care and long day care were not offered at Site B.

Site B was accommodated within a historic building and whilst more limited than Site A with outdoor space, what was provided appeared generous accommodating a sandpit, eating area, places for imaginative and nature play as well as other learning experiences. Inside space was divided into different areas, filled with a variety of stimuli.

Children and parents accessed the preschool via a gate at the end of a walkway past the main administration building of the school. Children's bags were

placed outside and children brought lunch boxes inside. Parents signed children in and many stayed to help their children settle in, reading books and chatting to them as they went about selecting something to do. The environment of the preschool absorbed the children as they arrived and found activities of interest within the learning environment.

The learning space was highly functional. Photographs and images of children's learning called attention to children's individual and group contributions (New & Kantor, 2013). The use of light within the learning space was evident with large windows allowing natural light in, and also through other means such as the use of mirrors and light tables (New & Kantor, 2013). Key observations of the preschool setting at Site B are detailed in the table on the following page (**Table 5.2**).

Photographs of children attending the preschool with their families adorned a shelf in the preschool classroom. The children's learning logs were easily accessible on open shelves. Chicks and turtles invited interest from the children who gathered in an area of the preschool promoting science and interest in the natural world. Parents and children made use of a reading corner with a selection of reading material, reading together as children settled in for the day.

Provisions to write, draw and create were easily accessible by children at Site B. The floor area where the preschool class congregated was spacious enough for the children to sit in a circle. Thematic displays were featured around the classroom. An example was a display about Remembrance Day which featured children's work and reflections. A visual diary incorporating photographs and informative captions of children attending preschool in the previous week was a point of interest and a powerful means of conveying some of the events of the previous week.

Staff interacted with children about their learning and play. Like the children of Site A, the children of Site B also accessed the school playground during the school's instructional time.

Table 5.2

*Key Observations – Site B*

<b>Organisers</b>	<b>Key Observations</b>
<b>Environments</b>	Environment as third teacher Ordered space, everything in its place Many plants, flowers, greenery present Children's work displayed prominently around the room
<b>Resources</b>	Pictures of parents and children learning and playing together on display Learning journals containing learning stories and children's work were easily accessible Many varied activities for children to choose and interact with Children able to initiate their own learning (e.g. After a conversation with an educator about chicks, a girl is given some plasticine after asking to make one. Later the same teacher returns and brings a picture of a chick to the two children now making models. A boy on being invited to join in, then chooses to go and look at the chicks.)
<b>Time</b>	Children fell quiet on hearing a bell and quickly moved to the floor to sit down After morning prayer, the activities for the day were discussed and negotiated Educators prompted children to come to the floor, explaining that they could return to their work after floor time
<b>Space</b>	Inside and outside spaces divided into 'rooms' Care and ingenuity taken with how space is used and utilised Order, everything in its place - everything seemed to have a purpose Children able to choose to be inside or outside with one educator in and one educator out Children flowed between inside and outside with much interaction with staff
<b>Bodies</b>	Children prepared with hats, sun block and drink bottles before heading off for outside play Teacher prompting child to wipe nose – expectation of hygiene and self-care Children dressed in smocks help teacher to set up water play with coloured ice cubes
<b>Social Norms</b>	Children seemed to transition with a knowledge of how the day was to run A boy running is told by another child, 'You're not allowed to do that.' Children expected to tidy and clean up but teachers willing to help and work together (e.g. Teacher helps children to clean up the home corner.) Bell used for pack up time, children prompted where necessary As parents left in morning, children chose activities and appeared quickly engaged in what they had chosen Staff prepared tables for lunch, with fresh flowers in glass vases on each table – a sense of coming together Independence fostered (e.g. child cleaning own shoes of sand with a brush)
<b>Language and Literate Practices</b>	Children's stories on display, typed but in children's words Staff welcomed children and parents by name as they arrived Staff talked with children as they went about their work and play Educators in conversation with children could be heard asking questions about what the children were doing (e.g. What? Why?) Children active in social play with animated discussion (e.g. Girls in boat playing with one holding an umbrella, one steering and one acting as a passenger. "Look. We're here." "Oh no. It's raining.")
<b>Numerate Practices</b>	Child asked to count the boys and then another to count the girls before moving off Children counting in their play (e.g. Counting the toes on a chick from a picture)
<b>Of Interest</b>	Boys and girls shared inside and outside space Children chose to look at silk worms through magnifying glasses and discussed their observations Large bound scrap book on display with each week in pictures, written text and related EYLF outcomes Mobile on display made from stripped umbrella, beads, paper cranes - showing alternative uses for everyday items Children invited to participate in prayer with every child given the opportunity to contribute Parents read stories to their children, put away children's lunches, sat down with their children as they chose an activity and helped them to settle Lunch provided to all children every day

Early in the session on the observation day, children were invited to the floor by the sound of a bell rung by a child following direction from a preschool educator. Children were greeted by name and all were invited to participate in morning prayer. The day's activities were discussed, as was what was on the menu for lunch. The children were settled and seemed familiar with the routine. As children chose which activities they would commence, preschool educators communicated with one another. Whilst a number of children initiated their own play, others were invited to participate in water play with coloured ice cubes. Preschool educators interacted easily with the children and the children were engaged in their learning and play.

Movement from inside to outside was fluid with children able to choose where they wanted to be. Toilets were accessed from the preschool classroom and thought was evident again in relation to making the space functional but also aesthetically pleasing with plants and pictures adorning the space. Whilst the outside area was not overly large, the space accommodated a number of activities without the children encroaching on each other's space. These included; imaginative play, sand play, water play, painting and construction. Playground equipment at the school campus was accessed for active play with children reminded to bring drink bottles and hats and to apply sunblock.

Preschool educators took time to talk with children about what they were doing and choices they were making. Very few children required redirection but when necessary preschool educators did so easily and sensitively. A feature of the learning environment was children's ownership over the space and their work on display. Children seemed to understand the expectations of them and were cooperative and engaged with preschool staff who seemed able to capitalise on the discoveries of individual children whilst also initiating experiences for other children.

Cultural aspects of Site B included the importance placed on the environment as a third teacher (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998). The learning environment, both inside and outside was inviting with many points of interest. The voice of the child was evident through the interactions with one another and preschool staff, the value placed on children being at the heart of teacher's work and how visible

children's presence was within the learning space through their work on display and the availability of resources and access to space.

Children's work was prominently displayed and educators supported children in pursuing things of interest to them. Children's talk about their learning and play was highly regarded and the group of children appeared cohesive, engaged and motivated. Educators and preschool staff were approachable and were accommodating of children's interests and play whilst providing cues when needed about expectations of how to operate respectfully in the learning space.

## **ii. Interview Transcripts**

Semi-structured interviews with preschool educators were employed to respond to the second research question:

### **What are preschool educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool in a time of policy reform?**

A summary of data obtained from semi-structured interviews at Sites A and B is presented next. Codes were identified within the data of the interview protocols using two or three key words used by the participants as the codes themselves (Creswell, 2008). Key words, potential quotes and text segments were identified and assigned to the different codes. The researcher amalgamated similar codes in an effort to reduce the number of codes to seven or less themes (Creswell, 2008).

#### **a. Data Summary from Site A**

Data was examined within seven themes which emerged from the research and more specifically was language which the preschool educators employed themselves in the semi-structured interviews: dispositions for learning, learning language, being reflective, child-led; engagement, family, and educational journey (**Table 5.3**).

**Table 5.3**

*Data from Interview Protocol – Site A*

<b>Data from Interview Protocol – Site A</b>		
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
Dispositions for learning	young children, opportunities problem-solvers, socially construct, learners want to learn	“Preschool is about developing those dispositions in young children.”
Learning language	families and communities, social aspects, learning English, wider context and audience, language interaction, identity and culture	“Language plays a huge part in preschool.” “I mean the more time they (children) are in an environment where they are being challenged and supported, would be better.”
Being reflective	practice, questioning, creative thinkers, relevant experiences, being a listener, one hundred languages	“If you believe kids are competent then what you do is have a focus around the intellectual work that’s happening in anything you do.” “You’ve got to be flexible in your practice, like you’re constantly reviewing, it’s not here’s the programme we’re going to do this week, it’s here’s the framework, here’s what we’re exploring, these are the questions we’re asking, we don’t know what’s going to happen.”
Child-led	being honest, children take the lead, supportive reflective, the flow of the day, their voice in the flow	“We talk about the flow of the day, actually running with the flow of the day, rather than against it.” “Do we do the routine thing or what the children are telling us? What are we actually hearing from them by the behaviour that they are displaying at the time? How are they telling us they want their day to go? Where is their voice in the flow?” “I think that we have to be careful that we’re not stuck in our traditional way of doing preschool because that’s the way we know preschool to be, but have solid theory and knowledge about learning and young children, to be responsive and adapt to the kids we have now.”
Engagement	minimal interruption, respect, observing supporting, giving time and space, educators, engagement looks like , interacting relationally	“There’s always the thought in the back of my mind of minimal interruption, giving children the respect in not interrupting them and stopping them and moving them and changing them all the time, actually giving them time and space and supporting them to take part in what they have chosen to take part in and offering extension.” “It’s not about us, it’s about children.”
Family	sharing of knowledge, strength-based, supporting learning, cultural and language issues, families and communities, broader family perspective, educators, engagement, interacting relationally, accessibility, transport, single parent families, flexible care possibilities, access, disadvantaging the already disadvantaged, children’s centre, counselling , therapy	“We don’t just have the child and then we’re done, we actually have a piece of this bigger unit that we need to work with.” “Children live in families and communities and they come to us, so we’re actually not the centre of the universe, they are.” “If there were more flexible care possibilities that would be much better for families to be able to access the preschool.” “The attendance for a children’s centre is not just about a child’s education, but what else is being missed when they’re not attending.”
Educational journey	practice and pedagogy, Early Years Learning Framework, culture of reflective practice and inquiry, standard, perception, transitioning families, dispositions for learning, deep thinkers and problem solvers, Birth-5 or Birth-8?	“Hopefully it won’t come back to expiry date of hand creams and things, but it will actually bring about good practice.” “The intent is good.” “Having qualified people working with young children I think is really important.” “As a preschool educator, I still see a huge gap in preschool being totally disjointed for a child’s educational journey, like there’s preschool and real big school.” “I mean in South Australian education, we’re all part of the education system so why is there this huge gap and a lack of understanding about what happens before they turn 5?” “We need to be talking about early childhood as Birth - 8.”

### **b. Data Summary from Site B**

Data from the interview protocol of Site B was explored through six themes which came to light through the process of the semi-structured interviews: life skills, environment, important relationship, Universal Access; paperwork, workload and cost; and EYLF (**Table 5.4**).

### **iii. Description of Interviews from Sites A and B**

The question related to the purposes of preschool resulted in animated discussion by preschool educators at both research sites. The Director of Site A explained, "We see the experiences which they bring to the preschool as a really important starting point for how we work with children so we don't see preschool, the role of preschool, preparing children for this thing called school." At Site B, a preschool educator responded, "I think it provides children with social interactions and life skills outside of the home, outside of the family and broadens their understanding of how it is in the big world."

At both Sites A and B, preschool educators emphasised the importance on viewing preschool or 'kindergarten' as was the preferred reference, as important and not merely as a precursor to school, "Being four is important in itself for children but within what we do, they will be prepared for school, for that next part of their lives, not in terms of this is how we behave in school or this is what you do but being the learner." Preschool educators at Site A discussed the necessity for school to be ready to receive children, and not placing the onus on the child to be ready.

Preschool educators at both research sites discussed the importance of children being entrusted to make choices within the preschool environment and this was supported by the way in which both operated with fluid movement of children between inside and outside. Areas within both preschools were defined by their usage and traffic patterns (Fromberg, 2002) and were supportive of this with furniture and space arranged accordingly.

Table 5.4

*Data from Interview Protocol – Site B*

Data from Interview Protocol – Site B		
Themes	Key Words	Quotes
Life skills	social interactions, life skills, resilience, safe situation, safety net, documentation, trusting your kids	<p>“What we want is the life skills that allow children to make a mistake in a safe situation, so that there’s a safety net here with the staff and their peers.”</p> <p>“Allowing I think and trusting your kids. Trust is a big thing, if we set up places and spaces and activities where they have to do something that they’ve not ever done before is just providing them with that safety net and taking a risk, all those things are really important.”</p>
Environment	setting up environment, choices	<p>“The idea of setting up environment as it is, is to give children the opportunity to make choices and to find out for themselves whether it was a good choice, or not so good choice, whether it is with activities or friendships.”</p>
Important relationship	Relationship, open and honest, newsletter, provocation, respectful	<p>“It’s an important relationship from the very beginning.”</p> <p>“I think talking with parents and calling them by name, welcoming them in the mornings, greeting them I think that’s all an important part, and listening to their point of view.”</p>
Universal Access	Universal Access, respectful, restructuring, challenge, flexible, floating	<p>“Parents get to choose. We always allow parents to choose.”</p> <p>“I get a little upset about preparing for school.”</p> <p>“I think my concern ...it’s not going to be enough, for those children who are 5 and 5 and a ½.”</p> <p>“I’m not entirely convinced that 3 years and 9 months and 5 and ½.”</p> <p>“When you have younger children going into reception and older children into kindy, we’ll have to see how that goes and whether those children can be floating.”</p>
Paperwork, workload and cost	Policies, standards, qualifications, workload, cost	<p>“The paperwork is just ridiculous. Now I can’t even work in the kindy for the whole week. I can’t be there the whole time. That’s why I was doing what I was doing, so it breaks my heart in a way.”</p> <p>“I think it has lifted our standards to a higher level. We expect more. If you expect more, then you get more and it’s the same with children.”</p> <p>“Once they decided that everyone needs to be qualified to a degree depending on your role, I think it’s a good thing because it lifts our standards.”</p> <p>“It’s a financial cost to the school and we’ve been given very little support by the government to do what they want us to do with the ratios.”</p>
EYLF	Reggio Emilia, provocation, citizen, user-friendly, cultural competency, community	<p>“A really important point is that there is no acknowledgement of Reggio Emilia in there. It’s just full of Reggio, not a mention of Reggio Emilia, or Carla or Loris Malaguzzi and that’s where it’s all come from.”</p>

Preschool educators from both Sites A and B discussed what they perceived to be a lack of understanding as to the value of the work of preschools and how it was hoped that more attention on early childhood education in the way of media, funding and through the National Quality Framework (NQF) would see a better appreciation of early childhood education in its own right. Preschool educators at Site A discussed perceived discontinuity in the educational journey of many children between preschool and school, “I mean in South Australian education, we’re all part of the education system so why is there this huge gap and a lack of understanding about what happens before they turn five?”

The importance of a child-centred approach was discussed by preschool educators with 'the hundred languages of children' (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998) being valued. Developing resilience and life skills in children was highly regarded by preschool educators at Site A with an emphasis on giving children opportunities in a safe and supportive environment to make choices and develop the capacity to take risks, "What we want is the life skills that allow children to make a mistake in a safe situation, so that there's a safety net here with the staff and their peers."

Preschool educators were largely positive about the concept and the intent of the National Quality Framework (NQF) and Universal Access in increasing children's access to preschool and providing a benchmark for early childhood education which would be universal. They discussed their desire to see standards lifted in low-performing centres, improvements to the number of qualified educators and staff and greater value placed on the importance of early childhood education by the community at large.

In discussing the National Quality Standard, preschool educators from Site A expressed their hope that attention would be placed firmly on children, their learning, well-being and that of their families during the assessment process; and not reduced to what was perceived to be more trivial concerns such as use by dates on sun block. In order for this to happen, they felt that it would be imperative for the assessment process to be undertaken by people who understood the nature of early education, how young children learn and genuinely motivated by improving practice in early childhood settings.

Preschool educators at Site B considered the National Quality Framework (NQF) as being a positive step in again ensuring that there be a benchmark for early childhood education. They too felt that it could lift the standards of low performing centres and in doing so improve learning outcomes for some children. The Director at Site A explained that, "If you look across Australia, the low functioning child care centres could be really low and hopefully that's where change will happen. Whereas we're pretty high functioning, so for us it's a matter of organisation of stuff rather than changing our practice and pedagogy because that's what we do."

The preschool educators at Site B didn't feel that they would be affected greatly in their practice by the National Quality Framework (NQF) as they felt that they were already providing a high standard of care and education. However, additional workload, paperwork and documentation had already impacted on educators and the preschool in partly removing the Director from the classroom out of necessity to fulfil additional documentation as per the NQF. This was seen to be negative and a burden where directors were required to work much longer hours to accommodate the changes. The Director of Site B explained, "The paperwork is just ridiculous. Now I can't even work in the kindy for the whole week. I can't be there the whole time. That's why I was doing, what I was doing, so it breaks my heart in a way." At Site A, the Director queried how effective the NQF may actually be without professional learning support to genuinely assist early childhood settings in achieving what is required of them by the NQF.

The Director at Site B in discussing the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) spoke of her frustration at how much she felt this document borrowed heavily from Reggio Emilia without acknowledgment of its source, "A really important point is that there is no acknowledgement of Reggio Emilia in there. It's just full of Reggio, not a word, not a mention of Reggio Emilia, or Carla or Loris Malaguzzi and that's where it's all come from." She explained how the language threaded throughout the document was that of the philosophy of Reggio Emilia and whilst she appreciated its inclusion, she would have preferred it to have been acknowledged accordingly.

Changes through Same First Day (DECD, 2013, August) were discussed by educators at Site B with some concern expressed for how best to cater for children commencing preschool earlier and those commencing school later. The Director of Site B spoke about how they may have to restructure the learning spaces to adequately cater to the needs of children aged three years and nine months and five and a half years and that their practice may have to evolve as the practicalities of this change couldn't yet be known, "I'm not entirely convinced that three years and nine months and five and a half year olds are best placed together. So that's a challenge for us because it's going to be an evolving process because no-one here has experienced that yet." The capacity of preschools on site with a primary campus to

transition children more flexibly was discussed by both groups of preschool educators and this was thought to be a possible way of addressing any issues around the varying ages now to be found within every South Australian preschool.

Interestingly a number of parents were also abreast of the issue with one parent remarking that, "(It) would be good to have greater access to three year old kindy/early learning. I don't agree with one intake to pre-school/school, I believe this will have a detrimental effect on my 18 month old who is a June baby and already seems quite bright." Yet another parent took a different view in support of Same First Day, "I believe the move to one entry date will be better. I did not understand and the disruptive nature of new and departing students every term and did not compensate for it."

Preschool educators at Site A focused on the challenges faced by families in accessing early childhood education for their children. Transport and issues around language, culture and the family structure were perceived to be significant. For families without private transport and, dependent on public transport or travel on foot, factors such as distance, weather, the well-being of other family members and conflicting priorities such as access to English classes for CALD or refugee families were all considerations. Preschool educators explained that, "Access is also based on the families' needs, not just about the child but what does the family actually need to access as well as preschool will affect attendance." The value placed upon early childhood education by families was also discussed as a point of difference and educators emphasised the necessity in sharing knowledge with families about the importance of early childhood and the work which they do.

Preschool educators at Site A spoke about the importance of viewing the child as part of a family unit, that they weren't the only educators of children, and in viewing parents as children's first educators, "Children live in families and communities and they come to us, so we're actually not the centre of the universe, they are." Preschool educators at Site B discussed how the whole family was important and that they invited the commitment and participation of families, not just the enrolment and attendance of the child.

Funding was discussed by educators at both sites. The Director at Site A spoke about how attendance varied due to issues which families had with access and this impacted on funding. At Site B, the Director explained that as a non-government preschool, whilst receiving government funding this wasn't adequate to pay for the cost of running the preschool. As fees for the preschool were not set at the same level as the school, the school significantly subsidised the running costs of the preschool. The Director expressed the view that the government should be much more generous in their actual funding to non-government preschools to achieve changes to staff-child ratios as per the National Quality Framework (NQF), "It's a financial cost to the school and we've been given very little support by the government to do what they want us to do with the ratios."

#### **iv. Analysis**

Whilst educators at both research sites A and B, described their philosophy as Reggio Emilia, the preschool settings were very different in practice. This was in part due to the children, parents and staff who made up their communities but also due to the context and wider community to which they belonged. It is notable that preschool educators from Sites A and B emphasised the importance of preschool being understood as worthwhile in its own right, not simply a precursor to school. The knowledge and experience children brought with them was highly valued and educators demonstrated a keen awareness that children didn't begin learning when they arrived at preschool or school, instead that parents and families were actually children's first teachers.

On reflection, there is bias inherent within the interview protocol. The researcher's own experience as an early years educator has been largely within a school setting and this in part shaped the focus of the study. As the research progressed, the researcher's perspective changed somewhat. Part of what the researcher took into the research settings was the personal meaning of the questions and the cultural lens of experience (Wolcott, 1999). The interview protocol implied the notion of school readiness which is in itself an issue of some contention between educators. As the semi-structured interviews progressed, interestingly the questions

promoted much discussion which emphasised the importance of preschool. The preschool educators expressed the importance of seeing the preschool experience as valid in its own right and not just pre-emptive to the learning and experience of school. Culture and personality impact on fieldwork and even how the research is devised and undertaken (Wolcott, 1999). When conducting semi-structured interviews with preschool educators at Sites A and B, the researcher sought to follow the interview protocol but also be open to following the direction taken by preschool educators and this meant hearing their voice about preschool's place in children's lives.

Preschool educators particularly from Site A, emphasised the importance of viewing each child as part of a family unit. This was certainly evident in their practice and the way in which they operated as a children's centre with centralised services for parents and families. Preschool educators at Site A also discussed how they sought to work in partnership with parents and families. This was demonstrated in a number of ways including communication with parents; the way in which parents were welcomed in the morning and invited to participate; as well as the opportunity to come to understand the practice of the preschool through participation in the play group by the youngest children.

Preschool educators of Sites A and B discussed the necessity of developing dispositions for learning and life skills in the children of their relevant preschool settings. Site B particularly emphasised the rights of the child as being paramount and the respectful and dynamic preschool setting reflected this. An awareness of the environment as the third teacher was evident in both settings with a focus on the natural world (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998).

## **v. Discussion**

At both research sites, preschool educators were optimistic about the effect that the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) would have on the early childhood sector. However there was concern about the assessment process, the implied workload for directors and the lack of a genuine professional support to assist early childhood services in

meeting the requirements of the National Quality Standard. Preschool educators were reserving judgment on the introduction of Same First Day in South Australia with only one entry for all children at the start of the school year. Preschool educators were resigned to the policy reforms and prepared to make changes within their settings to ensure continuity for children and families in their access and experience of preschool education. Findings specifically related to the second research question are discussed next to summarise the experience of preschool educators in a time of policy reform.

#### **a. Findings on Research Question 2**

Findings related to the second research question are discussed here:

##### **What are preschool educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool in a time of policy reform?**

- *Finding: Preschool educators believed that developing children's resilience, life skills and independence are an important purpose of preschool education.*

The Director at Site B explained that, "What we want is the life skills that allow children to make a mistake in a safe situation, so that there's a safety net here with the staff and their peers." This was reflected in the practice of the preschool where children were encouraged to participate in genuine learning experiences which were child-led. Independence was also fostered at Site A where the researcher observed children managing which space they wanted to occupy and what they wanted to do with their time. Preschool educators of Site A also discussed child-led learning experiences as evidenced within the preschool environment.

- *Finding: Preschool educators believed that the work of the preschool was to promote children's dispositions for learning, building upon experiences brought with them.*

Preschool educators from Site A discussed the importance of not underestimating the wealth of experience which children bring with them to preschool and instead building upon and developing in children their dispositions for learning. The additional time provided by Universal Access was thought to be of

greatest benefit to children whose home learning environments weren't as stimulating or enriched. The more time spent within the preschool, the greater the benefit was considered to be. Considerable thought was put into the preschool environment and the ways in which children learned and played within this space. Preschool educators were able to speak to how the environment reflected their philosophy and pedagogy.

- *Finding: Not all children have the same degree of access to preschool and for those with rich and stimulating home lives this was not such a significant concern for preschool educators. For those children already at risk of educational disadvantage, preschool educators were concerned for what they and their families missed out on due to children's lack of attendance.*

For Site A and other children's centres like it, the centralised nature of the setting allows for a concentration of educators and professionals who can educate and support not only children but also families in many ways, such as counselling and various types of therapy. However it also creates a need for many of these families to travel greater distances than they did before preschool and school sites were amalgamated. Difficulties particularly with transport as discussed by preschool educators, could mean that children who may be enrolled to attend preschool within particular settings, may not do so on a regular basis. The needs of the family, a lack of understanding about the preschool setting, other commitments such as English language classes for parents and a lack of transport are all factors which may impede children's access and experience of preschool. Children and families perhaps at most need of the experiences a quality preschool environment can offer, were thought to be the very families at greatest risk of missing out.

As government-funded preschools are funded by attendance, a preschool with an enrolment of 70 children with only 50 regularly attending can see its funding reduced and therefore access, already challenging, can then be further impacted by reduced hours offered to children and families. How do preschools work around this and can they? This is highly relevant if the National Quality Framework (NQF) is to succeed in providing high quality early childhood education to every Australian child. By reducing the service, diminishing its effectiveness and removing the

invitation for children and families potentially most at risk of educational disadvantage, does the door close on these children? It is certainly pertinent and deserving of further study and consideration.

- *Finding: Preschool educators believe that partnerships are important for a successful preschool experience.*

Preschool educators within both research sites emphasised the importance of viewing children as part of a family unit and understanding that preschool was only one aspect of their lives and part of their educational journey. Sharing knowledge and understandings with parents was thought to be important in communicating and developing a common understanding of early education, respectful of the role of parents in children's lives.

- *Finding: The intent of Universal Access and the National Quality Framework (NQF) to improve standards, staff qualifications and access and experience to early childhood settings was seen as positive by preschool educators but the workload of directors, lack of adequate funding to improve staff-child ratios, and challenges inherent in children starting school with one intake were issues of concern.*

Preschool educators were positive about the National Quality Framework (NQF) but concerns lay with practicalities within their preschool settings and the workload of preschool directors in working to address the requirements of the National Quality Standard. Issues discussed by preschool educators related to the NQF included a lack of adequate funding, insufficient professional support to assist early childhood settings to make changes, and perceived challenges in accommodating children of varied ages under Same First Day. One parent also remarked, "Universal Access has had knock on effects that may not have been anticipated upon its introduction. Kindergartens have been forced to cancel play groups and no longer offer transition/pre-entry programs in order to accommodate the extended hours." Another parent commented that, "Perhaps the government should increase the funding in this area so that kids can have better quality preschool education which can set a firm foundation for their future."

## **b. Additional Findings**

Additional issues which emerged from the research were:

- *Finding: Preschool educators believed that a fortnightly three day, two day cycle was problematic for some families.*

Early childhood education in South Australia is no stranger to change and innovation. The National Quality Framework (NQF) is already making an impact within the participating preschools included within the research, most notably with the increase of hours as per Universal Access (DECS, 2011. May). The preschools each accommodated the change in hours to best suit the needs of children and parent communities whom they serve. Parents varied in their opinions of how many hours were appropriate and how this was delivered. They were largely positive about the impact that this may have on children's experience of preschool and their early education.

Preschool educators whilst positive of the increase of access and funding to preschool education were somewhat critical of the number of hours from a practical standpoint. Preschool educators discussed how the preschool day is six hours in duration and the 15 hour provision meant that most offered two full days one week and three full days the following. This was seen as less than ideal for modern family life where one or both parents may have work commitments which required further care for the child by a child care provider or someone within the family network itself on alternate weeks. However half days were seen to be more problematic. One preschool director spoke of a preference for increases to be in six hour increments to make children's access to preschool potentially easier to deliver for early childhood settings and more responsive to the needs of families.

- *Finding: Preschool educators felt that schools need to be more responsive to the children they receive and that it is not the work of early childhood settings to make children ready for school.*

The conflict between what was perceived by preschool educators of seeking to engage children in an emergent curriculum (DeBoehmler, 2009; Nimmo, 2002) and that of the notion of school readiness, whilst not something specifically explored within the scope of this research was certainly something which was raised by the

preschool educators. They felt that better understanding is needed around the value of the work which takes place in early childhood education. Preschool educators emphasised that early childhood education is not inferior to that of what occurs in school, but inherently different due to the age, nature and disposition of the learner.

## **vi. Summary**

Preschool educators as the professionals who work with preschool children and their families within the preschool environment, have a unique perspective on policy reforms in early childhood education. The preschool educators participating in this research spoke of the importance and value of quality early childhood education, the notion of knowing each child as part of a family unit and preschool being only a part of their learning experience, not the sum of it. Preschool educators emphasised the importance of viewing children not through a deficit model, but instead tailoring preschool and school experiences around what children could do (Hilferty et al., 2010). The capacity and effectiveness of integrated centres to outreach and provide support, education and a sense of belonging to the whole family as well as the child was discussed by preschool educators from Site A. This was argued to be a positive, working model of how to address educational disadvantage caused by poverty, cultural and language factors and other reasons as individual as each family.

Through the semi-structured interviews, preschool educators conveyed their philosophies about the way in which children were understood to learn and the value placed upon partnerships with families. The insights shared in this forum put into context the work of preschool educators in the preschool setting. At both research sites where observations took place, practice reflected the asserted philosophy and whilst differently executed, both had at their heart the best interests of children and their families. Both sites also celebrated young children as learners, and their engagement in the world around them. Preschool educators did not see their role as preparing the child for school, instead calling upon school settings to be responsive to the needs of children by building upon the dispositions for learning fostered in each child during their time at home and preschool.

Educators were well aware of policy reforms and were working towards their full implementation. Whilst appreciating the intent of the National Quality Framework (NQF) and being positive about Universal Access and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), they reserved judgement on whether policy reforms would actually improve outcomes for all Australian children. Concerns were related to workload, assessment and other logistical considerations. The effects of Same First Day were only to be surmised at the time of the research, with preschool educators primarily concerned with how to best cater for younger and older children attending the same preschool. Quantitative data collected via parent questionnaire is presented and discussed in the next chapter to better understand how parents perceive the preschool experiences of their children in a time of policy reform.

## **Chapter 6**

# **Parents' Perceptions of Preschool Experiences and Policy**

This chapter presents quantitative data taken from questionnaires completed by parents of four preschool communities within metropolitan Adelaide. The chapter explores parents' perceptions of children's experiences of preschool, and outlines children's access to and enrolment in preschool within the context of policy reforms brought about by the National Quality Framework (NQF). These changes include Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Data is first described and then analysed in terms of the bearing socio-economic status and parental education have on the access and experience of children from the sample. The chapter provides evidence that parents firstly consider the location of a preschool and then the quality of a learning programme on offer when choosing a preschool for their children. The data provides evidence that many parents view preschool as preparation for school. This view contrasts with the opinions of preschool educators interviewed in the research. It will be argued that socio-economic factors affect children's experiences when they are not attending preschool and that the nature of children's early experiences have a bearing on their development and dispositions for learning.

### **i. Background Information of Phase 2 Questionnaire**

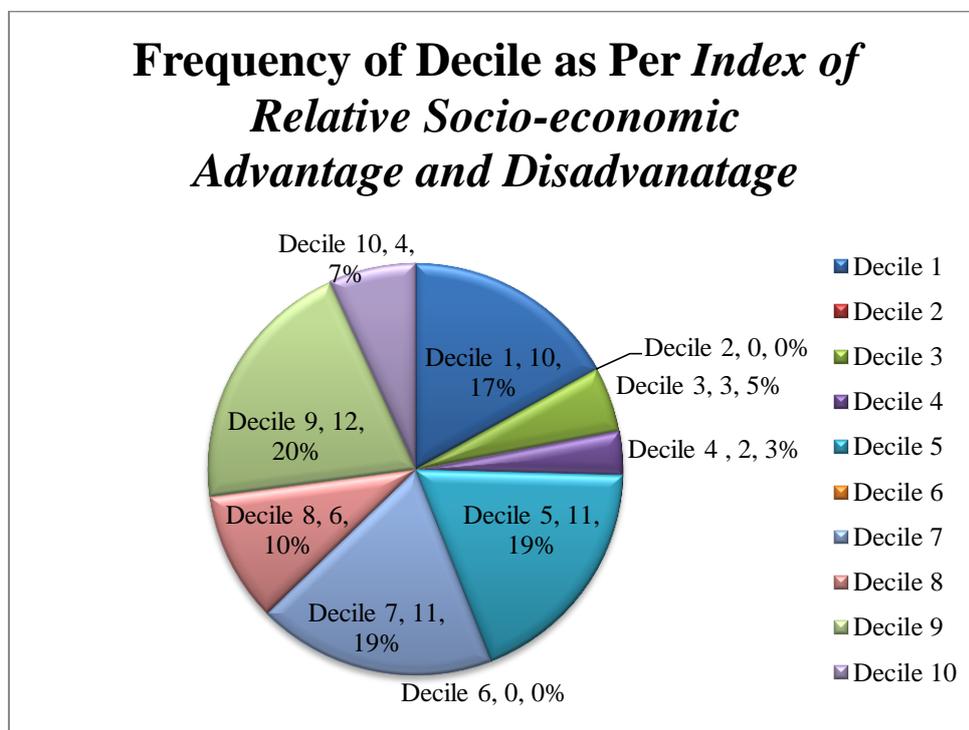
Background information given by respondents in the Phase 2 questionnaire is explored here in an effort to better understand the sample. In learning more about the sample, it is particularly pertinent to appreciate that due to the sampling method employed, the responses are representative of this sample only and are not generalisable to a larger population.

Postcode has been used to discern some information as to the socio-economic background of respondents (**Figure 6.1**), with decile 1 regarded as low and 10

regarded as high. *The Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage* uses the following indicators; low income, qualification levels, unemployment, overcrowded housing, disability, no car, and Indigenous status (ABS, 2013b). Whilst the index can be informative of an area, it cannot be understood to provide specific information about individuals (ABS, 2013b). Forty-four per cent of respondents of the Phase 2 questionnaire resided within postal areas of deciles 1 to 5 and 56 per cent within deciles 6 to 10 (ABS, 2013b). Therefore it can be concluded from the sample, that there were more respondents from medium to high socio-economic backgrounds than low to medium.

Figure 6.1

*Frequency of Decile as Per Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage*



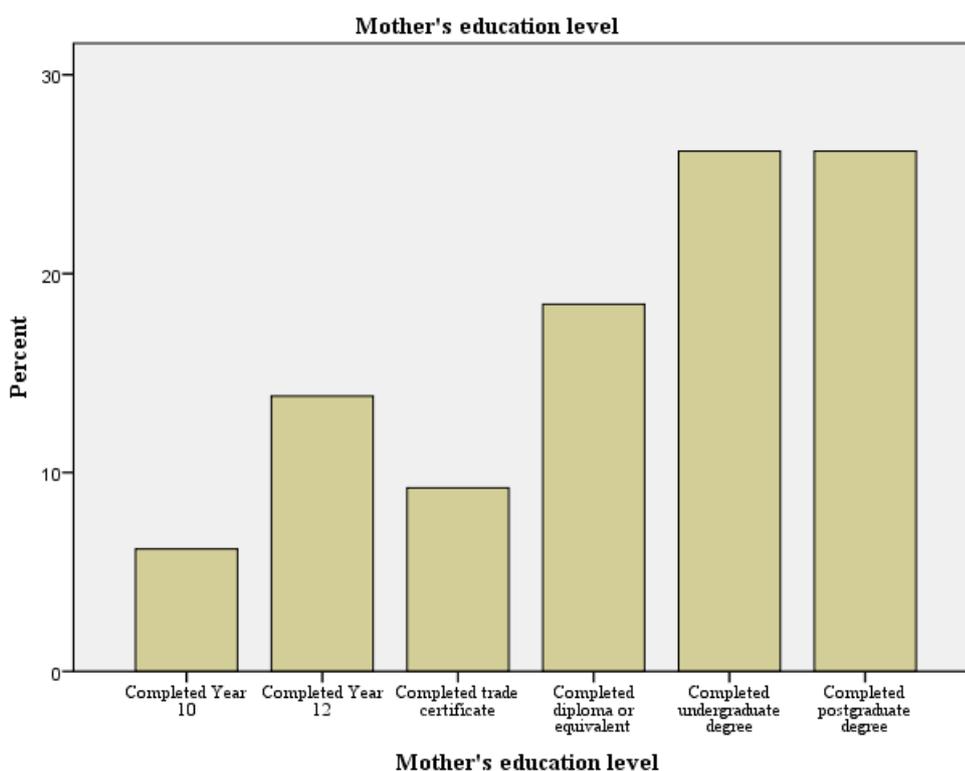
Sixty-two respondents identified themselves as female, three as male and one respondent who did not indicate his/her gender. The high proportion of female respondents may in part be due to the 89 per cent of mothers who were reported to care for their children when not attending preschool. The questionnaire related to

preschool which may have made it more relevant to parents providing the primary care. Eighty-nine per cent of mothers caring for their four year old children would seem to concur with the findings of Baxter (2013), that the division of child care and household work sees Australian mothers do more than their partners in families with children under the age of 15. Care of the four year old children from within the research was shared with; spouse/partner (37.9%), OSHC (3%), child care centre not at school (19.7%), family day care provider (1.5%), maternal grandparent (28.8%), paternal grandparent (19.7%), parent residing elsewhere (3%), relative 18 years or older (4.5%), other person (4.5%), and relative under 18 years (1.5%).

Four (6.2%) mothers completed Year 10 as their highest level of education, nine (13.8%) completed Year 12, six (9.1%) completed a trade certificate, 12 (18.5%) completed a diploma or equivalent, 17 (26.2%) completed an undergraduate degree, and 17 (26.2%) had completed postgraduate degrees (**Figure 6.2**).

Figure 6.2

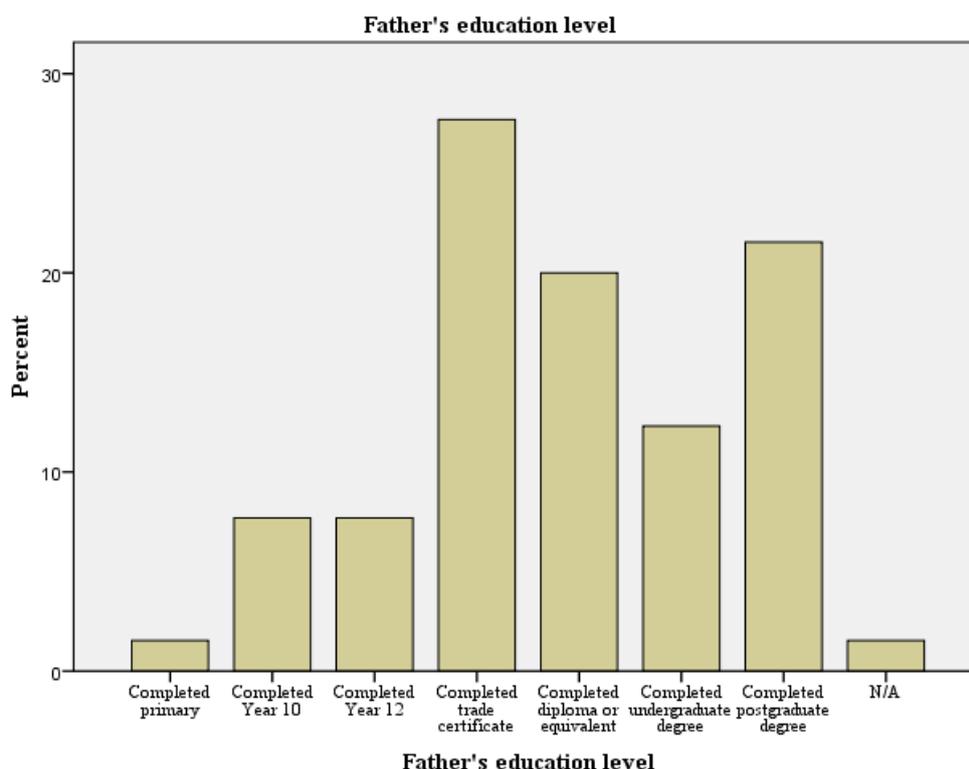
*Mother's Education Level*



The responses to the item regarding the highest level of father's education indicated that one (1.5%) father had completed primary schooling, five (7.7%) completed Year 10, five (7.7%) completed Year 12, 18 (26.5%) completed a trade certificate, 13 (20%) completed a diploma or equivalent, eight (12.3%) completed an undergraduate degree, and 14 (21.5%) had completed a postgraduate degree (**Figure 6.3**).

Figure 6.3

*Father's Education Level*



Participation and completion of study at tertiary level was less for fathers from less advantaged sites, A (22%) and C (22%), than the more advantaged, B (45%) and D (64%) (ABS, 2013b). Site B (82%) from an advantaged area had the highest participation and completion of tertiary education by mothers. The other advantaged research site, site D (64%) saw a similar participation rate by mothers to the culturally diverse and less advantaged site A (63%). Site C from a less advantaged area saw 35 per cent of parents respond that the mother of the preschool

child had participated in and completed tertiary education. With the exception of mothers from Site A, participation of mothers and fathers of preschool children in tertiary education would seem to reflect disadvantage and advantage as per *The Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage* (ABS, 2013b).

When looking at the entire sample with regards to employment of mothers (n=65) and fathers (n=65) within the household, 14 (21.5%) mothers were currently unemployed, with an additional six (8.8%) being on leave. Four (5.9%) fathers were unemployed with 1 (1.5%) being on leave. Thirty-six (55.4%) mothers were employed on a paid, part time basis (being less than 35 hours a week). Three (4.6%) mothers were employed on a paid, full time basis. Six (9.2%) respondents selected 'N/A' in regard to employment of the child's mother. This may be for a number of reasons, some of which were alluded to by respondents. These included; a child living with a male guardian, mothers employed in a voluntary capacity, or as a comment to highlight the work the mother of the four year old child undertook within the family home. A majority of fathers (84.6%) were engaged in paid full time work with three (4.6%) employed in a paid part time capacity, one (1.5%) on leave, four (6.2%) unemployed, and two (3.1%) answering 'N/A'. The patterns of parental employment were similar to the findings of Baxter (2013) where most fathers were engaged in full time employment, with mothers generally spending less time than their partners in paid employment but more time caring for children and engaged in household work.

Only six (9.1%) respondents had just one child in the family home, with 90.9 per cent of respondents residing with two or more children. This may have some relevance when considering the access of the four year old child to preschool and similarly the nature of other activities undertaken both inside and outside the family home. The questionnaire responses related to 33 (50%) female and 33 (50%) male four year old children.

## **ii. Parents' Decision-Making**

Parents' decision-making when choosing a preschool for their children was influenced by a number of factors (**Table 6.1**). Fifty-six per cent of parents cited

proximity to home as being relevant to their decision-making when choosing a preschool. The quality and nature of the educational programme was also highly relevant with 50 per cent of parents taking this into consideration. Friends and family attending or having attended the preschool was also a factor for some parents, as were logistical considerations such as being close to parents' place of work and the child's child care centre. More than one parent wrote additional responses that the expertise of the preschool staff had also been a persuasive factor when considering a preschool for his/her children. Another parent's decision-making was guided by how the new changes under Same First Day were managed, "State kindy for children who turn four between February to April 2013 are only offering kindy for Terms 2 to 4 with increased hours in Terms 3 and 4. I feel this would rush my child and also stress him in the first term of attendance. Therefore I chose a \* kindy that offers transition pre-entry Term 4, 2012 and 15 hours from Term 1, 2013."

Table 6.1

*Factors Influencing Parents' Decision-Making When Choosing a Preschool*

Factors influencing parents' decision-making	% of parents who responded	
	Yes	No
Close to home	56.1	43.9
Educational programme	50.0	50.0
On site with primary setting	43.9	56.1
Friends and family attend same preschool	25.8	74.2
Child care centre picks up and drops off to preschool	22.7	77.3
Sibling attended same preschool	19.7	80.3
Close to parent's work	12.1	87.9
Other	16.7	83.3

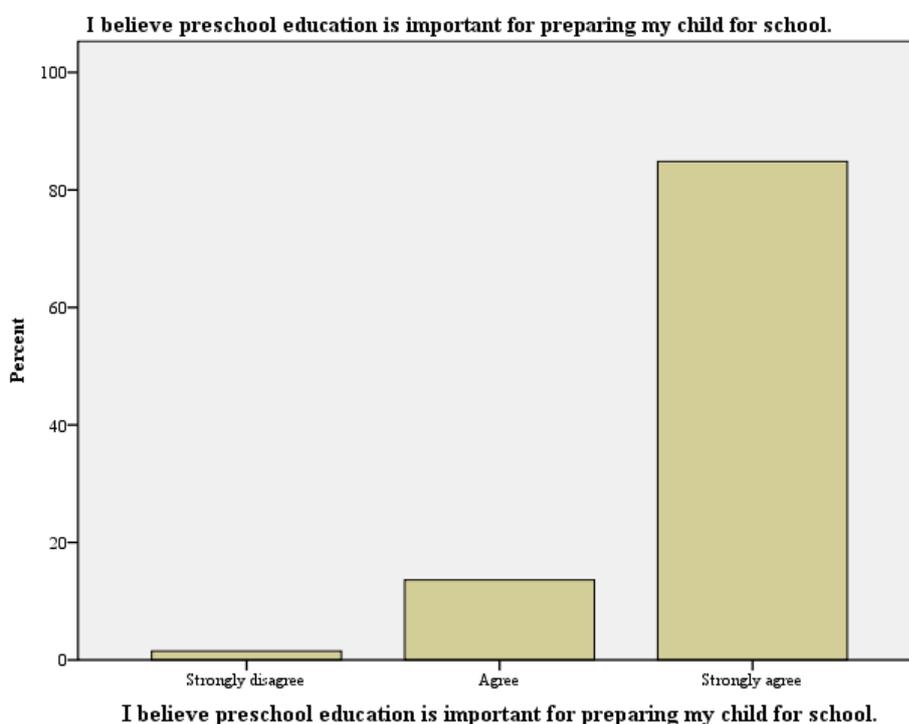
**iii. Purposes of Preschool**

Parents from the sample valued preschool education in preparing their children for school with 98.5 per cent demonstrating this in their response to item *Presimp78* (**Figure 6.4**). It is worth noting that, unanimously, preschool educators who were interviewed in the semi-structured interviews were particularly keen to define the purpose of preschool in different terms from school readiness and preparedness, even objecting in part to the term 'preschool' for the inference that it undervalued the learning and experiences which took place in this setting. Most

parents (**Figure 6.4**) expressed the belief that preschool was important to their child's preparation for school commencement. It is important to acknowledge that the nature of this question was shaped by the researcher's experience as a school rather than preschool educator and that framing this item in a different way may have seen parents also attribute value to other aspects of preschool life. Parents indicated that most children from the sample were happy (**Figure 6.5**) and engaged (**Figure 6.6**) within the preschool environment.

Figure 6.4

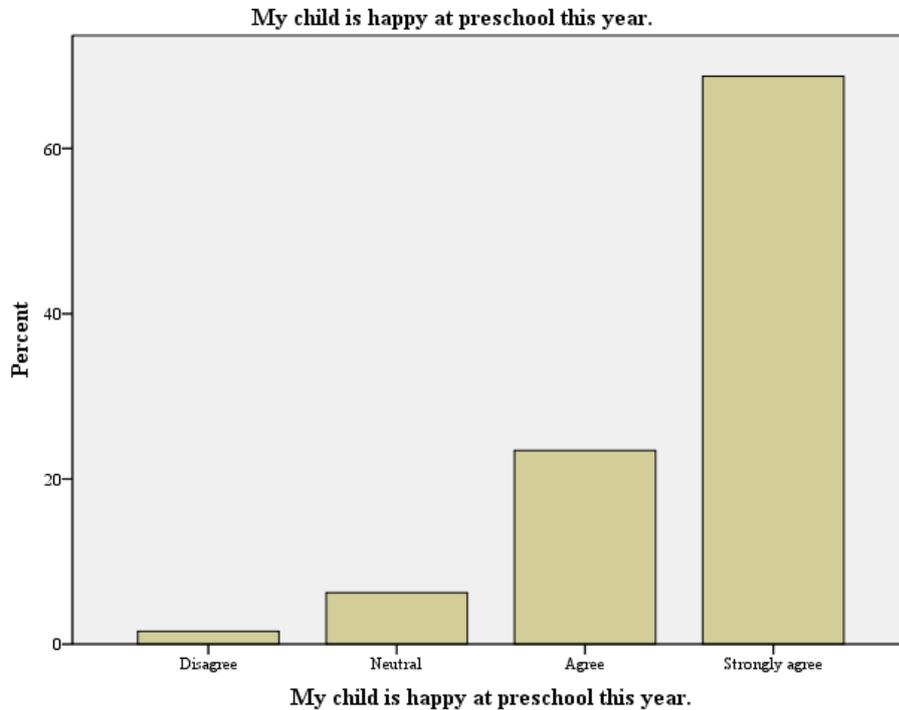
*Parent Responses to Importance of Preschool Education in Preparing Children for School*



A parent writing about the purposes of preschool explained that, “Preschool has come a long way since I was at kindy (in late 70's). Focus should be on socialising, exploring imagination, learning to follow rules and develop friendships. (I) Do not want it to be too ‘pre’ school focused with structured lessons. Reggio Emilia approach understands this I think.”

Figure 6.5

*Parent Responses to Perceived Happiness of Child at Preschool*



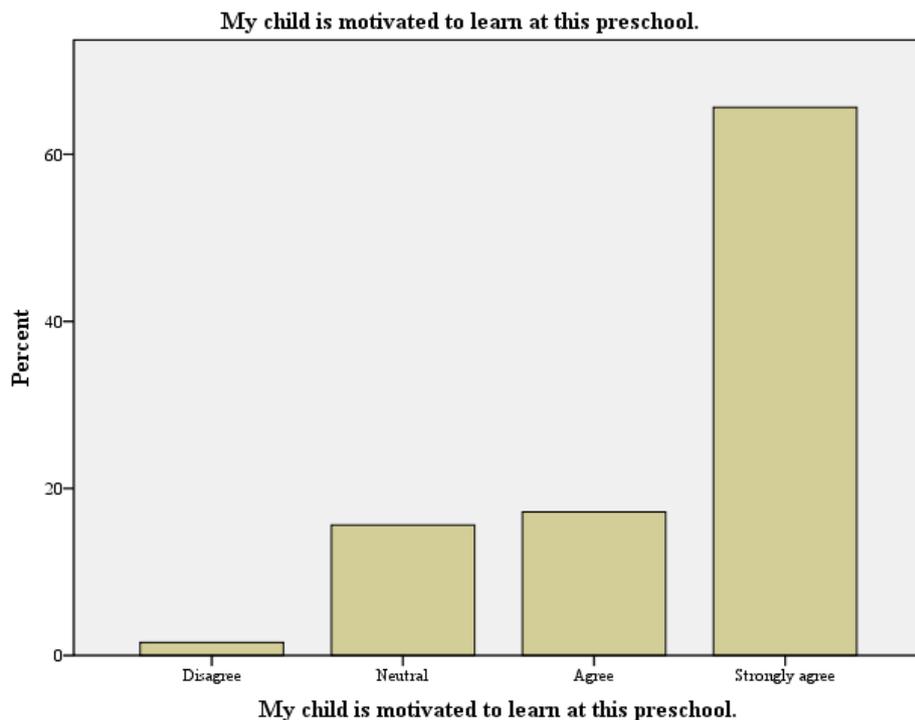
As diverse as the families were within the research, so too were the opinions with some parents desiring more structure within the preschool environment. One parent remarked that, "Reading with kids 1:1 should be pushed more." Another parent commented that, "I feel it could be a little more formal as a transition for school. Having moved from the UK, it is a shame that my child will not continue to build on letter recognition, days of the week etc." The perceived changes which Same First Day was expected to bring was also a topic of discussion for some parents with one parent commenting, "As older children will be attending kindy, I believe a curriculum should be introduced." A desire to see more able students identified was discussed by one parent, "We have moved from interstate (Tasmania) and have been impressed. I would like to see kindergartens proactively identifying gifted children and being active in planning for their needs at kinder and as they transition to school."

Ninety-two per cent of parents from the sample indicated that their children were happy at preschool (**Figure 6.5**). One parent explained that, “My child is enjoying preschool and wants to go every day. She has no trouble being with other children. She enjoys the interaction with learning advisors as well.”

When asked whether their children were motivated to learn in this setting, 82.8 per cent of parents indicated that they were (**Figure 6.6**). Issues related to child to staff ratios were commented upon by some parents, “The preschool my son attends is great but sometimes I feel that there are too many kids in the learning class and that each child doesn't get enough individual learning attention.” Another parent remarked, “An extra staff member would be beneficial.”

Figure 6.6

*Parent Responses to Perceived Motivation of Child at Preschool*



#### iv. Enrolment and Attendance

Due to different modes of attendance and some children being enrolled at and attending more than one preschool setting, there is some overlap of children's attendance from government and non-government preschool sites. Thirty-nine (60%) of the four year old children from the four preschool communities surveyed attended a secular non-government preschool on a school site; 23 (35.4 %) attended a government preschool on a school site; 3 (4.6%) also attended an independent preschool on a school site; 3 (4.6%) attended an independent preschool as a stand alone, and 2 (3.1%) children also attended long day care which incorporated a preschool programme (**Table 6.2**).

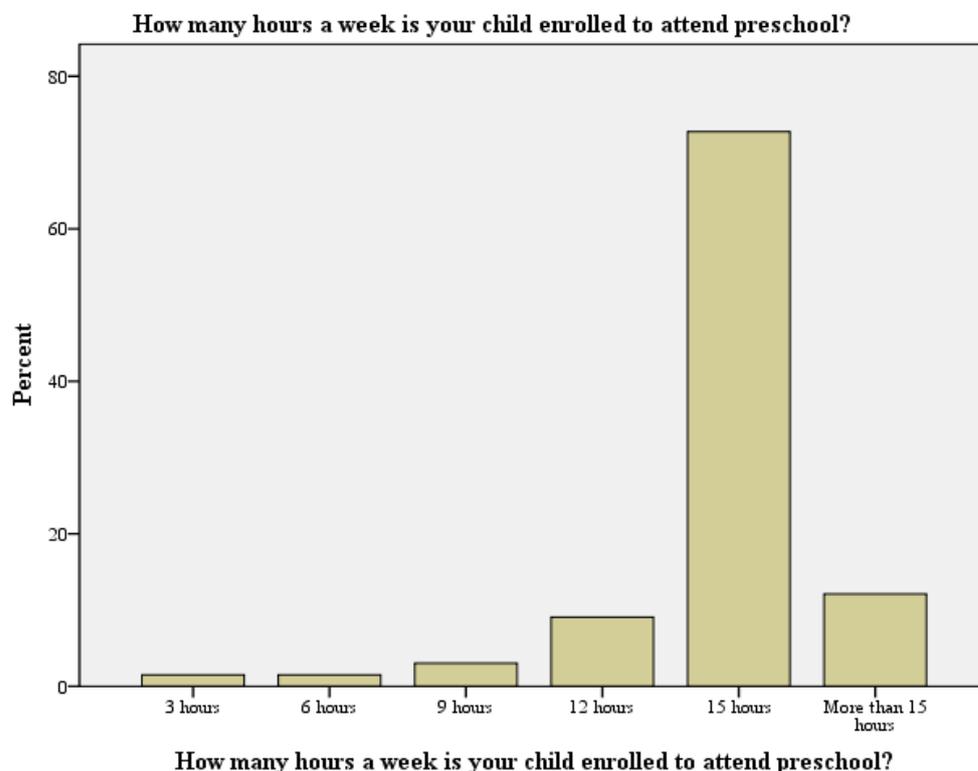
Despite the provision of Universal Access, there were still 10 (15.1 %) children from within the sample (n=66) who were enrolled to attend preschool for less than the 15 hour provision as per *Universal Access Policy* (DECS, 2011, May) (**Figure 6.7**). A very clear majority of children, 48 (72.7%), were enrolled to attend 15 hours of preschool with an additional 8 (12.1%) children enrolled to attend more than 15 hours of preschool between different preschool settings. This means that 83.8 per cent of children from within the sample were enrolled to attend preschool 15 hours or more. This was consistent with data of *The National ECEC Collection* (ABS, 2013a) which found that in 2012, 84 per cent of eligible children in South Australia were enrolled to attend preschool for 15 hours or more.

Table 6.2

#### *Hours of Preschool Enrolment*

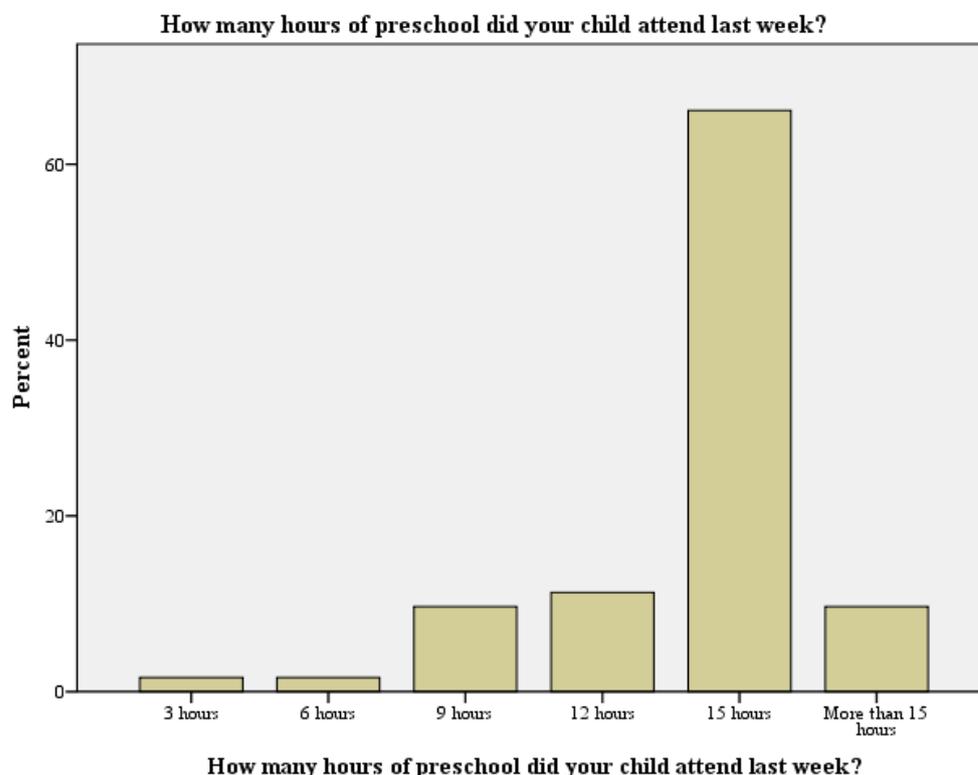
How many hours a week is your child enrolled to attend preschool?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3 hours	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	6 hours	1	1.5	1.5	3.0
	9 hours	2	2.9	3.0	6.1
	12 hours	6	8.8	9.1	15.2
	15 hours	48	70.6	72.7	87.9
	More than 15 hours	8	11.8	12.1	100.0
	Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	999.00	2	2.9		
Total		68	100.0		

Figure 6.7  
Hours of Preschool Enrolment



When examining the responses regarding actual attendance in the week prior to completion of the questionnaire (**Figure 6.8**), there is some disparity. This is partly due to the way in which preschools have opted to manage the 15 hour per child provision as allocated by *Universal Access Policy* (DECS, 2011, May) with most opting to offer three days one week and two days the next. This is also in part due to some ambiguity within the question itself. Unfortunately three of the respondents who selected *Other* did not specify hours attended and it is impossible to determine the actual attendance of their children except that it was not 3, 6, 9, 12 or 15 hours. Whether it was more or less cannot be known, so these cases were excluded from analysis of this item. The pilot study did not highlight this ambiguity which is certainly disappointing but fortunately most parents annotated their responses which offered further clarification.

Figure 6.8  
*Hours of Preschool Attendance*



What can be determined with a high degree of certainty from the responses given (**Table 6.3**), 75.8 % of the four year old children from within the sample attended 15 or more hours of preschool. Attendance of 3 and 6 hours were similar to enrolment data with both at 1.6 per cent. However there was a difference from the enrolment data in children who attended for 12 hours. This would in part explain the decrease in the number of children who attended for 15 or more hours of preschool as per their enrolment. Respondents were given the opportunity to explain the difference between their child's enrolment and attendance. However no data was collected to explain the disparity, other than one parent who explained that his/her four year old child was absent due to illness. There may be a number of reasons why children were absent from their preschool sessions but data collected here cannot answer that. However, differences between enrolment and actual attendance certainly highlight that within the week prior to data collection, as would be expected, there were differences between enrolment and actual attendance with some

children from the sample missing some of their preschool sessions and one from the sample missing all. Differences between enrolment and attendance data was also evident within the data of *The ECEC Collection* (ABS, 2013a) when looking specifically at preschool-aged children in South Australia in 2012, with 84 per cent of eligible children in South Australia enrolled to attend preschool for 15 hours or more and 56.1 per cent of children actually doing so (ABS, 2013a).

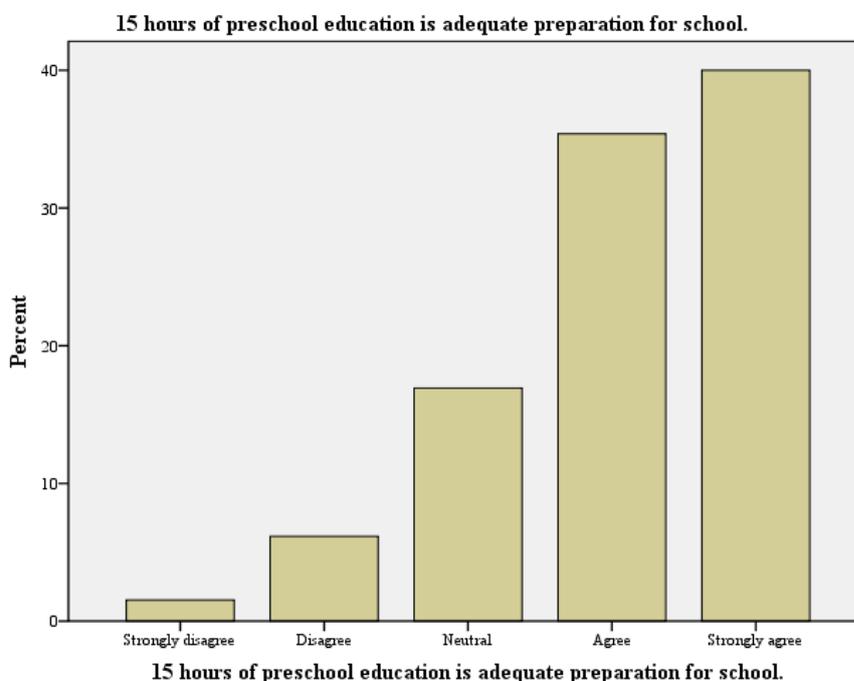
Table 6.3  
*Hours of Preschool Attendance*

How many hours of preschool did your child attend last week?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3 hours	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	6 hours	1	1.6	1.6	3.2
	9 hours	6	9.7	9.7	12.9
	12 hours	7	11.3	11.3	24.2
	15 hours	41	66.1	66.1	90.3
	More than 15 hours	6	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Seventy-five per cent of parent respondents responded *agree* or *strongly agree* (**Figure 6.9**), asserting that the 15 hours provision as per *Universal Access Policy* (DECS, 2011, May) was adequate as preparation for school commencement whilst 7.7 per cent disagreed with its adequacy. One parent actually responded later in the questionnaire that, “Fifteen hours is too much for children who have just turned four. Due to kindy’s funding you feel obligated to attend the full 15 hours. I would have been happier increasing the hours gradually.” Other parents were interested in seeing greater than the 15 hour provision as children prepared for school commencement, evidenced by the following comment by a parent, “I believe that 20 hours a week would be better suited to children in their third and fourth term of kindy. This would allow for a more consistent transition into school in relation to contact hours.” Still other parents praised preschool staff in how the provision of 15 hours per week per child was managed, whilst allowing children time at home prior to school entry, “I think 15 hours is ideal to strike a balance between learning at kinder and learning at home. I think both are very important. My children have all valued the one-on-one time they had at home as well as the kinder environment.”

Figure 6.9

*Parent Responses to Adequacy of 15 Hours of Preschool for School Preparation*



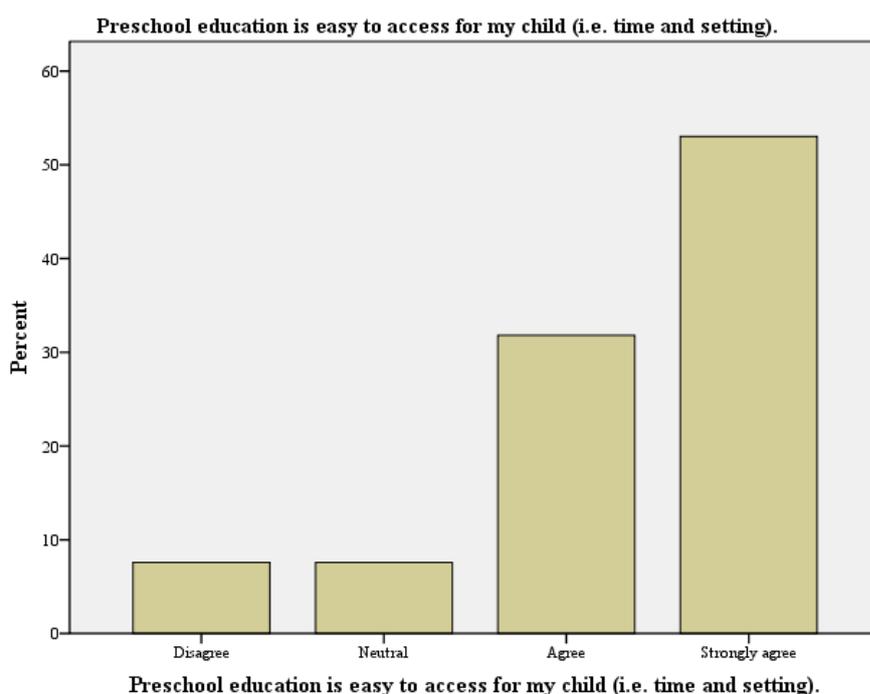
**v. Preschool Access**

A majority of parent respondents (84.8%) from the sample (n=66) indicated that preschool education was easy to access when considering time and setting (**Figure 6. 10**). One parent was particularly appreciative of how the preschool day was structured to allow for pickups of other children from other locations, “Some hours are short in order to coordinate with collecting siblings from school at a different location (the kinder is designated kinder for several schools in the region).” Whilst this is certainly encouraging for providers of preschool education, it must be remembered that the sample of parents who chose to participate from the four preschool communities are not representative of a wider sample and such results must be understood as being representative only of this relatively small sample. Parents who may have chosen not to participate may have in fact responded differently to those who did. Also, the survey only targeted parents of children enrolled and attending preschool and in doing so potentially missed collecting data from those parents whose children did not attend preschool and may have had

particular issues with access to preschool. Possibly of some concern for the participating preschools is that 7.6 per cent of parents who completed the Phase 2 questionnaire stated that access was an issue and was not easy in terms of time and setting.

Figure 6.10

*Parent Responses to Ease of Access of Preschool Education*



The increase to 15 hours offered per week per child was a point of some discussion by parents. One parent remarked, “Fifteen hours per week is not very helpful for working parents.” Another parent commented that, “The two full days is good. The two hours every other Friday is difficult to access with working as well. It would be better to offer half a day less often or even an additional full day twice a term.” Other parents were able to accommodate a half day when the 15 hours was set up in this way, “Personally, the 15 hours (spread across two full days and one half day a week) provides a good balance for us all; allowing me to manage my paid work and still being able to be present for my daughter after school. It will enable her to transition into school with (I hope) ease and confidence and a network of friends.”

Zoning restrictions created a significant difficulty accessing preschool to one particular family where the parent explained, "I find it hard finding a public kindergarten due to zoning restrictions. In \* there is no kindy and I have been advised to put my children's names down at a few and be on a waiting list for extra vacancies, this is frustrating." Whilst not further explored as beyond the scope of the present research, it is considered possible that other families may experience similar difficulties in accessing preschools of their choice.

#### **vi. Children's Time Usage**

The responses of parent respondents (n=64) regarding activities in which their children participate, demonstrate the diversity of experiences which children engage in when not attending preschool (**Table 6.4**). Most children from within the sample participated in some early literacy related activities such as drawing and writing, reading, and talking. A finding of *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* was that children from higher socio-economic backgrounds were read to significantly more than their less advantaged peers and that excessive television watching displaced time given to reading and related activities (AIFS, 2011). This research found that almost all children of the sample (n=66) participated in reading-related activities in the week prior to data collection. However data was not collected on the amount of time devoted to such activities so a comparison of this kind with the data of *LSAC* cannot be made.

The use of media such as television was common amongst most children with access to computers and related technology less but still significant. The findings of *LSAC* were that children from more disadvantaged backgrounds watched more television than their more advantaged peers (AIFS, 2011) with children three years of age and younger from disadvantaged backgrounds watching more than two hours a day. Children aged between four and five years of age from the most disadvantaged backgrounds were found to watch more than three hours television a day, over double that of their more advantaged peers (AIFS, 2011). The quantitative questionnaire of this research did not gather data on the actual amount of television viewed by children but instead sought an indication from parent respondents whether

children had viewed television in the last week. For children from this sample (n=60), television was largely a common experience. All children from less advantaged areas (ABS, 2013b) viewed television in the week prior to data collection. Similarly most children from more advantaged areas (ABS, 2013b) viewed television, with only 10 per cent of this group not viewing any television at all.

Most children participated in imaginative, outside or playground play and play with toys, friends and siblings. Somewhat less common was participation in organised extra-curricular activities (**Table 6.4**) such as active lessons (54.5%) and library lessons (30.3%). The participation of children from research sites A, B and C was similar but the children from advantaged Site D demonstrated a much higher participation rate in extra-curricular active lessons. Children from sites B and D were more likely to visit a library than their less advantaged peers at sites A and C. The influence of adults in children's lives was evident with 74.2 per cent of children cooking with an adult in the week prior to the questionnaire being completed. More children from the advantaged research sites B and D, participated in cooking with an adult than their less advantaged peers at Sites A and C.

Higher participation in educational games by children from more advantaged research sites B and D, was evident from within the sample (n=66). Site C showed only slightly less participation (56.7 %) despite being regarded as less advantaged (ABS, 2013b). Participation in education and employment of parents at Site C indicated a difference to Site A, also considered less advantaged by demonstrating lower levels of parental participation in education and employment. As evidenced by the cited examples, it is argued that socio-economic factors, particularly parental education and employment, can affect the type of experiences children have when not attending preschool and that the nature of children's early experiences have a bearing on children's development and dispositions for learning.

Table 6.4

*Parent Responses as to Activities in Which Children Participate*

Activities in which children participate	% of parents who responded	
	Yes	No
Reading a story or being read to	97.0	3
Singing songs and nursery rhymes	81.8	18.2
Talking	95.5	4.5
Playing with letters and numbers	78.8	21.2
Drawing and early writing	86.4	13.6
Colouring	83.3	16.7
Playing educational games	54.5	45.5
Using computer	66.7	33.3
Watching television, video, DVD, movie	95.5	4.5
Listening to CD's, radio, music	71.2	28.8
Playing with toys	100	0
Cooking with an adult	74.2	25.8
Imaginative play	80.3	19.7
Playing outside at home	97	3
Riding bicycle/tricycle	77.3	22.7
Other exercise	81.8	18.2
Playing with friend or sibling	95.5	4.5
Travelling in pusher or on bicycle seat	19.7	80.3
Travelling in car or other household vehicle	97	3
Travelling on public transport, ferry or plane	18.2	81.8
Walking for travel or fun	66.7	33.3
Attending child care	27.3	72.7
Attending occasional care	0	100
Attending play group	9.1	90.9
Attending extra-curricular active lesson (e.g. dancing, swimming, gym)	54.5	45.5
Attending extra-curricular library lesson	10.6	89.4
Visiting playground	84.8	15.2
Visiting library	30.3	69.7
Visiting shops	89.4	10.6
Socialising with family and friends	89.4	10.6
Visiting museum, art gallery, exhibition, performance	6.1	93.9
Other	12.1	87.9

**vii. Discussion**

The two phases of the study and its varied data sources specifically respond to the research questions and illustrate how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform. Discussed next are the findings related to the first research question.

**a. Findings on Research Question 1**

Data from Phases 1 and 2 inform the findings for the first research question:

**What are parents' perceptions of the purposes of preschool and their decision-making associated with choice of preschool and attendance in a time of policy reform?**

- *Finding: Most parents from the sample (n=66) valued preschool in preparing their children for school.*

Ninety per cent of parents responded that they valued preschool in preparing their children for school. Qualitative responses varied with some parents desiring opportunities for their children to use their imagination, follow rules and develop friendships whilst others preferred more structure such as teacher-directed literacy activities.

- *Finding: Most parents from the sample (n=66) thought that access to preschool was easy.*

Most parents (84.8%) stated that access to preschool was easy. Whilst 7.6 per cent were neutral on this particular item, 7.6 per cent of parents from the sample thought access was an issue.

- *Finding: Proximity to home and the quality of the educational programme were most significant in decision-making of parents from the sample (n=66) regarding their children's attendance at preschool.*

Fifty-six per cent of parents nominated proximity to home as being significant in selecting a preschool for their children. The quality of the educational programme was a consideration for 50 per cent of parents from the sample (n=66) and being co-located with a primary campus was important to 43.9 per cent of parents. Other considerations included friends and family attending the same preschool (25.8 per cent), child care centre picking up and dropping off to preschool (22.7 per cent), sibling attended same preschool (19.7 per cent), and proximity to parents' work (12.1 per cent). In a study of the usage of early childhood services of 175 children, Rodd (1996) found that parents weighed geographic, and child-parent related factors when deciding upon an early childhood setting for their children with

child-focused reasons most prominent. The findings of the current research are consistent with that of Rodd (1996).

### **b. Findings on Research Question 3**

Data from Phases 1 and 2 inform the findings for the third research question:

#### **How are children accessing and experiencing preschool in a time of policy reform?**

- *Finding: Most children from within the sample (n=66) were enrolled to attend 15 hours or more of preschool a week.*

From the sample (n=66), 84.8 per cent of children were enrolled to attend 15 hours or more of preschool a week at the time of the research. The enrolment data from the present research, albeit from a limited sample (n=63) is consistent with that of *The National ECEC Collection* (ABS, 2013a). Of the 18,972 four year old children enrolled to attend preschool in South Australia, 84 per cent of children were enrolled 15 or more hours a week (ABS, 2013a). Within the present research, 9.1 per cent of children were enrolled to attend 12 hours of preschool per week, 3 per cent were enrolled for nine hours and 1.5 per cent for six or three hours respectively. The research found that of the sample (n=66), there were 15.1 per cent enrolled for less than the 15 hour provision (DECS, 2011, May).

- *Finding: Attendance rates were lower than enrolment rates with 75.8 per cent of children from within the sample (n=66) attending 15 hours or more of preschool a week.*

From the sample (n=62), 75.8% children attended preschool for 15 hours in the week prior to the questionnaire being completed. This was actually greater than the 56.1 per cent of children who attended preschool for 15 or more hours per week from the data of *The National ECEC Collection* (ABS, 2013a) of the 18,972 four year old children enrolled to attend preschool in South Australia. In the present research, there were 11.3 per cent of children who attended for 12 hours, 9.7 per cent attended for 9 hours, and 1.6 per cent for six or three hours respectively.

- *Finding: Activities related to sleep, personal care and well-being accounted for the greatest amount of time in the children's day.*

*Personal care and well-being activities* accounted for the largest proportion of time in the 24 hour diaries of the four children of the case studies. Sleeping or napping accounted for between 28 and 46 per cent of time in the day of the four children from the case studies accounting for 11, 13, 11.5 and 10.5 hours respectively. The data from *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* reported that children slept just over 11 hours a night on weekdays and spent four hours a day on personal care, with the most time devoted to eating, drinking or being fed (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). The data from the four case studies is comparable regarding sleep but divergent in regard to personal care, with the child of Case Study 1 participating in three hours of *Personal care and well-being activities* excluding sleep; Case Study 2, two hours; Case Study 3, one hour; and Case Study 4, four hours. The data collected for the case studies provided detail about a day in the life of four actual four year old children and the 24 hour diary successfully collected data about children's sleep and personal care activities.

- *Finding: There was considerable difference in the nature of and time devoted to home-based activities between children within the case studies (n=4).*

*Home-based activities* of the four children from the case studies accounted for 27 per cent, 8 per cent, 25 per cent and 56 per cent of their time respectively. The only common experience at home between the four children from the case studies was watching television. Two of the four children who participated in the case studies, who read a story or were read to, also enjoyed the opportunity to sing songs and nursery rhymes, and talk. One child also drew, completed early writing activities and coloured. Two children also participated in different types of play including playing with toys and imaginative play. The only activity which James of Case Study 3 was said to have participated in at home was watching television whilst Anwar from Case Study 2 balanced watching television with active play with toys, a friend or sibling, and riding a bicycle. Travel and excursions also featured in three of the four children's days between three and four per cent and three and seven per cent respectively. Preschool attendance of the children from Case Studies 1 and 2 and

child care of the child from Case Study 3 accounted for a considerable period of the day, between 21 and 34 per cent in fact.

Girls, children of more highly educated mothers and mothers who were not employed were found within *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* to participate in more 'achievement-related activities', to watch less television and perform better in achievement domains but boys were found to participate in more exercise than girls, and children with two or more siblings also exercised more than children with no or only one sibling (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). Jane of Case Study 1 watched one and a half hours of television. Anwar of Case Study 2 watched television for two hours. James of Case Study 3 watched two hours of television and used the computer for one hour. Eva of Case Study 4 watched one and a half hours of television and used the computer for half an hour. The instrument allowed for effective data collection to allow for comparison of four year old children's time spent at home.

- *Finding: The children of the case studies (n=4) slept between 10.5 and 11.5 hours.*

Jane of Case Study 1 slept for 11.5 hours, Anwar of Case Study 2 for 11 hours, James of Case Study 3 for 11.5 hours, and Eva of Case Study 4 for 10.5 hours. This is consistent with the data of the *Wave 1 Diary* of the *LSAC* which saw the sample of four year old children (n=4,983) sleep for just over 11 hours in a 24 hour period (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). Jane was asleep until 7:00 am in the morning; Anwar until 6:00 am; James until 8:30 am; and Eva until 7:00 am. Baxter and Hayes (2007) found that over half the children of the sample (n=4,983) were awake by 7:15 am and the majority were awake by 9:00 am during the week.

At night, Baxter and Hayes (2007) found that only five per cent of children were asleep by 7:00 pm with about half of the children asleep by 8:15 pm. Jane was asleep by 7:30 pm, Anwar by 7:00 pm, James by 9:00 pm and Eva by 8:30 pm. The sleep and waking times of the children of the case studies (n=4) were consistent with the findings of Baxter and Hayes (2007), that many four year old children are still awake after 8:15 pm. The case studies provide a useful picture of the sleeping routines of four year old children but the researcher concedes that it may have been

relevant to integrate some similar items into the Phase 2 questionnaire of the larger sample (n=66) to see whether these findings were consistent.

- *Finding: Most children from within the sample (n=66) read a story or were read to at least once in the week prior to data collection and most participated in some early literacy activity at home at least once in the week prior to data collection.*

Ninety-seven per cent of children from the sample (n=66) read a story or were read to by another person in the week prior to data collection. Aside from reading and being read to, 81.8 per cent of children sang songs and nursery rhymes, and 78.8 per cent of children played with letters and numbers. Eighty-six per cent of children participated in drawing and early writing, whilst 54.5 per cent of children participated in educational games. Baxter and Hayes (2007) refer to the following as achievement-related activities: having a story read to them, talking or singing, colouring or looking at books, playing educational games, and learning to do chores. Data of the *Wave 1 Diary* (Baxter & Hayes, 2007) found that only 20 per cent of four year old children participated in these types of activities at any time on a weekday with the most likely time for them to participate in such activities to be early evening.

The present research found to the contrary, most children read a story or were read to, sang songs and nursery rhymes, played with letters and numbers and participated in some drawing or early writing activities. How this difference may in part be accounted for is that data from *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* was collected by parents completing a 24 hour diary of their children's activities for a weekday and a weekend. Respondents of the larger sample of the current research were asked to indicate retrospectively which activities their children participated in over the course of the past week. This may account for higher participation of children in these sorts of activities as parents of the present research may have been able to recall one occasion over the five days of the working week when their children participated in such activities, whereas parents' responses within the *LSAC* data needed to be specific to the 24 hour collection period only.

Two of the four children from the case studies of Phase 1 participated in activities such as reading and nursery rhymes over the 24 hour period in which data

was collected, being similar to the findings from LSAC. Thirty per cent of children from the sample (n=66) visited a library in the week prior to data collection. Many of these children also participated in other 'achievement-related activities' (Baxter & Hayes, 2007).

- *Finding: Most children from the sample (n=66) watched television, a video, DVD or movie in the week prior to data collection.*

Most children (95.5%) shared the common experience of watching television in the week prior to data collection. Baxter and Hayes (2007) found that children of the K cohort (n=4,983), in response to the *Wave 1 Diary* of the LSAC, watched on average 138 minutes (2.3 hours) of television on weekdays. This is clearly a significant amount of time and the current research reflects that most children within this much smaller sample (n=66) also participated in this common experience. Television viewing displaces time which may otherwise be devoted to reading and other 'achievement-related' activities (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). This was true of the children of the case studies where the children who watched the greatest amount of television participated less in such experiences at home. This item may have been improved for comparison with the LSAC data, if parents of the larger sample were asked to nominate how long their children watched television in the 24 hours prior to the questionnaire being completed.

- *Finding: All children within the sample (n=66) participated in play in the week prior to data collection.*

All children from within the sample (n=66) played with toys at least once in the week prior to data collection with 80.3 per cent of children participating in imaginative play. Ninety-seven per cent of children played outside at least once, and 95.5 per cent of children played with a friend or sibling in the week prior to data collection. Baxter and Hayes (2007) found that Australian children spend a large proportion of the day engaged in play. Article 31 of *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 2005) states, "That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts." All children of the sample engaged in play and exercised their right as children to do so. The item within the Phase 2 questionnaire allowed for a conclusion to be drawn about children's play

over the course of a week. Further research could see the 24 hour diary distributed to all participants to gain a more detailed picture of time devoted to play and other activities.

- *Finding: Seventy-seven per cent of children from the sample (n=66) rode a bicycle or tricycle in the week prior to data collection, with 81.8 per cent participating in other forms of exercise.*

Most children within the sample (n=66) participated in some form of exercise in the week prior to data collection. Baxter & Hayes (2007) found that three quarters of the sample of the children from Wave 1 of *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* participated in some form of exercise during each weekday but more exercise was done over the weekend. The most likely time for children to exercise during the week was throughout the day but this then decreased at lunchtime (Baxter & Hayes, 2007). The children from the case studies (n=4) within the research all participated in some sort of exercise during their day but three of the four did so after lunch and into the evening, differing from the *LSAC* data, perhaps due to their participation in organised activities during their day, such as preschool and child care.

- *Finding: Eighty per cent of children from the sample (n=66) visited a shop, playground and socialised with friends and family in the week prior to data collection.*

The excursions which most children participated in were very everyday in nature with 80 per cent visiting a shop, playground or engaging in a social outing with friends. This may in part be due to when children travelled. Baxter & Hayes (2007) found that 50 per cent of children participated in social or organised activities which included preschool and child care on a weekday and as a result much of their travel occurred at the beginning and end of the day, to and from these settings (Baxter & Hayes, 2007).

- *Finding: Fifty per cent of children from the sample (n=66) participated in at least one active extra-curricular lesson (e.g. dancing, swimming, gym) in the week prior to data collection.*

Active lessons where children participated in extra-curricular activities showed lower rates of participation than other activities. Whilst data was not

collected on why this was so, cost in particular may have been prohibitive to some families, as may have been the ability to access such activities for their children. Some parents may also have chosen not to enrol their children in organised activities at such a young age. Rodd (1996) found that almost half of the four year old children from within a sample of 175 participated in some form of extra-curricular activity over the course of a week. The findings from the present research are consistent with this.

- *Finding: Six per cent of children from the sample (n=66) visited a museum, art gallery, exhibition or performance in the week prior to data collection.*

Visiting a museum, art gallery, exhibition, or performance was not a common experience amongst children from within the sample (n=64) with only 6.1 per cent of children doing so. Baxter and Hayes (2007) found children of couple families and children of more highly educated fathers, travelled to and were taken to more places. Children within the current research who participated in excursions to museums, art galleries, exhibitions and performances were from families with mothers educated to diploma (n=1), under-graduate (n=1) and post-graduate (n=2) level; and fathers educated to Year 12 (n=1), trade certificate (n=1) and diploma (n=2) level. The children who participated in a cultural excursion were all from couple families and with fathers who had completed secondary or further education. This was consistent with the data of *Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* for the K cohort of Wave 1. Two of the four children were from more advantaged areas and two from less (ABS, 2013b). Within the current research, the area the children where children resided did not determine their participation in such an experience, but family structure and fathers' education was relevant.

### **viii. Conclusion**

This chapter argues that parents consider first the location of a preschool as their primary concern and then the quality of a learning programme on offer when choosing a preschool for their children. The sum of children's experiences are important to their early development. Children are enrolled to attend more hours of

preschool than they actually do. During a time of policy reform this is particularly relevant when attempting to understand some of the complexities of children's enrolment and attendance at preschool. The chapter also presents data illustrating that experiences children have when not attending preschool are influenced by socio-economic factors such as parent education and employment. Children from more advantaged homes may be exposed to different experiences than their less advantaged peers, such as educational games, cooking with an adult and visiting a library.

#### **viv. Summary**

The research process of this thesis provided rich data from parents, preschool educators and observations of working preschool environments. Further refinement of the questionnaires would address any shortcomings with question design and be more detailed around the research questions as previously discussed. The data collected through the participation of parents and preschool educators was valuable, not only in response to the research questions but also to raise issues of importance to participants related to preschool education in South Australia currently and into the future.

The research could be built upon by further exploring the effects of the policy reforms now that they have been implemented. Further research would also be beneficial in exploring how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in different settings and in urban, country and isolated areas within this current climate of policy reform. It would be pertinent to explore whether the investment of the Commonwealth in early childhood education and its accompanying policy reform translates to improved and measurable outcomes for all Australian children, regardless of where they reside and attend preschool.

Additional questions emerging from this thesis which could lead to further research include:

- How do parents equip themselves with adequate information to inform their decision-making about prospective preschools?
- How have preschools and schools adapted to the changes to preschool and school entry brought about by Same First Day?
- Do preschool educators perceive the policy reforms in early childhood as having had a positive effect in acknowledging the work and professionalism of early childhood educators?

The most significant findings of this research are explored and discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter argues that socio-economic and parental education factors contribute to differences in children's access and experience of preschool in a time of policy reform. Children's life experiences away from the preschool setting also influence their access and experience of preschool. It is established that preschool educators perceive positive benefits of the National Quality Framework (NQF) as increased professional recognition and potential improvement of low-performing centres. However educators' concerns lay not only with the additional workload but also the ability of the NQF to affect real and genuine improvement for all South Australian children enrolled and attending preschool education in South Australia.

It is acknowledged that South Australia has better enrolment rates of eligible children than ACT, NT and Queensland but Australia's average at 51 per cent compared with the OECD average of 79 per cent is cause for concern (Peatling, 2013). Even in South Australia, one in ten children do not attend any preschool programme at all. It is argued that this is unacceptable if all South Australian children are to be advantaged in their educational journey as life-long learners. Attendance is not as strong as enrolment rates and this too may mask another group of eligible children who are not taking full advantage of their right to 15 hours a week of quality preschool education. If preschools under-perform, children most at risk of social and educational disadvantage may not receive the excellent early childhood experiences which they so need. Therefore the Commonwealth's investment in early childhood education and the converging policy reforms of the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) are an important initial step in ensuring better outcomes for all Australian children and acknowledging the important work of early childhood educators.

The most significant findings of the research and associated implications for preschool education in South Australia are discussed next.

**i. Parents' perceptions of the purposes of preschool and their decision-making associated with choice of preschool and attendance in a time of policy reform**

Parents of preschool children within the present research (n=66) made decisions about their choice of preschool setting based predominantly on its proximity to home (56%), the quality of the educational programme (50%) and being co-located with a primary campus (43.9%). The parents of the present research were motivated by child-related reasons in their choice of preschool which is consistent with the findings of Rodd (1996).

Proximity to home being important to parents, has some implications when considering the role of centralised services and locality of children's centres. What does this mean for families who need to commute further to preschool, particularly those for whom transport is a real logistical issue? The quality of the educational programme is a significant consideration for parents when selecting a suitable preschool for their children. What is not known is how parents equip themselves with adequate information to make this assessment, whether this is by visiting preschool settings, by gathering information from web-based sources, the preschool itself or through accounts from other parents of children already attending the preschool. This may be worthy of further research and have value in determining how parents choose to access information when making such an important decision about their children's early childhood experience. This in turn could further contribute to the understanding of preschool services and how to best inform prospective parents about specifics of the preschool programme and environment.

Being co-located with a primary campus was important to almost half of the parents (43.9%) of the sample (n=66). This may be due to the perceived continuity from preschool to primary school and/or the convenience of having more than one child at the same site.

Parents' decision-making about their children's preschool was also influenced by other factors such as friends and family having attended the same preschool (25.8%); child care centre picking up and dropping off to preschool (22.7%); older sibling having attended the same preschool (19.7%); and proximity to

parents' work (12.1%). Where family and friends attended the same preschool, parents were able to apply a different perspective in their decision-making based upon the experiences of others. The convenience of a child care centre either being co-located or dropping off and picking up from the preschool and/or being close to parents' place of employment balanced the needs of parents and children as suggested by Rodd (1996). These factors may have also enabled children to access preschool in a way that logistically worked for families, and may in part have secured the attendance of these children at preschool.

As suggested by preschool educators, flexible care options provided for families on site with their children's preschool could further support children's attendance at preschool. Young children can only attend preschool with the commitment of parents and families (DECD, 2013). Families are given additional support to access preschool for their children when flexible care which is responsive to their needs, can be provided on site. Competing demands of family and work life, logistical issues and the perceived value by parents of children's attendance at preschool all impact upon children's actual attendance even when they are enrolled.

**ii. Preschool educators' perceptions of the purposes of preschool in a time of policy reform**

Preschool educators were mostly positive about the increase of children's time at preschool to 15 hours per week (DECS, 2011, May). Criticisms of the 15 hour allocation included difficulties associated with accommodating 15 hours of attendance where the preschool day is six hours in duration. Preschool educators at Site A explained that their preschool operated on a fortnightly rotation of three days one week and two days the next. Preschool educators at Site B discussed how they were entirely flexible as to what worked for parents and families, but still there were some parents who opted to enrol their children for only 12 hours (2 days) as the half day was perceived to be difficult to work in with less flexible child care settings.

Preschool educators expressed concerns about what Same First Day (DECD, 2013, August) would mean for early childhood settings. Most commonly discussed was the potential impact of a greater variation in ages of children within the

preschool, particularly those children who will be within the preschool environment until they are five and a half, with a birthday after the May 1<sup>st</sup> cut off. Preschool educators spoke about how within their preschools, there were opportunities to transition these children to school earlier as both were co-located with primary campuses, but for stand-alone preschools it may be considerably more challenging to adequately cater for children aged three years and nine months and five and a half years of age within the same environment. Further developing relationships between feeder preschools and local primary schools and some innovative practice may in part address this issue. It is certainly deserving of further study to examine how preschools adapt to this change and also to illustrate best practice which could be adapted and implemented in other settings.

Understanding the diverse experiences which children bring to school, knowing each child and their family and engaging children in an emergent curriculum was at the heart of the purposes of preschool which preschool educators discussed. Developing children's dispositions for learning, life skills and resilience were also highly regarded. What is clear from the present research is that preschool educators value the National Quality Framework (NQF) for encouraging a better understanding of the value of quality early education and for improving the public perception of early childhood educators and the work which they do. Despite extensive research in the area, preschool educators still felt that a gulf existed between children's experiences at preschool and going to 'big school'. The term 'preschool' was also contentious, with preschool educators preferring 'kindergarten'. Preschool educators expressed the desire to see greater continuity between children's experiences of preschool and school with children at the centre of all work collaborated on. Also of importance to preschool educators was the consideration of a Birth-8 curriculum as opposed to the current Birth-5 focus of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

Reggio-inspired philosophies were evident at both preschool settings observed within the research. Whilst both had their own specific culture and attributes, in common, preschool educators were motivated by the interests and needs of individual children, and emphasised the importance of acknowledging and understanding the role of parents and families in children's educational journey.

Children had the capacity to make genuine choices within the preschool environment and staff were available to interact and guide children where needed. The relationship between educator and child was respectful and children were regarded as competent. Preschool educators sought not to impose their own agenda on children but instead to value and acknowledge children's rights and voice within the learning environment. Movement between indoor and outdoor settings was fluid, with children choosing where they wanted to be and which experiences they would engage in. Whilst some whole and small group times existed in both settings, preschool educators sought to minimise disruptions to children's endeavours by carefully managing transitions.

The language which the researcher observed the children using demonstrated a common understanding of how to conduct themselves within the learning environment. Preschool educators within the space were approachable yet unobtrusive and were seen to interact with children, responsive to what was asked of them. Children's work was displayed thoughtfully, particularly at one of the research sites. Images, photographs and pictures reflected children's learning and children were eager to share their stories with visitors to their preschool. Both preschools encouraged children to explore their environment and only what children could access, use, play with and learn from was available in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. Children were free to choose and were encouraged to be responsible for resources, equipment and learning spaces by sharing in their maintenance and clean up. Children's questions and inquiries were highly regarded in both preschools. Developing dispositions for learning, resilience and life skills and fostering a positive and genuine relationship with families was what preschool educators espoused and was evident in their practice.

### **iii. Children's access and experience of preschool in a time of policy reform**

The majority of children of the sample (n=66) were enrolled to attend preschool for the 15 hours (72.7 per cent) allocated for each child under *Universal Access Policy* (DECS, 2011, May). There were children (12.1 per cent) who were enrolled to access more than the 15 hours due to their enrolment at more than one

early childhood setting. Preschool educators in the semi-structured interviews explained that some parents had elected to enrol their children for 12 hours a week because having two set days which didn't change week to week was perceived to be easier to manage with child care and other family commitments. This may in part explain the 9.1 per cent of four year old children within the present research who were enrolled for 12 hours. Six per cent of children were enrolled for less than this. The reason for this is not known and can only be speculated. For further use of the questionnaire, it would be advantageous to ask parents why children were enrolled for less than the allocated 15 hours. Since 84.8 per cent of respondents (n=66) to the Phase 2 questionnaire answered that preschool was easy to access, it may be that the children of the 7.6 per cent of parents who responded that preschool was not easy to access, may in fact be the same children enrolled for less than 12 hours at the preschool setting.

From the data of the present research, it can be understood that most children of the sample (n=66) were enrolled and attended 15 or more hours of preschool per week. Attendance was as expected, less than enrolment. Reasons for this were not given by all respondents although those who did respond cited illness.

Whilst most children (75.8 per cent) from within the sample (n=62) attended 15 hours or more of preschool a week, some 24.8 per cent of children attended less than 15 hours of preschool (n=62). According to data of *The National ECEC Collection* (ABS, 2013a), of the 18,972 four year old children enrolled to attend preschool in South Australia, 55.2 per cent of children attended preschool for 15 or more hours per week. The findings from the present research saw a higher percentage of four year old children from the particular sample (n=62) attending preschool for 15 or more hours per week in the week prior to data collection than that reported in *The National ECEC Collection* (ABS, 2013a).

The encouraging statistic of nine in ten Australian children enrolled in a recognised preschool programme (ABS, 2013a; CCCH, 2011) illustrates the uptake of preschool education by most families for their four year old children. However conversely, one in ten eligible Australian children not attending any sort of preschool (ABS, 2013a; CCCH, 2011; DECS, 2010) is worrying, potentially compounding entrenched social disadvantage (Vinson, 2007). If we look at the data from OECD,

disadvantage of very young Australians looks worse again with Australia's average at 51 per cent compared with the OECD average of 79 per cent (Peatling, 2013).

As evidenced by this research and larger datasets such as that of *The National ECEC Collection* (ABS, 2013a), enrolment at preschool does not ensure attendance. It cannot be assumed that because a child is enrolled, the same child attends regularly. By looking at enrolment data in isolation, the actual attendance of children is obscured. More needs to be done to engage with families of both non-enrolled and non-attending children to inform an honest assessment of issues and factors related to children's non-enrolment and non-attendance at preschool.

The data of the current research suggests that there are factors to consider other than merely how advantaged or disadvantaged preschool locations are. The site with the highest percentage of children enrolled for 15 or more hours per week was one of the less advantaged research sites, closely followed by an advantaged site (ABS, 2013b). Site B, an advantaged site, had the lowest percentage of children enrolled for 15 or more hours per week. This may have been for a number of reasons. It may be that the parents who responded are different from those who did not and therefore are not representative of other parents from the preschool. It may be as suggested by the Director of Site B that many parents had opted to only enrol their children for two days a week (12 hours) so that there was constancy in which days their children would attend. Parent education appeared to be of greater relevance to children's enrolment and attendance at preschool, than where families resided.

As discussed by preschool educators within the research, early childhood settings are only part of many children's young lives and the child, peers, parents, educators and community contribute to each child's preschool experience. Acknowledgment, support and investment in further professional development of educators who facilitate children's learning in early childhood settings can only further enhance the experience of the people who come together in the preschool community. High quality educators improve outcomes and experiences for children (Cobb-Clark & Jha, 2013). It is in people where the wisest investment is made.

The case studies serve to illustrate how divergent children's home experiences can be, and highlights the importance of being responsive to the needs of

each child. Not all home learning environments are advantaged and whilst most have the capacity to promote valuable learning experiences and develop dispositions for learning in young children, this would not be true of all. There were many common experiences which the four year old children from within the larger sample (n=66) shared but as expected, there were also differences. For the six per cent of children from the larger sample (n=66) who visited a museum, art gallery, exhibition or performance in the week prior to data collection, this was something not experienced by their peers. Half the children of the larger sample attended an extra-curricular active lesson and half did not. However most children shared the experience of visiting a shop, a playground and socialising with friends and family. Exposure to television was common to most children in the week prior to data collection. Encouragingly, all children of the sample participated in play and most children read a story, were read to or participated in literacy-related activities.

Preschool educators who form partnerships with families have a greater likelihood of understanding the experiences children participate in when not attending preschool. Knowing that half of all four year old children are not asleep until after 8:15 pm (Baxter & Hayes, 2007) as illustrated within the case studies of the present research, may help educators anticipate when these children are likely to become fatigued during the preschool day. The majority of parents of the larger sample read to their children and most children had participated in other literacy activities which is certainly encouraging when one considers that the sample was slightly less advantaged than advantaged (ABS, 2013b). This suggests value being placed on such activities by families of preschool children. The participation of most children in television viewing at home particularly during the summer months, also implies the importance of giving children active options at preschool, especially when considering that two out of ten children were quite sedentary at home and did not participate in any exercise-related activities in the week prior to data collection.

#### **iv. Conclusion**

Whilst most eligible South Australian children are enrolled to attend 15 hours or more of preschool, there are some who are not. There are more again who are not

represented in this research, who are not enrolled at all in preschool or long day care with a preschool programme (ABS, 2013a). What if, as preschool educators within the research have suggested, that these are the children and families who may be most in need of education, support and intervention? Preschool educators cannot effect change in the lives of children who are not enrolled or do not attend preschool. The challenge presented by the research is, how do early childhood providers connect with people disenfranchised from what early education can offer their children and families?

Every child deserves to be welcomed into the preschool classroom by qualified, skilled staff ably led by good leadership, working collegially towards best practice and motivated by the rights and well-being of the child. Similarly, preschool educators deserve professional support to develop their own practice and competence as teaching professionals, as well as receiving recognition for the important work which they undertake every day with children and families.

The present changes under the National Quality Framework (NQF), whilst most certainly very welcome, don't yet go far enough and two such examples of this are; the financial under-investment of government in providing qualified staff at every preschool at every preschool session (Fenech et al., 2013) and the limited professional support available to assist preschool settings achieve the goal of quality early childhood education for every Australian child (COAG, 2009). If the NQF becomes primarily about meeting minimum standards, its promise may never be realised. A rating of 'excellent' needs to be the goal of every service if all children enrolled in preschool are to be given equitable opportunities to make the best start at preschool.

The quality, experience and education of staff can have an immediate bearing on the ability of early childhood services to improve the outcomes for children through quality early childhood education and care. As evidenced by other sectors, investment in teacher education, support and leadership translates to genuine and measurable outcomes for children (Cobb & Clark & Jha, 2013). Under the National Quality Framework (NQF), in centres with fewer than 25 approved places or 25 children in attendance, a qualified early childhood teacher is required to be present for only 20 per cent of time (ACECQA, 2013a). Further investment must occur to

better support preschool directors and their staff in achieving or exceeding the National Quality Standard and in the provision of qualified educators in every session attended by children.

The onus is also on preschools and primary schools to ensure continuity for children and families as children engage in their educational journey, whether the preschool is located as a stand-alone, on site with a primary campus or within a long day care setting. Educators from both early childhood and primary settings need to create and be given opportunities to meet and develop collegial relationships with the interests of children their prime motivation. Greater professional and practical support may need to be provided to preschool directors from within each sector to keep up with the requirements of the National Quality Framework (NQF) so that they are able to also focus on the children and families enrolled within their settings and not become overwhelmed by the volume of paperwork and implied workload as required by the National Quality Standard.

#### **v. Summary**

The Commonwealth's investment in early childhood education and the converging policy reforms of the National Quality Framework (NQF), Universal Access, Same First Day and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) are an important initial step in ensuring better outcomes for all Australian children and for acknowledging the important work of early childhood educators.

The early childhood sector is diverse and complex. Any measure of these policy reforms needs to be carefully and honestly undertaken in order to assess the success or failure in delivering the vision of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) that all Australian children have access to high quality early childhood education (COAG, 2009). The voices of parents and preschool educators are integral to understanding how they perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform.

Extending this current research to capture stories of children, their families and seeking out the discerning voices of a larger group of preschool educators will be valuable in understanding the ongoing developments in early childhood education.

The goal of further research would be to ascertain changes, if any, in how parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool. This work should be undertaken to incorporate preschools that are both urban and remote, located in advantaged and disadvantaged areas, and are culturally and linguistically diverse. COAG's commitment is to every Australian child. The first steps have been made, the measure of that commitment will be seen in what comes next.

## Bibliography

- Á Beckett, C., Konakov, S., & Robertson, J. (2012). More meaningful ways through culturally responsive approaches. *Every Child*, 18(1), 36-37. [Online] <http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/fullText;dn=193539;res=AEIPT> [Jul, 23, 2013].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2007). *2006 Census Tables, cat. no. 2068.0*: ABS. [Online] <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [January 15, 2012].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2008). *Population Projections: Series B Australia 2006 to 2101, September 2008, 3222.0*: ABS. [Online] <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3222.0> [September 16, 2011].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2008a). *Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), data cube: SuperTABLE, cat. no. 2033.055.001*: ABS. [Online] <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012006?OpenDocument> [January 15, 2012].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2009). *Childhood Education and Care, Australia June 2008, cat. no. 44020D003\_200806*: ABS. [Online] [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4402.0June%202008%20\(Reissue\)?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4402.0June%202008%20(Reissue)?OpenDocument) [April 16, 2012].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2011). *Experimental Estimates of Preschool Education*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. [Online] <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4240.0Explanatory%20Notes12010?OpenDocument> [September 16, 2011].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2013). *Estimates of Preschool Education*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. [Online] [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5AED3993A2C5D651CA257B2C000F62BA/\\$File/42400\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5AED3993A2C5D651CA257B2C000F62BA/$File/42400_2012.pdf) [July 1, 2013].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2013a). *Preschool Education Australia*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. [Online] [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5AED3993A2C5D651CA257B2C000F62BA/\\$File/42400\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5AED3993A2C5D651CA257B2C000F62BA/$File/42400_2012.pdf) [July 1, 2013].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2013b). *Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), data cube, 2011: SuperTABLE, cat. no. 2033.055.001*: ABS. [Online] <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012011?OpenDocument> [July 9, 2013].

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013). *Assessment and Ratings*. [Online] <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/assessments-and-ratings> [July 11, 2013].

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013a). *Early Childhood Teaching Qualifications*. [Online] <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/early-childhood-teaching-qualifications> [July 11, 2013].

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013b). *National Quality Framework*. [Online] <http://acecqa.gov.au/Uploads/files/Information%20sheets/2-ACECQA%20Information%20Sheet%20-%20Overview.pdf> [July 22, 2013].

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013c). *ACECQA Snapshot. A report from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (May 1, 2013)*. [Online] <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/Uploads/files/130501ACECQA%20Snapshot%20FINAL.pdf> [July 22, 2013].

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). (2012). *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report 2011*. Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)., & Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACCSIA). (2004). *Wave 1 Diary*. [Online] <http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/studyqns/docs/w1-tudk.pdf> [September 10, 2011].

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)., & Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACCSIA) (2009). *Growing Up in Australia 3.5B09 from Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)*. [Online] [www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/studyqns/docs/w3p5-b.pdf](http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/studyqns/docs/w3p5-b.pdf) [September 5, 2011].

Barnes, H. (2012). The introduction of the National Quality Framework: A significant milestone in our history. *Every Child*, 18(1), 4-5.

Baxter, J. (2013). Families working together. Getting the balance right. *Australian Family Trends No. 2. Facts Sheet 2013* [Online] Australian Institute of Family Studies. <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/factsheets/2013/familytrends/aft2/index.html> [July 7, 2013].

Baxter, J., & Hayes, A. (2007). How four year olds spend their day: Insights into the caring contexts of young children. *Family Matters*, 76, 34-43.

The Benevolent Society. (2010). *Investing in Children's Development: The Importance of Early Relationships*. Paddington, NSW: The Benevolent Society.

Bittman, M., & Siphthorp, M. (2012). Turned on, tuned in or dropped out? Young children's use of television and transmission of social advantage. *Growing Up in Australia. The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report 2011*. [Online] Australian Institute of Family Studies. <http://www.growingupinaustralia.gov.au/pubs/asr/2011/ch5asr2011.pdf> [June 10, 2013].

Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2013). Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education. In J.L. Roopnarine & J.E. Johnson (Eds.), *Approaches to Early Childhood Education* (pp. 241-260). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Burns, R. B. (2000). *Introduction to Research Methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.

Burr, V. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.

Butler, P. (2007). Celebrating 100 years of early childhood teacher education. *UniSA News*. [Online] <http://w3.unisa.edu.au/unisanews/2007/february/celebrating.asp> [June 22, 2013].

Cadwell, L.B. (2003). *Bringing Learning to Life: The Reggio Approach to Early Childhood Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Canadian Council on Learning (CCL). (2006). Let the children play: Nature's answer to early learning. *Lessons in Learning*. [Online] Canadian Council on Learning. <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/Nov-08-06-Let-the-Children-Play.pdf> [August 6, 2013].

Centre for Community Health (CCCH). (2008). Rethinking school readiness. *Policy Brief No. 10 2008 Translating Early Childhood Research Evidence to Inform Policy and Practice*. [Online] [www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm](http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm) [August 16, 2011].

Centre for Community Health (CCCH). (2008a). Rethinking the transition to school: Linking schools and early years services. *Policy Brief No. 10 2008 Translating Early Childhood Research Evidence to Inform Policy and Practice*. [Online] [www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm](http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm) [June 1, 2010].

Centre for Community Health (CCCH). (2009). The impact of poverty on early childhood development. *Policy Brief No. 14 2009 Translating Early Childhood Research Evidence to Inform Policy and Practice*. [Online] [www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm](http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/policybriefs.cfm) [August 17, 2011].

Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH), & Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (2011). *A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia: AEDI National Report 2009: Re-issue 2011*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Christensen, P., & James, A. (2000). Childhood Diversity and Commonality: Some Methodological Insights. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices* (pp. 160-178). London: Falmer Press.

Clare, J. (2003). Writing a PhD Thesis. In J. Clare & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *Writing Research. Transforming Data into Text* (pp. 19-32). New York: Churchill Livingstone

Cobb-Clark, D. A., & Jha, N. (2013). *Educational Achievement and the Allocation of School Resources. Melbourne Institute Working Paper No. 27/13*. Melbourne: Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne.

Connor, J. (2011). *Foundations for learning: Relationships between the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum AN ECA-ACARA PAPER*. [Online] Early Childhood Australia (ECA), Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).  
[http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/ECA\\_ACARA\\_Foundations\\_Paper/ECA\\_ACARA\\_Foundations\\_Paper\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/ECA_ACARA_Foundations_Paper/ECA_ACARA_Foundations_Paper_FINAL.pdf) [July 16, 2013].

Council of Australian Governments (COAG). (2009). *National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care*. ACT: Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, COAG.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. St Leonards, Australia: Allen and Unwin.

Daniels, D. H., & Clarkson, P.K. (2010). *A Developmental Approach to Educating Young Children*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

De Boehmler, T. (2009). Brave new world. Making the transition to school. *Independent Education*, 39(1), 21-22.

Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2012, January). *Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting*. [Online] <http://www.childrenscentres.sa.gov.au/pages/CC/42983/?reFlag=1> [August 27, 2013].

Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2012a, January). *Preschool: Fact Sheet*. [Online] Department of Education and Children's Services. <http://decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/PreschoolFactSheet.pdf> [January 10, 2012].

Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2013, August). *Starting Preschool and School*. [Online] Department for Education and Child Development.  
[http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Early\\_entry\\_preschool\\_FA1.pdf](http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Early_entry_preschool_FA1.pdf) [August 25, 2013].

Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2013). *Transition to School. A DECD Position Paper*. [Online] Department for Education and Child Development.  
[http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/teachingandlearning/files/pages/TransitionToSchool/T2S\\_PositionPaperA4.PDF](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/teachingandlearning/files/pages/TransitionToSchool/T2S_PositionPaperA4.PDF) [August 25, 2013].

Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2014, March). *Universal Access to Preschool Education*. [Online]  
<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/childrenservices/pages/earlychildhoodreform/universala ccess/?reFlag=1> [March 5, 2014].

Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2009). *Guidelines for Conducting Research in DECS Schooling and Early Childhood Services Version 2.0*. Adelaide, SA: DECS.

Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2009a). *Preschool Parent Survey*. [Online]  
<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/accountability/files/links/PreschoolSurvey.pdf> [September 7, 2011].

Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2010). *Early Childhood Services*. [Online]  
<http://www.sa.gov.au/upload/franchise/Education,%20skills%20and%20learning/2009DECSEarlyChildhoodServices.pdf> [August 30, 2011].

Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2011, May). *Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education: An Overview*. [Online] Department of Education and Children's Services.  
[http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/childrenservices/files/links/6\\_Universal\\_An\\_Overview\\_in.pdf](http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/childrenservices/files/links/6_Universal_An_Overview_in.pdf) [September 2, 2011].

Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2011). *Strategic Directions 2011*. [Online]  
[http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/links/DECS\\_Strategic\\_Directions.pdf](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/links/DECS_Strategic_Directions.pdf) (July 23, 2013).

Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2011, February-March). *National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care*. [Online]  
[http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/childrenservices/files/links/NQA\\_Agenda\\_Session\\_1\\_FebM\\_1.pdf](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/childrenservices/files/links/NQA_Agenda_Session_1_FebM_1.pdf) [July 24, 2013].

Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2012, December). *Children's Centres*. [Online] [http://www.childrenscentres.sa.gov.au/files/links/2010\\_03\\_16\\_Children\\_s\\_Cen\\_2.pdf](http://www.childrenscentres.sa.gov.au/files/links/2010_03_16_Children_s_Cen_2.pdf) [January 10, 2012].

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments (DEEWR). (2009). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra, A.C.T: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments.

Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2008). What makes a successful transition to school? Views of Australian parents and teachers. *International Journal of Early Education*, 12(3), 217-230.

Dowling, A., & O'Malley, K. (2009). Preschool education in Australia. *Australian Policy Online*. [Online] <http://www.apo.org.au/node/20217> [August 12, 2011].

Edwards, C. P., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. E. (1998). Introduction: Background and Starting Points. In C.P. Edwards, L. Gandini & G.E. Forman (Eds.), *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach-Advanced Reflections* (pp. 5-25). Greenwich: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Edwards, S. (2008). Images of childhood, early education and care: Mediating the principles of social constructivism with teachers' perceptions of practice and pedagogy. In P.G. Grotewell & Y.R. Burton (Eds.), *Early Childhood Education: Issues and Development*, (pp.171-187). New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc.

Elliott, A. (2006). *Early Childhood Education. Pathways to quality and equity for all children*. Camberwell, ACER Press.

Emerson, R.M. Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (2007). Participation observation and field notes. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 352-368). London: Sage.

Fabian, H., & Dunlop, A-W. (2008). The importance of play in the transition to school. In J.Moyles (Ed.), *The Excellence of Play* (pp. 228-241). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Fenech, M., Harrison, L., Press, F., & Sumsion, J. (2010). *Contributors to quality long day care: Findings from six case study centres*. Bathurst: Charles Sturt University.

Fenech, M.,\_Giugni, M., & Bown, K. (2012). A critical analysis of the National Quality Framework: Mobilising for a vision for children beyond minimum standards. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(4), 5-14.

Field, A.P. (2009). *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS (and sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll)*. London: Sage.

Fromberg, D.P. (2002). *Play and Meaning in Early Childhood Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Government of South Australia. (2007). *South Australia's Action Plan for Early Childhood and Child Care*. SA: Government of South Australia.

Government of South Australia. (2011). *Productivity Commission Study on the Early Childhood Development Workforce*. [Online] SA: Government of South Australia. [http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/106024/sub066.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0013/106024/sub066.pdf) [July 18, 2013].

Government of South Australia. (2012). *Adelaide Thinkers in Residence: Carla Rinaldi Re-imagining childhood*. [Online] <http://www.thinkers.sa.gov.au/Thinkers/CarlaRinaldi/p510.aspx> [April 12, 2012].

Government of South Australia. (2013). Every chance for every child. *Seven Strategic Priorities*. [Online] <http://saplan.org.au/> [April 5, 2013].

Government of South Australia (2014). *Same First Day*. [Online] <http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/pages/HOME/samefirstday/?reFlag=1> [ March 5, 2014].

Hammersley, M. (2001). *What's Wrong with Ethnography?* London: Routledge.

Harrington, M. (2008). Preschool education in Australia. *Background Notes*. [Online] <http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/pubs/bn/2007-08/PreschoolEdAustralia.htm> [September 17, 2011].

Henry, G.T. (1990). *Practical Sampling*. CA: Sage Publications.

Hilferty, F., Redmond, G., & Katz, I. (2010). The implications of poverty on children's readiness to learn. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(4), 63-71.

Hill, S., Comber, B., Loudon, W., Rivalland, J., & Reid, J. (1998). *100 Children Go to School: Connections and Disconnections in Literacy Development in the Year Prior to School and the First Year of School-Volume 1*. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Holderhead, S. (2013, April 9). Birth is best time to start kids on the path of learning. *The Australian*. [Online] <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/birth-is-best-time-to-start-kids-on-the-path-of-learning/story-e6frg6n6-1226615227924> [July 11, 2013].

Hydon, C. (2013). Pursuing best practice: What does it take to drive continuous improvement? *Every Child*, 19(1), 26-27.

James, A. (2007). Ethnography and the Study of Children and Childhood. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 247-257). London: Sage Publications.

James, A., Jenks, C., & Prout, A. (2004). *Theorizing Childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers.

James, L., Pate, J., Leech, D., Martin, E., Brockmeier, L., & Dees, E. (2011). Resource allocation patterns and student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(4), 1-10.

Johnson, R.B., & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14-27.

Kagan, S. L., & Rigby, D. E. (2003). *Improving the Readiness of Children for School: Recommendations for State Policy*. [Online] [http://ccf.tc.columbia.edu/pdf/PolicyMatters\\_2465\\_School\\_Read\\_FINAL.pdf](http://ccf.tc.columbia.edu/pdf/PolicyMatters_2465_School_Read_FINAL.pdf) [September 29, 2011].

Katz, L.G. (1999). Another look at what young children should be learning. *ERIC Digest*. [Online] <http://www.ericdigests.org/2000-1/look.html> [May 12, 2011].

Ludwig, J., & Sawhill, I. (2006). Success by ten: Intervening early, often, and effectively in the education of young children. *Policy Innovation Initiative*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution.

Maguire, B., & Hayes, A. (2012). Access to preschool education in the year before full-time school. *LSAC Annual Statistical Report 2011*. Australian Institute of Family Studies [Online] <http://www.growingupinaustralia.gov.au/pubs/asr/2011/ch6asr2011.pdf> [June 10, 2013].

Means, B., & Knapp, M.S. (1991). Cognitive approaches to teaching advanced skills to educationally disadvantaged students. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73(4), 282-289.

Menzie, K. (2013). Using picture books to build the foundations of global citizenship. *Educating Young Children: Learning and Teaching in the Early Childhood Years*, 19(1), 35-36.

Moss, P. (2012). The Relationship Between Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: A Properly Political Question. In P. Moss (Ed.), *Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the Relationship: Contesting Early Childhood* (pp. 2-50). Abingdon, Oxon, England: Routledge.

Mustard, F. (2008). *Investing in the Early Years: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do*. Adelaide, SA: Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Nader, L. (2011). Ethnography as theory. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 1(1), 211–219.

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). (2007). *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (The National Statement)*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

New, R.S., & Kantor, R. (2013). Reggio Emilia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Enduring Commitments Amid New Challenges. In J.L. Roopnarine & J.E. Johnson (Eds.), *Approaches to Early Childhood Education* (pp. 331-354). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Nicoletti, C., & Rabe, B. (2012). *The Effect of School Resources on Test Scores in England. Working paper no. 2012-13*. Colchester, England: Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex.

Nimmo, J. (2002). Nurturing the spirit to teach: commitment, community and emergent curriculum. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 27(2), 8-12.

Noble, K. (2007). Parent choice of early childhood education and care services. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 32(2), 51-57.

Oldfather, P., & West, J. (1999). Goal 1: Understanding Social Constructivism as a Basis for Meaningful Learning and Intrinsic Motivation. In P. Oldfather & J. West (Eds.), *Learning Through Children's Eyes: Social Constructivism and the Desire to Learn* (pp. 7-23). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Collins, K. M. T. (2007). A typology of mixed methods sampling designs in social science research. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(2), 281-316.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2006). *Education Today: The OECD Perspective*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2009). *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2009a). *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2011). *Education at a Glance 2011*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2011a). *Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Research Brief: ECEC Quality Goals Matter*. [Online] <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/25/11/49360345.pdf> [January 22, 2012].

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2012). Table C2.1 – Enrolment rates in early childhood and primary education, by age (2005, 2010). Full-time and part-time students in public and private institution. *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicator*. DOI :10.1787/eag-2012-table179-en [Online] [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2012/enrolment-rates-in-early-childhood-and-primary-education-by-age-2005-2010\\_eag-2012-table179-en](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2012/enrolment-rates-in-early-childhood-and-primary-education-by-age-2005-2010_eag-2012-table179-en) [21 July, 2013].

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2012a). Table C2.2. Expenditure on early childhood educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (2009): By funding source. *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*. DOI: [10.1787/eag-2012-graph177-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-graph177-en) [Online] [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2012/expenditure-on-early-childhood-educational-institutions-as-a-percentage-of-gdp-2009\\_eag-2012-graph177-en](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2012/expenditure-on-early-childhood-educational-institutions-as-a-percentage-of-gdp-2009_eag-2012-graph177-en) [July 21, 2013].

Page, S., Hydon, C., Gibbs, L., Keegan, T., Bryant, L., & Connell, G. (2013). Dialogue and debate. *Rattler*, 105, 28-29.

Patterson, C., & Fleet, A. (2011). Planning in the context of the EYLF: Powerful, practical and pedagogically sound. *Research in Practice Series*. Canberra: Early Childhood Australia.

Peatling, S. (2013, March 8). Australia lags developed world on preschool enrolment: OECD. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/australia-lags-developed-world-on-preschool-enrolment-oecd-20130307-2f0g1.html> [June 8, 2014].

Patterson, C., & Fleet, A. (2012). Planning in the context of the National Quality Standard: Valuing children, promoting learning. *Every Child*, 18(2), 4-6.

Press, F., & Hayes, A. (2000). *OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Australian Background Report*. Canberra: Commonwealth Government of Australia.

Punch, K.F. (2000). *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. London: Sage.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. (2005). *Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative – A 17 State Partnership*. Providence, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

Rinaldi, C. (2012, March). *Carla Rinaldi Lecture*. Paper presented at the Thinkers in Residence Carla Rinaldi Inaugural Lecture.

Rinaldi, C. (2013). *Re-imagining Childhood. The Inspiration of Reggio Emilia Principles in South Australia*. [Online] Government of South Australia. <http://www.thinkers.sa.gov.au/RinaldiReport/> [July 11, 2013].

Roberts, K. (2012). Australia. Country Note. *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicator*. [Online] <http://www.oecd.org/education/EAG2012%20-%20Country%20note%20-%20Australia.pdf> [21 July, 2013].

Rodd, J. (1996). A week in the life of a four year old: A study of Victorian children's patterns of usage of early childhood services. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 21(1), pp. 37-42.

Rodriguez, E. T., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2011). Trajectories of the Home Learning Environment Across the First 5 Years: Associations With Children's Vocabulary and Literacy Skills at Prekindergarten. *Child Development*, 82(4), 1058-1075.

Rogoff, B., Turkanis, C., & Bartlett, L. (2001). *Learning Together: Children and Adults in a Learning Community*. New York: Oxford.

Rosier, K., & McDonald, M. (2011). *Promoting Positive Education and Care Transitions for Children*. [Online] Australian Institute of Family Studies. <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/pubs/sheets/rs/rs5.pdf> [18 July, 2013].

Salant, P., & Dillman, D.A. (1994). *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: John Wiley.

Shearer, A., & Lenihan, S. (2011). Intentional teaching, child-centred curriculum and the EYLF. *Every Child*, 17(4), 26-27. [Online] <http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/fullText;dn=191697;res=AEIPT> [July 23, 2013].

Shearer, J., Snodgrass, F., & Butcher, C. (2008). *Early Childhood Transition for Children with a Disability: Focusing on Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting*. SA: Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC:SWD).

Sims, M. (2013). Professional recognition. *Rattler*, 105, 20-21.

Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Manni, L. (2007). *Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector: The ELEYS Study*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

Sloane, I. (2013). Up close and personalised. *Teacher: The National Education Magazine*, Sept 2010, 26-28. [Online] <http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/documentSummary;dn=341636509633117;res=IELHSS> [July 15, 2013].

Smart, D., Sanson, A., Baxter, J., Edwards, B., & Hayes, A. (2008). *Home-to-School Transitions for Financially Disadvantaged Children Summary Report*. Sydney: The Smith Family.

Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP). (2012). Report on Government Services. [Online] [www.pc.gov.au/gsp/rogs/2012](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/rogs/2012) [April, 16, 2012].

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). *The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) Project: Final Report: A Longitudinal Study 1997-2004*. London: Institute of Education.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2008). Quality of inferences in mixed methods research: Calling for an integrative framework. In M. M. Bergman (Ed.), *Advances in Mixed Methods Research: Theories and Applications* (pp. 101-119). London: Sage.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research. Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Thornburg, D. D. (2007). *Campfires in Cyberspace: Primordial Metaphors for Learning in the 21st Century*. [Online] <http://tcpd.org/thornburg/Handouts/Campfires.pdf> [July 16, 2013].

Touhill, L. (2011). Landscapes for Learning. *Rattler*, 97, 20-23.

Turabian, K.L. (2013). *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (8th ed.). Revised by W. C. Booth, G. G. Colomb, J. M. Williams, & the University of Chicago Press Staff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

University of South Australia (UniSA). (2012). *The Kindergarten Movement*. [Online] <http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/About/exhibitions/kindergarten.aspx> [July 22, 2013].

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2005). *A Summary of the Rights Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Fact Sheet*. [Online] [http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf) [August 13, 2013].

Vinson, T. (2007). *Dropping Off the Edge: The Distribution of Disadvantage in Australia*. Sydney: Catholic Social Services Australia and Jesuit Social Services.

Vinson, T. (2007a). The web of social disadvantage. *Developing Practice: The Child, Youth and Family Work Journal*, 19, 56-65.

Wake, M., Sanson, A., Berthelsen, D., Hardy, P., Misson, S., Smith, K., Ungerer, J. & LSAC Research Consortium. (2008). *Number 36: How Well are Australian Infants and Children Aged 4 to 5 years Doing?* Canberra: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia.

Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of practice and social learning systems. *Organization*, 7(2), 225-246.

Wilkinson, L. C., & Silliman, E. R. (1997). Classroom language and literacy learning. *Handbook of Reading Research*, 3(21), 337-360.

Wolcott, H.F. (1999). *Ethnography. A Way of Seeing*. Maryland: Alta Mira Press.

## **Glossary**

**Children's Centres** Children's Centres are those which bring together care, education, health, community development activities and family services for families and their young children from birth to eight years of age

**Early Childhood** Early childhood is defined as lasting from birth to age eight.

**Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)** Australia's first national Early Years Learning Framework for early childhood educators for children from birth to five years of age.

**National Quality Standard (NQS)** The National Quality Standard sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services by seven Quality Areas.

**National Quality Framework (NQF)** The National Quality Framework consists of: a national legislative framework; a National Quality Standard; a national quality rating and assessment process; and a new national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

**Preschool** Preschool is a planned sessional educational program, primarily aimed at children in the year before they start formal schooling. Preschool programs are play-based educational programs designed and delivered by degree-qualified teachers using an approved curriculum framework.

**Same First Day** Same First Day commenced in 2014 and mandates that in South Australia all children will have the same first day of preschool for all children. This will be the first day of term one. The same first day of preschool will mean that every child will have four terms of preschool and then four terms of reception when they go to school.

**Stand Alone** A preschool situated away from a school site.

**Universal Access** All Australian governments agreed that by the end of 2013, all four year old children will have access to 15 hours per week of preschool, for 40 weeks of the year before they attend school; and that each preschool programme will be delivered by an early childhood teacher with four years of university training.

*How do parents and preschool educators perceive children's experiences of preschool in a time of policy reform?*

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2013b). *National Quality Framework*. [Online] <http://acecqa.gov.au/Uploads/files/Information%20sheets/2-ACECQA%20Information%20Sheet%20-%20Overview.pdf> [July 22, 2013].
- Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). (2011, May). *Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education: An Overview*. [Online] Department of Education and Children's Services. [http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/childreancesservices/files/links/6\\_Universal\\_An\\_Overview\\_in.pdf](http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/childreancesservices/files/links/6_Universal_An_Overview_in.pdf) [September 2, 2011].
- Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2012, January). *Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting*. [Online] <http://www.childrenscentres.sa.gov.au/pages/CC/42983/?reFlag=1> [August 27, 2013].
- Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2012a, January). *Preschool: Fact Sheet*. [Online] Department of Education and Children's Services. <http://decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/PreschoolFactSheet.pdf> [January 10, 2012].
- Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). (2013, August). *Starting Preschool and School*. [Online] Department for Education and Child Development. [http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Early\\_entry\\_preschool\\_FA1.pdf](http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Early_entry_preschool_FA1.pdf) [August 25, 2013].
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments (DEEWR). (2009). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Canberra, A.C.T: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments.
- Shearer, A. & Lenihan, S. (2011). Intentional teaching, child-centred curriculum and the EYLF. *Every Child*, 17(4), 26-27. [Online] <http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/fullText;dn=191697;res=AEIPT> [July 23, 2013].

## Index

- children's centres**, 20, 85, 119
  - definition, 5
- early childhood**,
  - definition, 1
- Early Years Learning Framework**,
  - definition, 16
  - EYLF, 1-3, 8, 12, 14-17, 26, 40, 41, 45, 47, 66, 73, 77, 78, 80, 83, 89, 90, 118, 121, 127, 144
- environment**,
  - as third teacher, 68, 70, 73, 74, 83
- epistemology**, 28
- home learning environment**, 12, 21-23, 25, 63, 64, 85, 125
- life skills**, 40, 41, 77-79, 83, 84, 121, 122
- LSAC**, 9, 20, 23, 25, 35, 36, 48, 63, 64, 105, 110-115
- National Quality Framework**, 1, 2, 3, 6-8, 10-12, 15, 16, 22, 26, 45, 47, 66, 78-80, 82, 83, 85-87, 89, 90, 118, 121, 126, 127
  - definition, 3
- National Quality Standard**, 14, 84, 86, 127, 144
  - definition, 3
- parents**,
  - as first educators, 21, 23, 81
  - decision-making, 2, 6, 10, 12, 13, 19, 62, 94, 95, 108, 117, 119, 120
- play**, 17, 23, 35, 39, 52, 59, 63, 68-76, 106, 107, 110, 113, 114, 122, 125
- preschool**,
  - access to, 4-6, 18-20, 22, 79, 85, 87, 90, 104, 108, 127
  - attendance, 2, 4-6, 9-12, 20, 21, 24, 32, 46, 49, 55, 58, 65, 71, 76, 81, 82, 85, 95, 99, 100-102, 108, 109, 116, 118-120, 123, 124, 126
  - definition, 5
  - enrolment, 4-6, 9-12, 20, 34, 35, 62, 71, 81, 85, 90, 99-102, 109, 118, 122-124
  - experience of, 1, 2, 27, 45, 49, 65, 70, 83-85, 87, 90, 113, 118, 122, 124, 125
  - purposes of, 2, 10-14, 18, 37, 66, 75, 77, 95, 96, 119-121
- Reggio Emilia**, 22, 66, 71, 78, 80, 82, 96
- Same First Day**, 1, 2, 8, 11, 12, 18, 26, 45, 47, 66, 80, 81, 84, 86, 89, 90, 95, 97, 117, 118, 120, 127
  - definition, 5
- social constructivism**, 29, 40, 41
- symbolic interactionism**, 27-29
- Universal Access**, 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10-12, 18, 20, 21, 26, 40, 41, 45, 47, 55, 65, 66, 77-79, 83, 84, 86-90, 99, 100, 102, 118, 122, 127
  - definition, 4

## **Appendices**

- A1** Phase 1: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (English)
- A2** Phase 1: Questionnaire (English)
- A3** Phase 1: Information Sheet for Observation (Site B only)
- A4** Phase 1: Consent for Observation (Site B only)
- A5** Phase 1: Observation Tool
- A6** Phase 1: Narrative Observation Tool
- A7** Phase 1: Site Map (Site A)
- A8** Phase 1: Site Map (Site B)
- A9** Phase 1: Interview Protocol
- A10** Phase 1: Interview Transcript (Site A)
- A11** Phase 1: Interview Transcript (Site B)
- A12** Phase 2: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (English)
- A13** Phase 2: Questionnaire (English)
- A14** Phase 2: Qualitative Response to Phase 2 Questionnaire (English)
- A15** Phase 2: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (Dari)
- A16** Phase 2: Questionnaire (Dari)
- A17** Phase 2: Information Sheet for Questionnaire (Hindi)
- A18** Phase 2: Questionnaire (Hindi)
- A19** Phase 2: Information Sheet (Vietnamese)
- A20** Phase 2: Questionnaire (Vietnamese)



**Mrs Sarah Wight**  
EdD Candidate  
School of Education  
School of Education  
Flinders University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2100  
Adelaide 5001

Tel: xxxx xxx xxx

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

---

## INFORMATION SHEET

---

**Title:** *4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.*

**Investigator:**

Mrs Sarah Wight  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Supervisors:**

Dr Susan Krieg  
School of Education  
Flinders University

Dr Kerry Bissaker  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Description of the study:**

This study will investigate how four groups of four year old children access and experience preschool education in South Australia and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school commencement. Parents' choices regarding their children's attendance or non-attendance at preschool will also be explored. This project is supported by the School of Education at Flinders University.

**Purpose of the study:**

This project aims to find out:

- How many hours of preschool are four groups of four year old children enrolled and attending?
- How do children enrolled in the four participating preschools spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry?
- What are the perceptions of preschool educators on universal access, the purposes of preschool and how is this enacted in the programme which they provide?

- What is the basis on which parents of participating preschools have made decisions relating to preschool choice, enrolment and attendance for their children?

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your child's preschool attendance, activities which your child participates in when not in attendance at preschool and reasons for your choices regarding your child's preschool attendance. The questionnaire also contains questions related to parenting. It will take approximately ten minutes to complete and will not identify you in any way.

**What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?**

The sharing of your experiences will assist in gaining a more complete picture of the life of a four year old child attending preschool in South Australia and inform the discussion around access and experience of preschool in South Australia. This in turn may improve the planning and delivery of future programmes.

**Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?**

You will be anonymous. The questionnaire may be returned via mail and your responses and comments cannot be linked to you.

**Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?**

The investigator does not anticipate any risks from your involvement in this study. If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with the investigator.

**How do I agree to participate?**

Participation is voluntary. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions within the questionnaire without effect or consequences. If you choose to participate, please complete the questionnaire and place it in the collection box at your child's preschool marked *Preschool Survey- 4: It matters* or return via mail in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided to: Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide 5001. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

**How will I receive feedback?**

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and I hope that you will accept the invitation to be involved.**

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 5581). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)*

*4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.*

ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

The study seeks to explore how four groups of four year old children in South Australia access preschool education; how they spend the balance of their time in the year prior to starting school and how parents are making choices for their children regarding preschool education in South Australia. Your responses will better inform what is understood in South Australia about how children currently access preschool education and which other activities they participate in when not attending preschool. For the purposes of the study, the term *preschool* is used in place of *kindergarten* and is intended to include all preschool and kindergarten programmes which cater for children aged four in the year prior to school entry.

Please complete each background question and then mark how your child spends their time over a twenty-four hour period on the indicated day. You can choose to mark the questionnaire 2 or 3 times throughout the day, all at once at the end of the day or the following morning.

Please clearly mark appropriate responses with a tick. If a correction needs to be made, please place a cross through the error and mark the correct response. Once completed, please place your questionnaire in the collection box at your child's preschool marked *Preschool Survey - 4: It matters* or return it via mail in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided to: Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide 5001. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

**I. QUESTIONNAIRE INFORMATION**

1. Please complete on //12

2. When questionnaire completed:

- 1  Monday
- 2  Tuesday
- 3  Wednesday
- 4  Thursday
- 5  Friday

3. When did you complete this questionnaire?

- 1  More than 3 times during the day
- 2  2 to 3 times during the day
- 3  Once, when my child went to bed
- 4  Once, the next morning
- 5  At a later date

**II. BACKGROUND**

1. Gender of person completing questionnaire:

- 1  Female
- 2  Male

2. Level to which mother has studied:

(Please tick to highest level)

- 1  Completed primary education
- 2  Completed Year 10
- 3  Completed Year 12
- 4  Completed trade certificate
- 5  Completed diploma or equivalent
- 6  Completed under graduate degree
- 7  Completed post graduate degree
- 8  N/A

**3. Level to which father has studied:**

*(Please tick to highest level)*

- Completed primary education
- Completed Year 10
- Completed Year 12
- Completed trade certificate
- Completed diploma or equivalent
- Completed under graduate degree
- Completed post graduate degree
- N/A

**4. Mother's employment:**

- Currently unemployed
- On leave
- Paid, part time (less than 35 hours per week)
- Paid, full time (35 hours or more per week)
- N/A

**5. Father's employment:**

- Currently unemployed
- On leave
- Paid, part time (less than 35 hours per week)
- Paid, full time (35 hours or more per week)
- N/A

**6. Number of children residing in family home:**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

**7. Gender of 4 year old child in your care:**

- Female
- Male

**8. Languages other than English spoken at home:**

*(Please complete)*

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Post code:**

*(Please complete)*

\_\_\_\_\_

**III. CHOICE OF PRESCHOOL**

**1. What type of preschool does your child attend?**

- DECD preschool on school site
- DECD preschool as a stand alone
- Catholic preschool on school site
- Independent preschool on school site
- Independent preschool as a stand alone
- Long day care with preschool programme

**2. How many hours a week is your child enrolled to attend preschool?**

- 3 hours
- 6 hours
- 9 hours
- 12 hours
- 15 hours
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**3. How many hours of preschool did your child attend last week?**

- 3 hours
- 6 hours
- 9 hours
- 12 hours
- 15 hours
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4. If less than enrolled time, why was this so?**

- Illness
- Holiday
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5. At what age did your child commence preschool?**

- 3 years of age
- 4 years of age
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Did your child complete a pre-entry transition to preschool?**

- Yes
- No
- Was not offered







**V. COMMENTS**

**1. Any further comments on this questionnaire**

---

---

---

---

**2. Any further comments on the new 15 hour provision of preschool education for four year old children as per the Australian Government Universal Access Policy**

---

---

---

---

**3. Any further comments on preschool education in South Australia**

---

---

---

---

**Thank you for your valuable contribution.**

*This study uses questionnaires (or part of) developed for **Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)**. These questionnaires are the property of the Commonwealth as represented by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. LSAC is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs ([www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)), and is being undertaken in association with the Australian Institute of Family Studies ([www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics ([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)), with advice being provided by a consortium of leading researchers at research institutions and universities throughout Australia.*



**Mrs Sarah Wight**  
EdD Candidate  
School of Education  
School of Education  
Flinders University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2100  
Adelaide 5001

Tel: xxxx xxx xxx

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

---

## INFORMATION SHEET

---

**Title:** *4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.*

**Investigator:**

Mrs Sarah Wight  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Supervisors:**

Dr Susan Krieg  
School of Education  
Flinders University

Dr Kerry Bissaker  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Description of the study:**

This study will investigate how four groups of four year old children access and experience preschool education in South Australia and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school commencement. Parents' choices regarding their children's attendance or non-attendance at preschool will also be explored. This project is supported by the School of Education at Flinders University.

**Purpose of the study:**

This project aims to find out:

- How many hours of preschool are four groups of four year old children enrolled and attending?
- How do children enrolled in the four participating preschools spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry?
- What are the perceptions of preschool educators on universal access, the purposes of preschool and how is this enacted in the programme which they provide?
- What is the basis on which parents of participating preschools have made decisions relating to preschool choice, enrolment and attendance for their children?

**What will I be asked to do?**

You are asked to consent to the researcher being present within your child's preschool class to **specifically observe the work of preschool educators and the whole preschool context, not specifically the children within it.**

**What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?**

The observations within your child's preschool class will assist in better understanding the perceptions of preschool educators on universal access, the purposes of preschool and how is this enacted in the programme which they provide. This may inform the discussion around access and experience of preschool education in South Australia and in turn may improve the planning and delivery of future programmes.

**Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?**

You, your child, your child's preschool and preschool educators will be anonymous. The data from observations will have any identifying information removed and stored on a password protected computer that only the coordinator (Mrs Sarah Wight) and supervisors (Dr Susan Krieg and Dr Kerry Bissaker) will have access to.

**Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?**

The investigator does not anticipate any risks from the involvement of yourself and your child in this study. If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with the investigator.

**How do I agree to participate?**

Participation is voluntary. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate please read and sign the form. Your consent will be greatly appreciated.

**How will I receive feedback?**

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and I hope that you will accept the invitation to be involved.**

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 5581). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)*



**PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR  
CHILD PARTICIPATION  
IN RESEARCH  
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH  
(by observation of preschool educators and whole preschool environment)**

I .....being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to my child ..... participating, as requested, in the Information Sheet for the research project,

*4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.*

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
  - My child may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
  - My child is free to withdraw from the project at any time.
  - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, my child will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
  - Whether my child participates or not, or withdraws after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to him/her.
  - Whether my child participates or not, or withdraws after participating, will have no effect on his/her progress in his/her course of study, or results gained.
  - My child may ask that the observation be stopped at any time, and he/she may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
5. I do not agree/agree to the transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.

**Participant’s signature.....Date.....**

I certify that through the Information Sheet, I have explained the study to the participant (that being the parent of a child who will present in the preschool class) and consider that he/she understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

**Researcher’s name.....**

**Researcher’s signature.....Date.....**

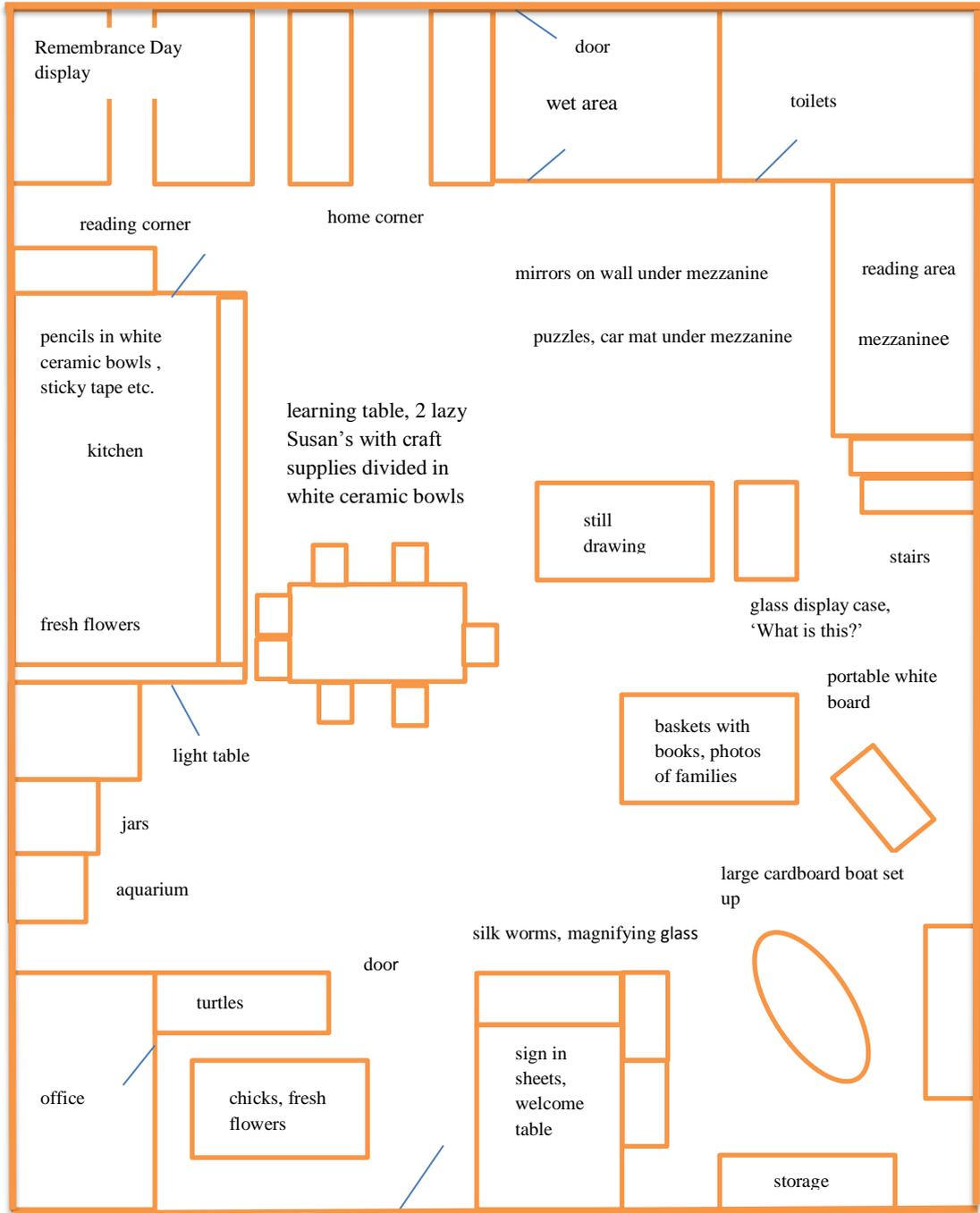
<b>Fieldwork Notes for Preschool Sites</b>			
<b>Site:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Day:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>Setting Notes:</b>			
<b>Environments:</b> <small>How do educators encourage children's use of the environment available to them and what evidence is there governing the environment?</small>		<b>Resources:</b> <small>How do educators employ material resources to engage and generate learning opportunities for children and manage any differences in children's experience with material resources? How do educators manage children's access to human resources within the preschool environment?</small>	
<b>Time:</b> <small>Time matters differently in different contexts. How is time managed in this context?</small>		<b>Space:</b> <small>How do educators create opportunities for children to interact with the space?</small>	

<p><b>Bodies:</b></p> <p>In what ways do educators teach children to use their bodies in appropriate ways, such as listening behavior?</p> <p>Are there any obvious challenges to educators when dealing with differences? i.e. gender etc.</p>	<p><b>Social Norms:</b></p> <p>In what ways do educators teach children to cope with the norms and expectations associated with the specific preschool context?</p>
<p><b>Language and Literate Practices:</b></p> <p>How do educators cater for linguistic differences?</p> <p>How do educators promote the use of language for children's social purposes?</p> <p>How do educators promote engagement of children with the language of preschool life and academic learning?</p>	<p><b>Numerate Practices:</b></p> <p>How do educators encourage children to be numerate within the preschool environment?</p> <p>What evidence is there of this in the learning environment?</p>
<p><b>Of Interest:</b></p>	
<p>Hill, S., Comber, B., Louden, W., Rivalland, J. &amp; Reid, J. (1998). <i>100 Children Go to School: Connections and Disconnections in Literacy Development in the Year Prior to School and the First Year of School-Volume 1</i>. Canberra: Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.</p>	

<b>Fieldwork Narrative Notes for Preschool Sites</b>			
<b>Site:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Day:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>Description of Setting and Events</b>		<b>Reflective Notes</b>	
<small>Creswell, J.W. (2008). <i>Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</small>			

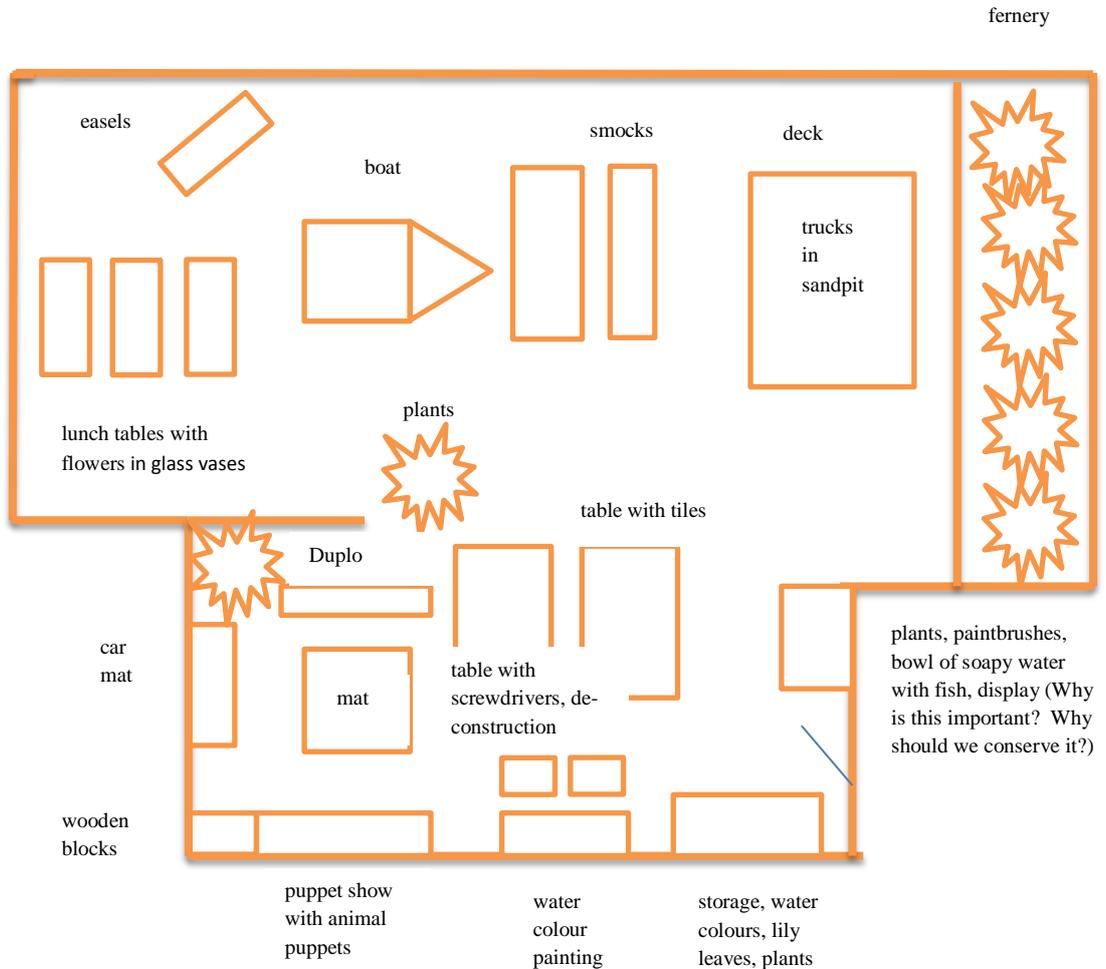
# Phase 1: Site Map - Site A

## Inside



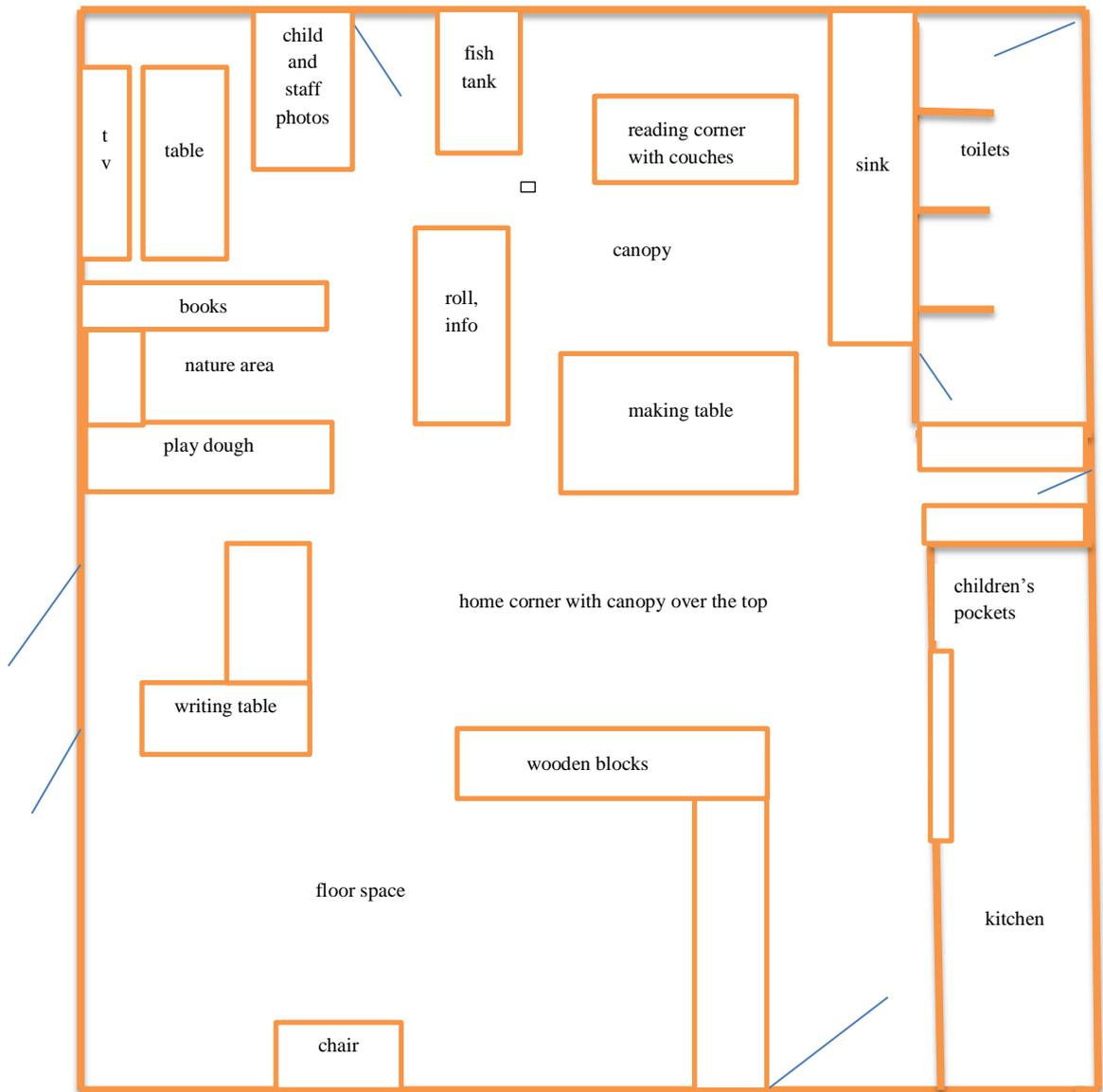
# Phase 1: Site Map - Site A

## Outside



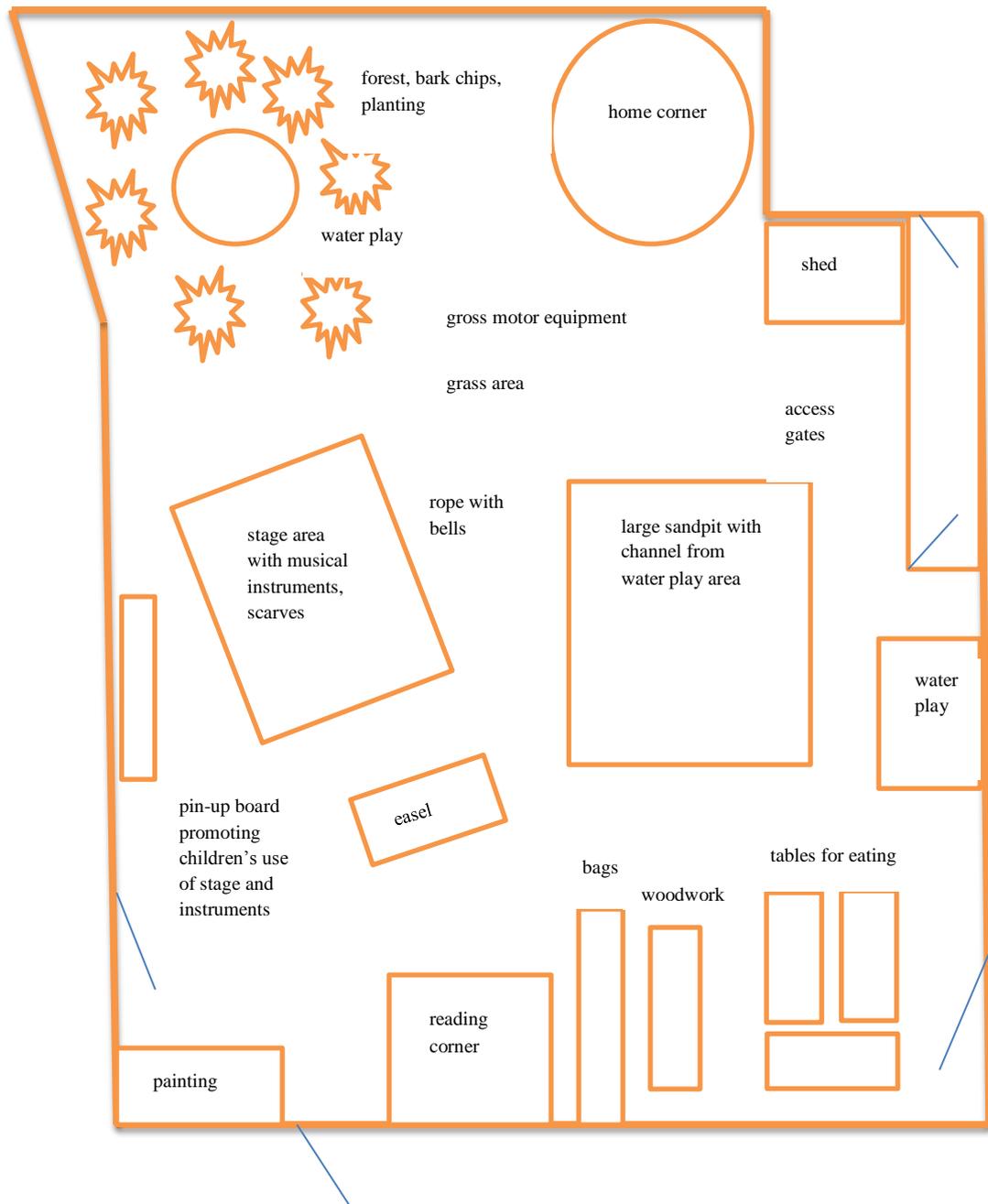
# Phase 1: Site Map - Site B

## Inside



# Phase 1: Site Map - Site B

## Outside



<b>Interview Protocol</b>			
<b>Project: 4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.</b>			
<b>Site:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Day:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>Interviewer:</b>		<b>Position of Interviewer:</b>	
<b><u>Summary of Project:</u></b>			
<b>1. Introduction of interviewer</b>			
<b>2. Purpose</b>			
This project aims to find out:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many hours of preschool are four groups of four year old children enrolled and attending?</li> <li>• How do children enrolled in the four participating preschools spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry?</li> <li>• What are the perceptions of preschool educators on universal access, the purposes of preschool and how is this enacted in the programme which they provide?</li> <li>• What is the basis on which parents of participating preschools have made decisions relating to preschool choice, enrolment and attendance for their children?</li> </ul>			
<b>3. What will be done with the data to protect the participant</b>			
Once the observation field notes are typed-up and saved as a file, any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file stored on a password protected computer that only the coordinator (Mrs Sarah Wight) and supervisors (Dr Susan Krieg and Dr Kerry Bissaker) will have access to. Your comments will not be linked directly to you.			
<b>4. How long the interview will take</b>			
The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.			
<b>If you are happy to continue to continue, please read and sign the consent form.</b>			
<b><u>Questions:</u></b>			
<b>1. What do you believe the purpose of preschool is?</b>			
<i>(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)</i>			

**2. How is this enacted through your practice?**

*(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)*

**3. How do you see the relationship between home and preschool in shaping the young person and their future?**

*(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)*

**4. What issues, if any do you see with the access and delivery of preschool programmes in this setting?**

*(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)*

**5. Do you believe that 15 hours of preschool education a week is adequate preparation for school?**

*(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)*

**6. And what then of the children who access less preschool than this?**

*(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)*

**7. What do you know about the changes occurring in early childhood education with the National Quality Framework?**

*(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)*

**8. Is there anything else that you wish to add or issues you wish to raise regarding preschool education within the South Australian context?**

*(Clarifying Probes: Tell me more. Can you clarify that? Can you provide an example from your own experience?)*

**Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. Your responses will remain confidential.**

Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

King, N. & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

<b>Interview Transcript</b>		
<b>Project:</b> <i>4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.</i>		
<b>Site:</b> A	<b>Date:</b> 16/10/12    T4 Wk2	<b>Day:</b> Tuesday
		<b>Time:</b> 10:00 am
<b>Interviewer:</b> Sarah Wight		<b>Position of Interviewer:</b> Principal Researcher
Time	Speaker	Interview Transcript
0:00	SW	<p>The Project is <i>4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.</i> I'm Sarah Wight. I'm an EdD student from Flinders University. The purpose of the project as discussed is to look at how many hours of preschool four groups of four year old children are enrolled and attending; how children enrolled in the preschool spend the balance of their time; what are the perceptions of preschool educators on universal access; and what is the basis which parents have made decisions regarding choice, enrolment and attendance of their children.</p> <p>So just so that you know the observation field notes and the interview notes will all be typed up and be saved as a file and any identifying information will be removed so this is entirely anonymous. Dr Susan Krieg and Dr Kerry Bissaker are my supervisors and they will have access to that too and the data will be stored at Flinders. The interview will probably take a lot less than thirty minutes but that's at the top end. If you're happy to continue and we've already signed the consent forms, we can get started.</p> <p>So what do you believe the purpose of preschool is?</p>
1:23	B	I think it's about developing the dispositions for learning in young children, about giving them opportunities to be problem-solvers, giving them opportunities to socially construct understanding and learning. I feel that content, education in terms of content um (sic) only really matters if you are a learner and want to learn so for me preschool is about developing those dispositions in young children.
1:56	A	And building on the dispositions which they already bring to preschool so we don't see children as, or we see the experiences which they bring to the preschool as a really important starting point for how we work with children so we don't see preschool, the role of preschool preparing children for this thing called school. Being four or however is important in itself for children but within what we do, they will be prepared for school, for that next part of their lives, not in terms of this is how we behave in school or this is what you do but being the learner as B said.
2:30	B	And it's about I guess extending their experiences so the things that they've done at home and with their families and the skills which they have they have in one context but preschool allows them to use them in a different context and I guess just expand it to peers and new adults.
2:39	A	Because the role of the preschool teacher is to do just that so it's not just kids coming here and playing in a way that's not understood or extended.
3:04	B	And I guess also for our families and communities, the language play a huge part in preschool whether it might be learning English for the first time but also learning language because of the social aspects of language and again

		extending and broadening what they already know and how they already use language in a wider context and a wider audience.
3:20	A	Which all links with identity and culture and...
3:36	SW	It's a big question isn't it?
3:33	A	It's a huge question.
3:36	SW	Why do you do what you do?
3:45	A	For some though, I mean that's our perception about preschool but for some and this is where the challenge is with families and parents, for some it's about just putting your children somewhere, some it's about getting them educated in their abc 123 so which is not the question.
	A, B, SW	Laughter.
4:05	SW	But part of the challenge.
4:04	A	Yeah.
4:11	SW	This addresses what you've just spoken about. How is this enacted through your practice, through what you actually do
4:20	A	I think it actually comes back to first of all your beliefs and, so your own personal beliefs about learning and children, so enacted through the practice it starts with what you believe and how you go about things before it's what you do.
4:37	B	And with the practice it's questioning why you're doing what you're doing. Are you building a rocket ship because at the end you want a rocket ship or are you presenting children with creative materials so that they can be creative thinkers and create something that is relevant to them so practice is very much about being reflective about why you're doing what you're doing and what you're putting forward in terms of experiences for children, rather than having a product focus.
5:06	A	Because if you believe kids are competent then what you do is you have a focus around the intellectual work that's happening in anything you do as B said, the why, not just the here to do activity.
5:25	B	And it's also about um (sic) being honest in letting children take the lead. Some people think that they're being child-led when actually at the end they will still have a robot or a rocket so it's about being really honest about following children's leads and putting aside what you want them to do but actually taking on the role of being supportive in what they would like to take on.
5:52	A	And being a listener so a listener in the one hundred languages, not just hearing the words that they say but how they're expressing how they're experiencing what they're experiencing... so you've got to be flexible in your practice like you're constantly reviewing it's not here's the programme we're going to do this week, it's here's the framework, here's what we're exploring, these are the questions we're asking, we don't know what's going to happen but which is why I say it comes back to, your practice comes back to what you believe and how you think.
6:28	B	I think also with practice there's always the thought in the back of my mind of minimal interruption, giving children the respect in not interrupting them and stopping them and moving them and changing them all the time, actually giving them time and space and supporting them to take part in what they have chosen to take part in and offering extension and not, 'Time to pack up now. We're going to play with the blocks'. But actually observing them, watching them, supporting them and giving them time and space.
7:01	A	For that to happen in practice, as educators we need to know what we're looking for because you can be looking, three people can be looking at the same thing and see things very differently so we need to know what engagement looks like so that we know when to extend or when to interrupt

		or when not to because it's not about us it's about children um (sic) we need to know and value quality of relationships as well so a big part of practice is building those relationships and interacting relationally, not just adult to child but child to child as well in building that culture and the well-being being part of it as well.
7:47	B	And practice does also come down to things like housekeeping and routines and being reflective about why you do things the way you do. We talk a lot about the flow of the day, actually running with the flow of the day rather than...
8:01	A, B	Against it...
		Um (sic) again noticing when do children start to disengage, when do children become hungry rather than having times and routines simply because someone ten thousand years ago decided that it would be lunchtime at this time whereas actually giving children opportunities to decide when they are hungry themselves.
8:19	A	And that was quite challenging to start with wasn't it. That was the struggle that we had. Do we do the routine thing or what are the children telling us? What are we actually hearing them by the behaviour that they are displaying at the time? How are they telling us that they want their day to go? Where is their voice in the flow?
8:43	SW	That's very interesting. How do you see the relationship between home and school in shaping the young person and their future?
8:54	B	Well, we very much see children as part of a little piece of their whole family. We don't just have the child and we're done, we actually have a piece of this bigger unit that we need to work with. Um (sic) and I guess we try really hard to share knowledge and understanding of children. We try and share with our families why we do the things which we do but also to find out what they do at home and what experiences the child already has when they come to preschool and I guess how parents might build on that because parents often think, 'Oh I'll have to do abc or a colouring in book'. We like to share the knowledge of actually when you're at home washing the dishes or at bathtime this is so important and these are the things which you are doing and these are the things which you could incorporate. So I guess it's that sharing of knowledge.
9:46	A	It's that same kind of thing with how we see children. It's that strength based stuff. What you already are doing, so guess what like B said, when you are washing the dishes here's the literacy in it. You know when you do this, do you know you actually know that you are doing this for your child's learning? You are supporting learning in this way because the whole social perception through media is that the pressure for parents you need to do this, you need to do this to get them to the top of the pile...
10:13	B	And you need to buy this product and that game and that programme...
10:16	A	To make it work. That is a huge challenge with the cultural and language issues but basically children live in families and communities and they come to us so we're actually not the centre of the universe. They are, so it's up to us to work out how we do the communication thing and plenty of examples of you know, when you're listening to kids and watching their play, how they've come to form the opinions that they already have, and they're quite strong aren't they, the beliefs that they already have like the little group of children where...
10:58	B	The girl...
10:59	A	The girl yeah.
	B	'The boys need to protect me, protect me. They're strong they need to protect me. I'm not strong they need to protect me.' Lots of social identities have already been created... But we're very aware that we are a tiny little part of time in a tiny little part of a child's life that actually trying to change the child is not actually going to be effective it's about looking at

		them as part of their family unit and if there are issues then it's looking at it from a broader family perspective
11:40	SW	Thank you. What issues, if any do you see with the access and delivery of preschool programmes in this setting?
11:45	B	Well, where shall we start?
11:46	A, B, SW	Laughter.
11:49	A	Well first of all accessibility. Um (sic) many of our families don't have transport and they're drawn from quite a huge area now that the preschool is here and so for lots it's being able to get here.
12:04	B	So when it rains, they can't walk here.
12:06	A	And if it's 40 degrees, they can't walk here. Is there public transport? No. So for...when it was Kilburn School and Blair Athol Kindy and Gepps Cross, Kilburn had a child-parent centre so people could just walk there. Now they have to come all the way from up here. That's partly why we've decided to do the 15 hours like we have as well as a full day because we couldn't disadvantage...
12:36	B	Sometimes by the time they'd drop off and walk home and turn around to come back again.
12:41	A	So even at 15 hours which is really stupid, I don't know who thought of 15. Works out to 2 1/2 days a week so we've made it so that it's 3 days one week and 2 days the next so there's not a half day thing. That was a bit off the track but...
12:56	B	The transport, but also single parent families. We have quite a high number of single parent families with more than one child so if one child is sick, they can't walk them to school to drop their siblings and go home so it means if one child's sick the whole family misses out on education.
13:12	A	Yeah. The other thing is the way that care is set up, we either had the choice of doing long day care which wasn't a good option or and we've only got a little bit of occasional care so if there were more flexible care possibilities that would be much better for families to be able to access the preschool.
13:36	B	And quite often families and mothers in particular of non-English speaking families and refugee families are almost forced to choose between their education and their child's education because they're responsible for getting the child to preschool so if they want to do English classes, particularly English and learn English, it can be really hard to drop the children and get to English classes and what have you, in time
14:05	A	Or the child goes to English classes and doesn't come to preschool
14:10	B	Yeah, so access is also based on the families' needs, not just about the child but what does the family actually need to access as well as preschool will affect attendance.
14:22	SW	You've already alluded to this, do you believe that 15 hours of preschool education a week is adequate preparation for school but not just that obviously, but also adequate for this time in a child's life? It addresses school readiness but is more than just that, do you feel that the 15 hours is sufficient?
14:51	A	Like I said 15 is a dumb number given that a day is like 6 hours so I don't know where 15 came from um...don't know that you can actually put a number on it...
15:07	B	It's really hard...I've actually come from the UK where nursery is full time as a reception class and that did allow for obviously more learning because there's more time and project-based work could go over longer periods of time and I guess as an educator we have to have double the energy because we have two groups. If we were to do something like a trip, we then have to find that energy to do it again twice whereas we could put twice as much

		energy into one group of children. From an educator's point of view that's what I feel a major difference is that I'm not always spending time and energy thinking about how to duplicate things which you can say in any in any preschool because sometimes they do the morning and then the afternoon because you're always doing things twice. How do you know if 15 is enough?
16:00	A	And actually I think it's really about the focus on being about school being ready for children because it's, you're going to get kids with such a range of experiences all the time, if there's this thing called school that's kind of defined and finite then you have to think about how kids are going to get ready but if school is responsive to children then it's much more fluid for children so I think I don't think that you can actually... I can't answer that question is a yes or no kind of way.
16:38	SW	You are in a somewhat unique position too because you do have that fluidity, don't you.
16:42	A	And we're building on that.
16:46	B	I feel like I could comment on 15 hours of preschool education being adequate. For many of our Category 1 families I don't particularly think it is because of their family situations and whilst I'm making a judgement and a blanket call which obviously families are different, but it's safe to assume that many of our children when they're at home are not being adequately stimulated or are not receiving the...
17:15	A	Language...
17:16	B	The language interaction so 15 hours for our children in our families who are often starting behind the 8 ball is definitely not adequate. I mean the more time they are in environment where they are being challenged and supported would be better.
17:31	A	And it's probably mostly around the language stuff isn't it and that's what the research talks about anyway.
17:38	B	And also we do have a high population of children who are involved with Families SA so there are concerns about their family life and then obviously being here means that they are accessing something which they possibly may not be accessing at home.
17:54	A	So for some kids 15 hours is adequate...
17:59	B	And they have a family life which they are learning and engaging through as well. Whereas some of our children are not having the same level of engagement at home.
18:11	SW	Thank you. And what then of the children who access less preschool than this? You've spoken about attendance issues, um (sic) do you have concerns about children who are accessing less than the 15 hours?
18:26	A	Yes, because it's usually those children that B is talking about. For some children it's possibly not a problem because they are in families where they get lots of experiences and lots of quality interactions and so we're not the only teachers of children. But for children who do access less it's sometimes it's because of that transport stuff, sometimes it's because it's just really hard to... they don't understand why it's important so...
19:00	B	Some families won't come to preschool because they're going to the beach with their grandma which is great go to the beach you can get more out of that whereas some children won't come to preschool because it's raining and they'll be stuck at home in front of the tv all day at home...
19:19	A	Or they don't get to make the decision. So it's really disadvantaging the already disadvantaged rather than a family or a child who is pretty well settled and ...
19:33	B	And we also put in place a lot of supports for children, for families that need extra support so it might be extra one on one adult time, it might be an extra group that runs. It might be some therapy on site so again when they're

		missing preschool, they're actually also missing the extra things that they need whether it's therapeutic, social, emotional.. They're missing more than just preschool when they don't attend the children's centre. And the families often are too... and the parents are missing their financial counselling that's been booked in or their general counselling so attendance for a children's centre is not just about a child's education, but what else is being missed when they're not attending.
20:17	SW	Thank you. What do you know about the changes occurring in early childhood education with the National Quality Framework?
20:24	A	Pretty much everything (laughs). We're right up on that. I think it was set up for a lowest common denominator and I wonder how effective it will be without a big professional learning support. If you look across Australia, the low functioning child care centres could be really low and hopefully that's where change will happen. Whereas we're pretty high functioning, so for us it's a matter of organisation of stuff rather than changing our practice and pedagogy because that's what we do. We use the Early Years Learning Framework, the reflect, respect, relate. We have a culture of reflective practice and inquiry here so um (sic) we're not too worried about it (laughs).
21:24	B	It is also about well, we just have to put our faith in that what it was set up to do it will do. Hopefully it won't come back to expiry dates of hand creams and things, but it will actually bring about good practice.
21:38	A	And for the people who are assessing actually really understand that to a deep level and can recognise it. I think it's really good that the standard is being lifted, that the perception of people working with young children is being lifted as a profession rather than just you know you're looking after young kids that's easy to do so I think all of that, the intent, I think the intent is great.
22:09	B	So yeah just seeing how it rolls out in practice.
22:13	A	And having qualified people working with young children I think is really important. So I think it's great.
22:20	B	It has helped our argument as a Birth to 7 school in that it is sometimes a lack of understanding if we had a teacher out, they would say we'll give you the Year 7 PE teacher and then they wonder why that doesn't work. This is helping us say, 'No it's not ok' and actually now the nation says it's not ok.
	A	It's not ok, early childhood can't be perceived as down here, it's just as important and even more so.
23:01	B	It has been helpful in explaining to outside agencies and other people, it's not just us saying it's important but now everyone thinks so.
23:08	A	Here's all the research and, here's all the politics and all of it.
23:17	SW	Is there anything else that you wish to add or issues you wish to raise regarding preschool education within the South Australian context, anything about where you think things are heading or any concerns within a broader context?
23:30	A	Historically South Australia has had preschool which has been funded for years and years and years. I think that's a bit of a double-edged sword in this bit here because I think we have to be careful that we're not stuck in our traditional way of doing preschool because that's the way we know preschool to be, but have really solid theory and knowledge about learning and young children to be responsive and adapt to the kids that we have now. I know a lot of people in my era can be still very much you put table top activities out and you do this and you do that so yeah, I think just because

		we've always had preschool in South Australia doesn't mean that...
24:23	B	It's always done well.
25:25	A	Yeah. It still comes down to not the preschool programme but the professionals working with children.
24:37	B	As a preschool educator I still see a huge gap in preschool being totally disjointed from a child's educational journey. Like there's preschool and real big school. Um (sic) and I feel really really lucky to work here where we're Birth to 7 and we have a lot of control over transitioning families and children and why it's important but there are still so many centres out there where it's preschool and then there's school.
25:00	A	Proper learning happens in school and that's a big... hopefully this, the the whole national thing will help with that but the media need to get on board with that because they're actually pretty powerful in terms of messages to give.
25:19	B	I just know that when you're in a stand alone kindy. You foster these children and their dispositions for learning and they come out of their shell and they become deep thinkers and problem solvers and it's like, 'See you later. I hope they don't destroy that.' You just don't know and quite often you don't know where the children are going. There's a huge gap and there shouldn't be. I mean in South Australian education, we're all part of the education system so why is there this huge gap and a lack of understanding about what happens before they turn 5?
25:51	A	In South Australia there have been in the past there have been opportunities to and hopefully there will be more now within this context of a National Quality Framework for prior to school and early years educators in school to get together and actually put children at the centre and do their learning around that. I was a bit disappointed and this has nothing to do with it but, well it has in a way ...I was a bit disappointed because in DECD there was a Birth-8 focus in curriculum, now there isn't. It's wonderful to get a minister for child development and everything, but Birth-5? I don't know why they did that. With children's centres we are saying Birth-8. So that whole Birth-5, Birth-8, I think the Birth-8 thing needs to be represented consistently across the state in all its iterations, like politically, within organisations you know, we need to be talking early childhood as Birth-8.
26:58	B	These children don't fundamentally change in a year.
27:00	A	And even the term as we talked about the term preschool, well really, what does that mean, it means the getting ready for and it still puts school as the ... you know that's the point in the sand, that's where the learning begins and as we know often that's where the learning stops (laughs).
27:28	SW	And if you don't have anything else to add.
27:34	A	I'll think of something at 3 o'clock this morning (laughs).
27:36	SW	What I'll do is I'll type up the transcript and I'll forward that to you so that you can read through them and if there is anything else that you want to add then feel free and then you can email me back and if I've represented anything differently from how it was intended then I'm happy to make those changes. Thank you.

<b>Interview Transcript</b>		
<b>Project:</b> <i>4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.</i>		
<b>Site:</b> <i>B</i>	<b>Date:</b> <i>20/11/12 T4 Wk7</i>	<b>Day:</b> <i>Tuesday</i>
		<b>Time:</b> <i>3:30 pm</i>
<b>Interviewer:</b> <i>Sarah Wight</i>		<b>Position of Interviewer:</b> <i>Principal Researcher</i>
<b>Time</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Interview Transcript</b>
<b>0.00</b>	<b>SW</b>	<p>For the purposes of the interview my name is Sarah Wight. I'm a research student at Flinders. The purpose of the semi-structured interview is to respond to the research questions, particularly the one about the perceptions of preschool educators on universal access, the purpose of preschool and how this is enacted in the programme which you provide here.</p> <p>Once the interview transcripts have been typed up and saved as a file, any identifying information will be removed and it will be stored at Flinders. My supervisors Dr Susan Krieg and Dr Kerry Bissaker will have access to this information too and obviously they'll be discreet with that. Your comments will not be linked directly to you and the purposes of the project is to inform a thesis towards a Doctor of Education. So thank you for signing the consent forms, um (sic) the interview will take approximately 30 minutes. So if you're happy to continue, we'll get started. So it's a very big, broad question to begin, what do you believe the purpose of preschool, or if you prefer kindergarten is?</p>
<b>1:11</b>	<b>A</b>	<i>I think it provides children with social interactions and life skills outside of the home, outside of the family and broadens their understanding of how it is in the big world.</i>
<b>1:27</b>	<b>B</b>	<i>I think it gives them the opportunity to be themselves away from their family as well. I think it's often the first time that there are away.</i>
<b>1:48</b>	<b>SW</b>	How do you think these things are enacted through your practice, through what you do and obviously the environment that you provide for the children, experiences which you provide?
<b>1:59</b>	<b>A</b>	<i>The idea of setting up environment as it is, is to give children the opportunity to make choices and to find out for themselves whether it was a good choice, or not so good choice, whether it is with activities or friendships and I...oh I've just lost my train of thought. Did you want to say something?</i>
<b>2:26</b>	<b>B</b>	<i>Yes. I suppose, I like...I think it's important to set up experiences where there's collaborative work to help them get along with others as they'll always have to find people that like and people they don't like and to deal with those situations.</i>
<b>2:49</b>	<b>A</b>	<i>I worry about the resilience of the children and because of that I worry about the resilience of the parents, parents chopping and changing, moving sessions and days to avoid particular children, situations and that doesn't help the children because what we want is the life skills that allow children to make a mistake in a safe situation so that there's a safety net here with the staff and their peers. And of course there is more staff in a preschool, than there are in a reception class, which is a good opportunity to have a go, take a risk. If it doesn't work, their world's not going to fall apart. But if they go home upset, and say the very typical I didn't play with anyone, I have no friends, the documentation that we have can show that that's not actually true or correct,</i>

		<p>whether it's through our photos, the diary or their portfolios. Like I say it provides a safety net for them and life skills, I just come back to life skills, because it's really important that they're allowed to use a knife. They can't cut an onion without a knife, there is no other way. Parents...H for instance had never been allowed to touch a knife because he might cut himself (laughs). So allowing I think...and trusting your kids and trust I think is a big thing, if we set up places and spaces and activities where they have to do something that they've not ever done before is just providing them with that safety net and taking a risk, all those things are really important. Otherwise we're going to have a generation of parents next, in the next twenty years who are just going to freak out if their children get dirty or smell like garlic on their hands or something like that. Hopefully these children will soldier on and give things a go.</p>
4:46	B	That sounds good. I don't think I can add anything to that.
4:52	SW	Thank you. This question feeds into that. How do you see the relationship between home and preschool in shaping the young person and you've already alluded to that. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?
5:06	B	Well it's an important relationship from the very beginning, even when they're enrolling. Yes so just to be open and honest with parents and discuss issues that you think are important.
5:27	A	I think with the newsletter we can provide a lot of non-specific to one particular child or one family or one group of people, that you can just the way you word something, it becomes something for parents to think about that's their provocation really if you like to, challenging them in a subtle but a nice respectful way by just whatever you want to talk about, like sunblock and all of the general things that we do. The hard part is talking to parents about a child's weight, speech... Speech is the easiest one of everything. Speech is one you quick fix sometimes, sometimes it's just a matter of weeks with special therapy but I think talking with the parents and calling them by name, welcoming them in the mornings, greeting them I think that's all an important part of...and listening to their point of view. Some days when I've got so much other paperwork to do, and they just want to talk, it's really important because they worry so much. Sometimes too much, but you can't say anything.
6:46	SW	I saw parents coming in and staying for a while this morning that's obviously they're welcome to do so and they feel comfortable doing that.
6:52	B	Yes, they would normally leave after prayer time.
6:57	A	Some think that the prayer bell is time to scatter (laughs). You promised to stay for prayer... and they're most welcome. In the old days we had a volunteer roster and people would come in and do things but time's pretty precious these days. Something that is rare.
7:16	B	It is lovely when parents will come in and cook or do something special.
7:21	SW	What issues if any do you see with access and delivery of preschool programmes in this setting?
7:29	A	Access as in universal access or just access?
	SW	Yes just access. I guess the way the sessions operate, availability to families.
7:41	A	Parents get to choose. We always allow parents to choose. We want the families here so if you say, I know when my children went to kindy in the Hills they did afternoons and then mornings, they never did whole days but it meant that you were always, 'Oh my gosh. I've got to go.' In the shopping queue, you'd leave your trolley. You had a very strict regime of what you could do while your child was at kindy. Now we have with universal access, they get to choose their sessions. They can have 5 days over a fortnight. However best they manage that. They don't have to but most do. Most do stay all day, five days in a fortnight but it's their choice. That I think is respectful to the other things that they have got to do in life. If I want the children here I have to...I mean it's ok. I know that some people don't like

		that because every time a child comes over a fortnight, there may be a different group of people. That's ok. It's alright. The children are quite...they're more flexible than we are.
8:45	B	They're very adaptable.
8:47	A	I don't know how I'd feel if I went to work 5 days a fortnight and every time there were different people there, that might be a bit confusing but they seem to manage it really quite well.
9:00	B	Yes and I think that says something about them feeling safe and secure within the environment.
9:08	SW	And obviously most of your families come from around this area.
9.10	A	No. No. From Two Wells to Hawthorndene. We're on the way to somewhere. Basically I always say to people we're on the way to work and picking up on the way home. It's funny because...Athelstone, all around, West Beach. We've got people from all over because Mum or Dad or grandparents live close by or Mum and Dad work close by. I don't know how. We used to plot it on a chart in the old days. We must have had more time. We'd put a little map up and put pins there to see where they all came from. It was more central than what it is now. Now they're from all over the place.
9.52	SW	Do you have difficulties when you have gatherings for school or that sort of thing or are most families able to attend?
10:00	A	No, it's pretty much a full house.
	SW	Oh, that's good.
10.03	A	Plenty of warning that's the secret.
10:08	SW	OK, so getting on to the universal access, do you believe 15 hours of preschool a week is adequate for preschool experience, or kindy experience and as preparation for school. So I guess it's a two-pronged question and I guess it depends too on what you think the purpose of preschool is.
10:25	A	I get a little upset about preparing for school...
10:27	SW	And school readiness?
10:29	A	Yes, because it's not our job.
10:33	SW	I guess it's more terminology for a primary teacher, than a kindy teacher. I guess the perspective of a primary teacher and a kindy teacher is quite different so answer it how you will.
10:43	A	Ok (laughs). Do you want to go first?
10.45	B	Well, I think the 15 hours is good. I suppose when it was first introduced, I thought it won't make very much difference and the extra time has made a difference and I can't imagine going back to the 11 or 12 or what it was before. I think the 15 hours just seems to be the right amount...at the moment.
11.09	A	Because of the hours and we open the door at 8:30, we actually have 16 and ¼ hours. We could, if they get up on time and get here on time, they can have 16 and ¼ hours if they stay until 3, but I think my concern is going to be next year when everything changes that little bit more, it's not going to be enough. For those children who are 5 and 5 and a 1/2...
11:36	B	Yes
11.38	A	I don't think it's going to be enough. We may have to look at restructuring a place. I don't want to give up the * room because I love it but I can't see what else we're going to do for the older children because I'm not entirely convinced that 3 years and 9 months and 5 and 1/2 year olds are best placed together. So that's a challenge for us because it's going to be an evolving process because no-one here has experienced that yet. And when you have younger children going into reception and older children into kindy, we'll have to see how that goes and whether those children can be floating. There may be opportunities for that here because it's a junior primary campus. We

		can do a whole lot more than a place which is more regimented. So I think that is the challenge, some kids get tired and you know, they just get a bit more delicate in the afternoon.
12:49	SW	Do you find that all of the children generally are accessing the 15 hours?
12:52	A	Most. I'd say most. We've got a few that are... I think it's because parents are scared they're not going to remember that extra day or extra ½ days, that they just keep at 2 days each week so there are a handful of people doing that. Also child care isn't very flexible, we're flexible to the hilt but child care just won't have ½ day visits or once a fortnight so they're kind of locked into childcare I think and * Montessori is not flexible is it? (laughs)
13:28	B	No.
13:29	A	It's not flexible. So they have to do certain things there if they are enrolled. So we're the flexible ones.
	SW	The next question is about the children who access less preschool than this but obviously that's not too much a concern here at this site but you know the children who may access less, they may possibly be the children at risk and...
13:37	A	I think probably some of them like A one of the little boys, he's actually doing more because he's actually going to *, so he's going to * and he's coming here.
14:05	SW	And the rest of their lives are rich enough to...
14:08	B	R, R doesn't access the full amount does she? R.
14:11	A	No.
14:14	B	But that's for family reasons isn't it.
14:16	A	They just don't get up in time. Lunchtime school. (laughs) She'll be in in the morning, she promised, a school visit. Some people have rich lives in other ways.
14:32	SW	Obviously that question may be more relevant at some of my other research sites where there are children coming from homes where they may be higher levels of illiteracy and that sort of thing.
14:42	A	Yes. Yes.
14:44	B	That may still impact on her next year when she's at school and she misses or comes late 3 mornings a week so it's not a good habit to start with.
14:55	SW	Often too I think teachers in kindy or Reception see things and it's only when they move up through the school that it becomes evident to everyone else.
15:04	A	Yes. If you're not here by 9.15, you're marked in late or absent so you have to rethink that when they roll up at 10 because...
15:14	B	They miss out on so much too.
15:21	SW	This is probably the wrong way to ask because I'm sure you know a lot about it. What do you know about the changes occurring in early childhood education with the NQF, and what do you think about them?
15:30	A	What hits me in the face is...paperwork. The paperwork is just ridiculous. Now I can't even work in the kindy for the whole week. I can't be there the whole time. That's why I was doing, what I was doing. So it breaks my heart in a way...
15:48	SW	Is that because of accountability?
15:50	A	Yes. Policies. We didn't have policies. We used the school policies before and we didn't really have policies and now we have a folder this thick and most of them I've created from various sources and written them myself, just gathered in all the information and put in what was appropriate for our site so you know, no-one ever looks at them but they're there. So I think that there's a lot of...child care might have always had to do it, that's what I've been told...
16:26	B	For their accreditation.
16:28	A	But now for us, it's like oh my gosh. If you know what I mean?
16:29	B	For it to be looked at once every 3 years on our assessment day.
16:32	SW	Do you have an assessment day yet?

16:35	A	19 <sup>th</sup> February. It's a Tuesday, Week 4. (laughs) Not that I'm counting.
	B	I think it's good because it does question what you're doing and to make sure that you are doing the right things. It's an enormous amount of paperwork for A and will be ongoing.
17:07	A	Yes, because every newsletter from ACECQA that you read there's something new for you to get your head around.
17:15	B	And file and...
17:20	A	Look I think there probably were a lot of... some staff let's say some staff in centres who probably either shouldn't have been there, well-meaning people and if they and... once they decided that everyone needed to be qualified to a degree depending on your role, I think it's a good thing because it lifts our standards. We're not highly regarded in the community. Teachers aren't highly regarded. I don't know if that will change... maybe in the old days it was better than what it is now. It always comes back to.. 'Oh, you've got all those holidays.' I just think, 'Hang on a minute, I work an 80 hour week. Why don't you think I can have a holiday?' But I think is has lifted our standards to a higher level. We expect more. If you expect more, then you get more and it's the same with the children. We expect more of them. You expect them to contribute, you expect families to, I always so you don't come here unless you come as a family. We don't just want your child, we want you as part of the community and that's a a small * school and we don't have just * children here or * families. Yeah, we're little but we hold our own.
18:43	SW	Do you think the NQF assumed that there would be a full time Director to do these sorts of things as opposed to a Director who would have a teaching load or an interest in teaching? Is that part of the problem?
18:57	A	I think within the * system we've been, I've never had another teacher until last year. I just did everything and because I didn't complain everyone just thought I was happy.
19:10	B	What changed? What made the change apart from the 15 hours?
19:14	A	I think it just became the workload, just the workload and things were starting to pile up. Policies had to be in place etc etc. July holidays, October holidays...that was the major change. Got a bit tense there but it's ok, not going to happen any longer. So that was good, we never had...it's our history that *. was allowed to... we're a DECS-funded * kindy so in the past when it suits we've become a DECS and when it doesn't suit we say no we're a * kindy but no we're a DECS-funded * preschool. So we have to abide by some of their regulations. It is complicated but the deal was that we had one teacher and one point 'da da da' (sic) ESO whatever it was and that's all the funding we get. And now we get 20 per cent loading which covers nothing of B's salary. So it's a high cost to us, it costs the school a fortune to have us here and we don't have fees like school. So our \$350 a term compared to the school's \$800 or \$900 I don't even know what it is any more...
20:43	SW	Which makes you highly accessible for your families doesn't it...
20:47	A	Yes, yes, yes. Compared to *, * and *. I think that's *'s weekly fee or fortnightly fee or something like that but compared to a DECS kindy, it's a lot. So people come here because they want to not just because they live next door. Yeah, but the cost to the school is enormous. I'm always very conscious of that because we pay...we have had 2 ESO's at times and now B's here so it's a financial cost to the school and we've been given very little support by the government to do what they want us to do with the ratios. So write that down (laughs).
21:37	SW	So it makes you quite unique doesn't it, like you've said with your position within the * sector and not being a DECD kindy. Interesting. Just quickly before we finish up, I was just wondering how you found the Learning

		Framework because some of the other kindies had said, where they have a school on site, that their preference would have been Birth-8. I was just wondering how you found it being a Birth-5 document. Have there been any issues like that for you? Have you found it good to use?
22:09	A	I actually quite like it. It's very...
22:14	B	... user-friendly.
22:16	A	It is user-friendly. You know I'm almost a bit tired of it now. I have to get my quotes from somewhere else please, but it's not very good on documentation I must. I'll say it's all so much to do with outcomes based about...
22:38	B	...the process
22:41	A	So also, a really important point is that there is no acknowledgement of Reggio Emilia in there. It's just full of Reggio not a word, not a mention of Reggio Emilia, or Carla or Loris Malaguzzi and that's where it's all come from. It just reeks of Reggio Emilia, You know who would use the term provocation before and citizen. We never talked about citizens since the 40's. That's all come from there and I think that that's the big pity that something they should have acknowledged in there, in the back of their book that a lot of research has been done on Reggio Emilia. That is really interesting. I do find it quite user-friendly and I quite like to flick through...my challenge each week is to use one page for my documentation. If I can just open it and pick a page and ok what does this mean? I do like particularly though the cultural competency because that's something that here in a pretty Italian community, we now have a few other cultures within our little community here. It's just making sure that you don't expect.. for instance so there's a picture of Megan one of my workers who works with me on IT and a Father's Day picture from her I think for this year. It's of a white Australian guy standing there with is back to us, it's just from clip art I think... and holding the child walking at the beach or something like that. It's very not my Sri Lankan family, it's not my Chinese family, it's not my Mandarin family. So I'd put a big picture right across the top of it or I'd change it to hands, Dad's hands or something so I think that's a big challenge for us here because it's not like * or down at *. We don't have the Vietnamese community that they have so predominantly or Aboriginal kids. We don't have indigenous children here and haven't had for several years. So that's the challenge because it's always got to be there because every time you open the book, you see it and you think yes I need to make sure I including all of these people in conversations, make sure they don't miss out when a newsletter goes home that's really important that. So it's good in lots of ways but I think it's got some refining to do and I wish they'd hurry up and do it (laughs)
25:26	SW	Do you have the opportunity to give feedback about the Learning Framework or are they not calling for anything?
25:30	A	No, they're not calling for anything (laughs). No, but if you find a place that would be good. But I know it has been mentioned at a conference I went to particularly about Reggio Emilia that it's not really acknowledged the readings, the background and the research which has obviously been done there.
25:53	SW	Interesting. Ok, I don't want to keep you too much longer. Is there anything else you'd like to add or issues you'd like to raise about preschool education... on a Tuesday afternoon when you've had a full day (laughs)? Once I type up the transcript I can email it to you. It'll probably take me some time because I'm doing it manually but then if there's anything you

		want to add afterwards...
<b>26:22</b>	<b>B</b>	What I think about preschool education is that it's improving and getting better all the time so I think that's a positive.
<b>26:31</b>	<b>SW</b>	Thank you.
<b>26:34</b>	<b>B</b>	And I think we are more accountable than in the past which is a good thing.
<b>26:41</b>	<b>A</b>	So in the end I think you'll probably get staff who want to be there, not because they like the workload because they like the work, because they're passionate about their work and really they're the people that you need there, not just people who think, 'Oh great good holidays,' because that's not true any more. So yes you need people there who love what they do.
<b>27:05</b>	<b>SW</b>	Thank you very much for your time after a full day and I really appreciate your time.
<b>27:15</b>	<b>A</b>	I just think it's really good that someone wants to listen. I'm very keen to see what becomes of your research.



**Mrs Sarah Wight**  
EdD Candidate  
School of Education  
  
School of Education  
Flinders University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2100  
Adelaide 5001

Tel: xxxx xxx xxx

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

---

## INFORMATION SHEET

---

**Title:** *4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.*

**Investigator:**

Mrs Sarah Wight  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Supervisors:**

Dr Susan Krieg  
School of Education  
Flinders University

Dr Kerry Bissaker  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Description of the study:**

This study will investigate how four groups of four year old children access and experience preschool education in South Australia and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school commencement. Parents' choices regarding their children's attendance or non-attendance at preschool will also be explored. This project is supported by the School of Education at Flinders University.

**Purpose of the study:**

This project aims to find out:

- How many hours of preschool are four groups of four year old children enrolled and attending?
- How do children enrolled in the four participating preschools spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry?
- What are the perceptions of preschool educators on universal access, the purposes of preschool and how is this enacted in the programme which they provide?

- What is the basis on which parents of participating preschools have made decisions relating to preschool choice, enrolment and attendance for their children?

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your child's preschool attendance, activities which your child participates in when not in attendance at preschool and reasons for your choices regarding your child's preschool attendance. The questionnaire also contains questions related to parenting. It will take approximately ten minutes to complete and will not identify you in any way.

**What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?**

The sharing of your experiences will assist in gaining a more complete picture of the life of a four year old child attending preschool in South Australia and inform the discussion around access and experience of preschool in South Australia. This in turn may improve the planning and delivery of future programmes.

**Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?**

You will be anonymous. The questionnaire may be returned via mail and your responses and comments cannot be linked to you.

**Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?**

The investigator does not anticipate any risks from your involvement in this study. If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with the investigator.

**How do I agree to participate?**

Participation is voluntary. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions within the questionnaire without effect or consequences. If you choose to participate, please complete the questionnaire and place it in the collection box at your child's preschool marked *Preschool Survey- 4: It matters* or return via mail in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided to: Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide 5001. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

**How will I receive feedback?**

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and I hope that you will accept the invitation to be involved.**

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 5581). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)*

*4: It matters. How four year old children from four South Australian preschools access and experience preschool education and spend the balance of their time in the year prior to school entry.*

ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

The study seeks to explore how four groups of four year old children in South Australia access preschool education; how they spend the balance of their time in the year prior to starting school and how parents are making choices for their children regarding preschool education in South Australia. Your responses will better inform what is understood in South Australia about how children currently access preschool education and which other activities they participate in when not attending preschool. For the purposes of the study, the term *preschool* is used in place of *kindergarten* and is intended to include all preschool and kindergarten programmes which cater for children aged four in the year prior to school entry.

Please clearly mark appropriate responses with a tick. If a correction needs to be made, please place a cross through the error and mark the correct response. Once completed, please place your questionnaire in the collection box at your child's preschool marked *Preschool Survey - 4: It matters* or return it via mail in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided to: Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide 5001. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

**I. BACKGROUND**

**1. Gender of person completing questionnaire:**

- Female
- Male

**2. Level to which mother has studied:**

*(Please tick to highest level)*

- Completed primary education
- Completed Year 10
- Completed Year 12
- Completed trade certificate
- Completed diploma or equivalent
- Completed under graduate degree
- Completed post graduate degree
- N/A

**3. Level to which father has studied:**

*(Please tick to highest level)*

- Completed primary education
- Completed Year 10
- Completed Year 12
- Completed trade certificate
- Completed diploma or equivalent
- Completed under graduate degree
- Completed post graduate degree
- N/A

**4. Mother's employment:**

- Currently unemployed
- On leave
- Paid, part time (less than 35 hours per week)
- Paid, full time (35 hours or more per week)
- N/A

**5. Father's employment:**

1  Currently unemployed

2  On leave

3  Paid, part time (less than 35 hours per week)

4  Paid, full time (35 hours or more per week)

5  N/A

**6. Number of children residing in family home:**

1  1

2  2

3  3

4  4 or more

**7. Gender of 4 year old child in your care:**

1  Female

2  Male

**8. Languages other than English spoken at home:**  
(Please complete)

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Post code:**  
(Please complete)

\_\_\_\_\_

**II. CHOICE OF PRESCHOOL**

**1. Does the 4 year old in your care attend preschool?**

1  Yes *Please continue on to question 4.*

2  No

**2. If no, what are your reasons for the 4 year old child in your care not attending preschool?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. What if anything, would make you reconsider the non-attendance at preschool of the 4 year old child in your care?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please continue on to III. OUTSIDE OF PRESCHOOL*

**4. What type of preschool does your child attend?**

1  DECD preschool on school site

2  DECD preschool as a stand alone

3  Catholic preschool on school site

4  Independent preschool on school site

5  Independent preschool as a stand alone

6  Long day care with preschool programme

**5. How many hours a week is your child enrolled to attend preschool?**

1  3 hours

2  6 hours

3  9 hours

4  12 hours

5  15 hours

6  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**6. How many hours of preschool did your child attend last week?**

1  3 hours

2  6 hours

3  9 hours

4  12 hours

5  15 hours

6  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**7. If less than enrolled time, why was this so?**

1  Illness

2  Holiday

3  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**8. At what age did your child commence preschool?**

- 1  3 years of age
- 2  4 years of age
- 3  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Did your child complete a pre-entry transition to preschool?**

- 1  Yes
- 2  No
- 3  N/A

**10. Why did you choose this preschool setting?**

*(Tick all that apply)*

- 1  Educational programme
- 2  Close to home
- 3  Close to parent's work
- 4  Child care centre where child attends drops off and picks up to and from preschool
- 5  Child's sibling attended same preschool
- 6  Friends and/or family attend same preschool
- 7  On site with primary setting
- 8  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**III. OUTSIDE OF PRESCHOOL**

**1. Who cares for your child when he or she is not attending preschool?**

*(Tick all that apply)*

- 1  I do
- 2  My spouse/partner who lives with me
- 3  Before or after school after school care at a school
- 4  Child care centre, or outside school hours care centre not at school
- 5  Family Day Care provider
- 6  Occasional care centre (e.g. gym, leisure or community centre)
- 7  Maternal grandparent
- 8  Paternal grandparent
- 9  Parent who lives elsewhere
- 10  Other relative 18 years or older (including siblings)
- 11  Other person 18 years or older (e.g. nanny or friend)
- 12  Relative under 18 years (including siblings)

**2. Please indicate activities which your child participated in during the last week when not attending preschool.**

*(Tick all that apply)*

Home-based activities	1 <input type="checkbox"/> Reading a story or being read to
	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Singing songs and nursery rhymes or being sung to
	3 <input type="checkbox"/> Talking
	4 <input type="checkbox"/> Playing with and learning with letters and numbers
	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing and early writing
	6 <input type="checkbox"/> Colouring
	7 <input type="checkbox"/> Playing educational games
	8 <input type="checkbox"/> Using computer
	9 <input type="checkbox"/> Watching tv, video, DVD, movie
	10 <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to CD's radio, music
	11 <input type="checkbox"/> Playing with toys
	12 <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking with an adult
	13 <input type="checkbox"/> Imaginative play
	14 <input type="checkbox"/> Playing outside at home
	15 <input type="checkbox"/> Riding bicycle, tricycle
	16 <input type="checkbox"/> Other exercise (e.g. swimming, dancing, running)
	17 <input type="checkbox"/> Playing with friend or sibling
Travel	18 <input type="checkbox"/> Travelling in pusher or on bicycle seat
	19 <input type="checkbox"/> Travelling in car or other household vehicle
	20 <input type="checkbox"/> Travelling on public transport, ferry or plane
	21 <input type="checkbox"/> Walking for travel or fun
Organised activities	22 <input type="checkbox"/> Attending child care
	23 <input type="checkbox"/> Attending occasional care
	24 <input type="checkbox"/> Attending play group
	25 <input type="checkbox"/> Attending active lesson (e.g. dancing, swimming,
	26 <input type="checkbox"/> Attending library lesson
Excursions	27 <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting playground
	28 <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting library
	29 <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting shops
	30 <input type="checkbox"/> Socialising with family, friends
	31 <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting museum, art gallery, exhibition, performance
	32 <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

#### IV. VIEWS ON PRESCHOOL

Using the following 1-5 scale, please indicate, by ticking the most correct response, the degree to which you agree with the statement below.

1  2  3  4  5   
strongly disagree    disagree    neutral    agree    strongly agree

1. 1  2  3  4  5  I believe that preschool education is important in preparing my child for school.
2. 1  2  3  4  5  I know what is expected of my child for school commencement.
3. 1  2  3  4  5  15 hours of preschool education a week is adequate preparation for school.
4. 1  2  3  4  5  I have confidence in my ability to prepare my child for school.
5. 1  2  3  4  5  I believe that expectations on children commencing school are greater from when I entered formal schooling.
6. 1  2  3  4  5  My child will participate in school transition programmes.
7. 1  2  3  4  5  I have confidence that my child will be ready for school.
8. 1  2  3  4  5  Successful transition to school is important for later school success.
9. 1  2  3  4  5  Preschool education is easy to access for my child (i.e. time and setting).

#### V. VIEWS ON MY CHILD'S PRESCHOOL

*If your child does not attend preschool, please miss this and continue on to VI. COMMENTS.*

Using the following 1-5 scale, please indicate, by ticking the most correct response, the degree to which you agree with the statement below.

1  2  3  4  5   
strongly disagree    disagree    neutral    agree    strongly agree

1. 1  2  3  4  5  I think my child receives high quality teaching at this preschool.
2. 1  2  3  4  5  I am satisfied with the learning programmes offered at my child's preschool.
3. 1  2  3  4  5  The preschool has an excellent learning environment.
4. 1  2  3  4  5  My child is motivated to learn at this preschool.
5. 1  2  3  4  5  My child is happy at preschool this year.
6. 1  2  3  4  5  Children have enough materials and resources for their learning.
7. 1  2  3  4  5  This preschool assist the development of my child's personal and social skills.
8. 1  2  3  4  5  I receive helpful information about my child's progress and achievement.
9. 1  2  3  4  5  This preschool provides opportunities to discuss my child's progress.
10. 1  2  3  4  5  The preschool is well organised this year.
11. 1  2  3  4  5  I have confidence in how the preschool is managed.
12. 1  2  3  4  5  Overall, I am satisfied with the preschool's planning.
13. 1  2  3  4  5  I have confidence in my child's preschool to prepare my child for school.

**V. COMMENTS**

**1. Any further comments on this questionnaire**

---

---

---

---

**2. Any further comments on the new 15 hour provision of preschool education for four year old children as per the Australian Government Universal Access Policy**

---

---

---

---

**3. Any further comments on preschool education in South Australia**

---

---

---

---

**Thank you for your valuable contribution.**

*This study uses questionnaires (or part of) developed for Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). These questionnaires are the property of the Commonwealth as represented by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. LSAC is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs ([www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)), and is being undertaken in association with the Australian Institute of Family Studies ([www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics ([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)), with advice being provided by a consortium of leading researchers at research institutions and universities throughout Australia.*

*This study uses questionnaires (or part of) developed and administered in South Australia by the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) as part of **The Preschool Survey**.*

### Qualitative Responses to Phase 2 Questionnaire (English)

Case	Item	Comment
1	VI. 1	I feel my child benefits from the Montessori Preschool that he attends along with the kindy she is in now.
4	VI. 2	I think having the choice of 15 hours is a great initiative. In particular, the full day options are good preparation for the full school day such a big step for the child. I don't think it should be increased as this is the last opportunity for daily quality time with parents and time to do 'own thing' without structure of school.
4	VI. 3	Has come a long way since I was at kindy (in late 70's). Focus should be on socialising, exploring imagination, learning to follow rules and develop friendships. Do not want it to be too "pre" school focussed with structured lessons. Reggio Emilia approach understands this I think.
5	VI. 2	State kindys for children who turn 4 between Feb-April 2013 are only offering kindy for Terms 2-4 with increased hours in terms 3 and 4. I feel this would rush my child and also stress him in the first term of attendance. Therefore I chose a Catholic kindy that offers transition pre-entry T4 2012 and 15 hours from Term 1 2014 (sic).
7	VI. 2	I think preschools and kindys should be praised for the outstanding way they have managed to provide 15 hrs of education for 4 year olds while maintaining playgroup and 3 year old programs.
8	VI. 3	I feel it could be a little more formal as a transition for school. Having moved from the UK, it is a shame that my child will not continue to build on letter recognition, days of the week etc.
9	VI.2	Personally, the 15 hours (spread across 2 full days and 1 half day a week) provides a good balance for us all; allowing me to manage my paid work and still being able to be present for my daughter after school. It will enable her to transition into school with (I hope) ease and confidence and a network of friends.
10	VI. 2	Very pleased with the extra hours. Could even increase in term prior to starting school. It is still a big jump from 15 hrs to full time school.
16	VI. 2	Universal access has had knock on effects that may not have been anticipated upon its introduction. Kindergartens have been forced to cancel playgroups and no longer offer transition/pre-entry programs in order to accommodate the extended hours.
17	VI. 2	The 2 full days is good. The 2 hrs every other Friday is difficult to access with working as well. It would be better to offer 1/2 day less often or even an additional full day twice a term.
23	VI. 2	15 hrs is too much for children who have just turned 4 – due to kindy's funding you feel obligated to attend the full 15

		hrs. I would have been happier increased the hours gradually.
23	VI. 3	After experiencing both private and public kindy/preschool, I feel there was better attention to detail and education with private run kindys.
25	VI. 1	I am a Reception /Year One teacher (with an Early Childhood degree) with 10+ years experience so I probably know a little bit more about the way things operate at preschool-I also work at the school where my child attends preschool.
25	VI. 2	I think it would be wonderful if all children accessed 15 hours per week.
25	VI. 3	I would not like to see Preschool fully integrated into long day childcare. I think educational programs operate more effectively in a stand alone preschool environment.
28	VI. 1	During the year the pre-school moved moved to offer full day (2 sessions) of kindy per day from 5 ½ mornings or afternoons. For our family, this change is pivotal. The child at kindy was less tired and enjoyed it more than 2 ½ days than 5 mornings.
28	VI. 3	I believe the move to one entry date will be better. I did not understand and the disruptive nature of new and departing students every term and did not compensate for it.
34	VI. 1	They were great in picking up on my child's speech problems and were quick to act on it.
34	VI. 2	Not long enough-my child requires more stimulation and is easily bored-loves interacting with the kids and it would be great if kindy was more (increased) hours during the week (re-3 full days-instead of 2 full and 1 1/2 day
35	VI. 3	The preschool my son attends is great but sometimes I feel that there are too many kids in the learning class and that each child doesn't get enough individual learning attention.
41	VI. 3	Perhaps the government should increase the funding in this area so that kids can have better quality preschool education which can set a firm foundation for their future.
41	VI. 2	15 hour provision is a good thing but it is not enough to help prepare the child for school.
49	Other31	Staff, environment and reputation, a lovely kindy.
49	VI. 3	Would be good to have greater access to 3 yr old kindy/early learning. I don't agree with 1 intake to pre-school/school, I believe this will have a detrimental effect on my 18mth old who is a June baby and already seems quite bright.
50	VI. 2	A good idea, hope all children make the most of it.
50	VI. 1	I have noticed small differences between Montessori early learning program and the kindy (pre-school at OLV).
50	VI. 3	Cultural diversity needs to be explored further in preschools and importance of the environment, healthy lifestyles/eating etc.
52	VI. 2	As older children will be attending kindy, I believe a curriculum should be introduced.
52	VI. 2	15 hour provision is a good thing but it is not enough to help prepare the child for school.

<b>52</b>	VI. 3	I find it hard finding a public kindergarten due to zoning restrictions. In Walkerville there is no kindy and I have been advised to put my children's names down at a few and be on a waiting list for extra vacancies, this is frustrating.
<b>54</b>	Other31	It is designated kinder for the primary school attended by the child's siblings, and is also an excellent kinder (otherwise would have selected another).
<b>54</b>	Preaccess86	Some hours are short in order to coordinate with collecting siblings from school at a different location (the kinder is designated kinder for several schools in the region).
<b>54</b>	VI. 2	We have moved from interstate (Tas) and have been impressed. I would like to see kindergartens proactively identifying gifted children and being active in planning for their needs at kinder and as they transition to school.
<b>54</b>	VI. 2	I think 15 hours is ideal to strike a balance between learning at kinder and learning at home. I think both are very important. My children have all valued the one-on-one time they had at home as well as the kinder environment.
<b>55</b>	Other31	Staff are brilliant with children.
<b>58</b>	VI. 1	My child is enjoying preschool and wants to go everyday. She has no trouble being with other children. She enjoys the interaction with learning advisors as well.
<b>61</b>	VI. 1	The staff at my daughter's kindy work very hard and provide an outstanding educational experience. My involvement has encouraged me to gain a Certificate III in Education Support.
<b>61</b>	VI. 2	I feel the extra hours provide an easier transition to the demands of schooling.
<b>61</b>	Other31	Staff, environment and reputation, a lovely kindy.
<b>64</b>	VI. 1	An extra staff member would be beneficial.
<b>64</b>	VI. 2	15 hours per week is not very helpful for working parents.
<b>66</b>	VI. 1	My centre has increased the number of pupils since my first child attended. I am not happy with this. They now offer full days which is much better.
<b>66</b>	VI. 2	I believe that 20 hours a week would be better suited to children in their 3rd and 4th term of kindy. This would allow for a more consistent transition into school in relation to contact hours.
<b>68</b>	VI. 3	Reading with kids 1:1 should be pushed more.



---

### ورقه معلومات

---

**عنوان: 4:** اهمیت دارد. چطور اطفال چهار ساله از چهار مکتب آمادگی استرالیای جنوبی به تعلیمات مکتب آمادگی دسترسی دارند و آن را تجربه می کنند و [چطور] متباقی وقت خود را در سال قبل از ورود به مکتب سپری می کنند.

#### محقق:

Mrs Sarah Wight  
School of Education  
Flinders University

#### ناظرین:

Dr Susan Krieg  
School of Education  
Flinders University

Dr Kerry Bissaker  
School of Education  
Flinders University

#### شرح مطالعه:

این طرح مطالعاتی در این مورد تحقیق می کند که چطور چهار گروه اطفال چهارساله به تعلیمات آمادگی مکتب در استرالیای جنوبی دسترسی دارند و آن را تجربه می کنند و [چطور] بخشی از وقت خود در سال قبل از ورود به مکتب را می گذرانند. انتخاب های والدین در قسمت اشتراک یا عدم اشتراک در مکتب آمادگی نیز مورد بررسی قرار خواهد گرفت. این پروژه از سوی "مکتب تعلیم و تربیه" در "پوهنتون فلیندرز" پشتیبانی می شود.

#### هدف مطالعه:

هدف پروژه عبارتست از دریافت اینکه:

- چهار گروه اطفال چهارساله برای چند ساعت شامل مکتب آمادگی می شوند و [برای چند ساعت] در آن اشتراک می کنند؟
- اطفال شامل در چهار مکتب آمادگی اشتراک کننده چطور متباقی وقت خود را در سال قبل از ورود به مکتب سپری می کنند؟
- معلمین مکتب آمادگی چه تصویری از دسترسی همگانی و اهداف مکتب آمادگی دارند و این امر چگونه در برنامه ای که ارائه می کنند گنجانده می شود؟
- والدین اطفال مکاتب آمادگی اشتراک کننده بر کدام مبنا درباره انتخاب مکتب آمادگی، ثبت نام و اشتراک برای اطفال شان تصمیم گرفته اند؟

### انجام چه کاری از من درخواست خواهد شد؟

از شما درخواست خواهد شد که پرسشنامه ای را درباره اشتراک طفل تان در مکتب آمادگی، فعالیت هایی که طفل شما در خارج از اوقات مکتب آمادگی انجام می دهد و دلایل انتخاب های مربوط به اشتراک طفل تان در مکاتب آمادگی تکمیل کنید. این پرسشنامه همچنین حاوی سوالاتی درباره وظایف والدینی است. تکمیل این پرسشنامه حدود دقیقه را در بر می گیرد و بهیچوجه هویت شما را معرفی نمی کند.

### من از شمول در این طرح مطالعاتی چه منافع حاصل خواهم کرد؟

به اشتراک نهادن تجربیات شما در حصول تصویر کامل تری از زندگی یک طفل چهار ساله که در استرالیا ای جنوبی در مکتب آمادگی اشتراک می کند کمک خواهد کرد و به مباحثه پیرامون دسترسی و تجربه مکتب آمادگی در استرالیا ای جنوبی اطلاع رسانی می کند. این امر می تواند به نوبه خود کیفیت پلانگذاری و ارائه برنامه های آینده را بهبود بخشد.

### آیا با اشتراک در این طرح مطالعاتی هویت من قابل شناسایی خواهد بود؟

شما بی نام خواهید بود. می توان پرسشنامه را از طریق ایمیل تسلیم کرد و پاسخ ها و تبصره های شما را نمی توان به شما پیوند داد.

### آیا شمول من در این طرح خطرات یا مشکلاتی برای من به همراه خواهد داشت؟

محقق پیش بینی نمی کند که شمول شما در این طرح هیچ خطری برای تان به همراه داشته باشد. اگر تشویشی درباره خطرات پیش بینی شده یا واقعی دارید، لطفاً آنها را با محقق مطرح کنید.

### برای اشتراک چطور موافقت کنم؟

اشتراک شما داوطلبانه است. شما می توانید با "تبصره ای ندارم" پاسخ بدهید یا از پاسخ دادن به هر سوالی که می خواهید امتناع کنید. اگر اشتراک کردن را انتخاب کردید، لطفاً پرسشنامه را پر کنید و آن را در صندوق جمع آوری در مکتب آمادگی طفل تان که نوشته *Preschool Survey- 4: It matters* بر روی آن دیده می شود بگذارید و یا از طریق پست در پاکت خط استامپ دار آدرس دار ارائه شده به Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide 5001 تسلیم کنید. سهمگیری شما عمیقاً قابل قدر است.

### چطور بازخورد دریافت خواهم کرد؟

نتایج پروژه به شکل خلاصه ترتیب خواهد شد و اگر خواهان دیدن آنها باشید از سوی محقق به شما داده خواهد شد.

از تخصیص وقت تان برای خواندن این ورقه معلوماتی تشکر می کنم و امید دارم که دعوت ما را به اشتراک در این طرح بپذیرید.

این پروژه تحقیقاتی از سوی «کمیته اخلاق تحقیق اجتماعی و رفتاری پوهنتون فلیندرز» مورد تأیید قرار گرفته است (شماره پروژه 5581). برای معلومات بیشتر درباره تأیید اخلاقی پروژه می توانید با مدیر اجرایی کمیته به شماره 8201 3116 تلفون کنید، و یا به شماره 8201 2035 on یا به آدرس [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au) ایمیل ارسال کنید.

4: اهمیت دارد. چطور اطفال چهار ساله از چهار مکتب آمادگی استرالیای جنوبی به تعلیمات مکتب آمادگی دسترسی دارند و آن را تجربه می کنند و [چطور] متباقی وقت خود را در سال قبل از ورود به مکتب سپری می کنند.

شماره هویت: \_\_\_\_\_

#### دستورالعمل ها

این طرح مطالعاتی در صدد است تا بررسی کند که چطور چهار گروه اطفال چهارساله در استرالیای جنوبی به تعلیمات آمادگی دسترسی دارند؛ متباقی وقت خود را در سال قبل از شروع مکتب چطور سپری می کنند و والدین بر کدام مبنا درباره تعلیمات آمادگی در استرالیای جنوبی تصمیم گیری می کنند. پاسخ های شما در حصول معلومات دقیق تر درباره درک ساکنین استرالیای جنوبی از نحوه دسترسی اطفال به تعلیمات پیش از مکتب در حال حاضر و فعالیت هایی که آنها در خارج از اوقات مکتب آمادگی انجام می دهند کمک خواهد کرد. در این طرح مطالعاتی، اصطلاح مکتب آمادگی بجای کودکستان استفاده می شود و تمام برنامه های مکتب آمادگی و کودکستان که برای اطفال سن چهار سال در سال قبل از ورود به مکتب تدارک دیده شده اند را شامل می شود.

لطفاً پاسخ های درست را به شکل واضح با یک نشان «تیک» علامت بزنید. اگر به اصلاح کدام جواب ضرورت دارید، لطفاً بر روی جواب اشتباه چلیپا بکشید و جواب درست را علامت بزنید. پرسشنامه را بعد از تکمیل در صندوق جمع آوری در مکتب آمادگی طفل تان که نوشته *Preschool Survey - 4: It matters* دارد بگذارید و یا آن را از طریق پست در پاکت خط دارای استامپ و آدرس که به Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, تسلیم نمایید. سهمگیری شما عمیقاً قابل قدر است.

#### I. پس منظر

##### 1. جنسیت شخص تکمیل کننده پرسشنامه:

1 زن

2 مرد

##### 2. سطح تحصیلات مادر:

(لطفاً بالاترین سطح را تیک مارک بزنید)

1 تکمیل تعلیمات ابتدایی

2 تکمیل سال دهم

3 تکمیل سال دوازدهم

4 تکمیل تصدیقنامه تجارت

5 تکمیل دیپلوم یا معادل آن

6 تکمیل درجه لیسانس

7 تکمیل درجه ماستری

8 قابل تطبیق نیست

3. سطح تحصیلات پدر:

(لطفاً بالاترین سطح را تیک مارک بزنید)

1  تکمیل تعلیمات ابتدایی

2  تکمیل سال دهم

3  تکمیل سال دوازدهم

4  تکمیل تصدیقنامه تجارت

5  تکمیل دیپلوم یا معادل آن

6  تکمیل درجه لیسانس

7  تکمیل درجه ماستری

8  قابل تطبیق نیست

4. وضعیت استخدام مادر:

1  در حال حاضر بیکار

2  در حال گذراندن دوره رخصتی

3  بامعاش، نیمه وقت (کمتر از 35 ساعت در هفته)

4  بامعاش، تمام وقت (35 ساعت یا بیشتر در هفته)

5  قابل تطبیق نیست

5. وضعیت استخدام پدر:

1  در حال حاضر بیکار

2  در حال گذراندن دوره رخصتی

3  بامعاش، نیمه وقت (کمتر از 35 ساعت در هفته)

4  بامعاش، تمام وقت (35 ساعت یا بیشتر در هفته)

5  قابل تطبیق نیست

5. تعداد اطفال ساکن در منزل خانواده شما:

1

2

3

4  یا بیشتر

6. جنسیت طفل 4 ساله خانه شما

1  دختر

2  پسر

7. لسان غیرانگلیسی که در خانه تکلم می شود:

(لطفاً تکمیل کنید)

---

8. کود پستی:

(لطفاً تکمیل کنید)

---

II. انتخاب مکتب آمادگی

1. آیا طفل 4 ساله تحت مراقبت شما در مکتب آمادگی اشتراک می کند؟

1 بلی. لطفاً سر از سوال 4 ادامه دهید.

2 نخیر.

2. اگر جواب شما نخیر است، طفل 4 ساله تحت مراقبت شما بنابه چه دلایلی در مکتب آمادگی اشتراک نمی کند؟

---

---

---

---

---

3. چه چیزی، در صورت وجود، موجب می شود که شما در مورد عدم اشتراک طفل 4 ساله تحت مراقبت تان در مکتب آمادگی

تجدید نظر کنید؟

---

---

---

---

---

4. طفل شما در کدام نوع مکتب آمادگی اشتراک می کند؟

- 1  آمادگی DECD در محل مکتب
- 2  آمادگی DECD منحصیث یک مرکز مستقل
- 3  آمادگی کاتولیک در محل مکتب
- 4  آمادگی کاتولیک منحصیث یک مرکز مستقل
- 5  آمادگی مستقل منحصیث یک مرکز مستقل
- 6  مرکز مراقبت روزانه با برنامه آمادگی

5. طفل شما چند ساعت در هفته برای اشتراک در مکتب آمادگی نام نویسی کرده است؟

- 1  3 ساعت
- 2  6 ساعت
- 3  9 ساعت
- 4  12 ساعت
- 5  15 ساعت
- 6  غیر از این اوقات \_\_\_\_\_

6. طفل شما در هفته گذشته چند ساعت در مکتب آمادگی اشتراک داشت؟

- 1  3 ساعت
- 2  6 ساعت
- 3  9 ساعت
- 4  12 ساعت
- 5  15 ساعت
- 6  غیر از این اوقات \_\_\_\_\_

7. اگر مدت اشتراک کمتر از مدت ثبت شده در نام نویسی است، علت آن چیست؟

- 1  مریضی
- 2  رخصتی
- 3  علت دیگر \_\_\_\_\_

8. طفل شما در کدام سن مکتب آمادگی را شروع کرد؟

- 1  3 سالگی
- 2  4 سالگی
- 3  سن دیگر \_\_\_\_\_

9. آیا طفل شما یک دوره انتقال قبل از ورود به مکتب آمادگی را تکمیل کرد؟

1□ بلی

2□ نخیر

3□ قابل تطبیق نیست

10. چرا شما این مکتب آمادگی را انتخاب کردید؟

(تمام موارد قابل تطبیق را تیک مارک بزنید)

1□ برنامه آموزشی

2□ نزدیکی به خانه

3□ نزدیکی به محل کار والدین

4□ مرکز مراقبت طفلی که طفل در آن شامل است، او را به مکتب آمادگی می برد و می آورد

5□ خواهر یا برادر طفل در همان مکتب آمادگی شامل است

6□ دوستان و/یا خانواده طفل در همان مکتب شامل هستند

7□ با مکتب ابتداییه در یک محل قرار دارد

8□ سایر دلایل

III. خارج از مکتب آمادگی

1. چه کسی طفل شما را در اوقاتی که خارج از مکتب است، مراقبت می کند؟

(تمام موارد قابل تطبیق را تیک مارک بزنید)

1□ من این کار را می کنم

2□ همسرم که با من زندگی می کند

3□ مرکز مراقبت قبل از مکتب یا بعد از مکتب در یک مکتب

4□ مرکز مراقبت طفل، یا مرکز مراقبت خارج از ساعات مکتب بیرون از مکتب

5□ تأمین کننده مراقبت روزانه برای خانواده

6□ مرکز مراقبت مناسبی (مثلاً، جیمناریوم، مرکز تفریحی یا مرکز اجتماع)

7□ والد مادری

8□ والد پدری

9□ والدی که در جای دیگر زندگی می کند

10□ سایر خویشاوندان 18 ساله یا بزرگتر (بشمول خواهر و برادر)

11□ یک شخص دیگر 18 ساله یا بزرگتر (مثلاً مراقب طفل یا یک دوست)

12□ خویشاوند زیر 18 سال (بشمول خواهر و برادر)

13□ شخص دیگر زیر 18 سال

14□ مراقبین طفل خوداشتغال

2. لطفاً فعالیت هایی را که طفل شما در طی هفته گذشته در اوقات خارج از مکتب در آنها اشتراک داشته است، مشخص بسازید.

(تمام موارد قابل تطبیق را تیک مارک بزنید)

### فعالیت های مبتنی بر منزل

1□ خواندن قصه یا گوش دادن به قصه ای که خوانده می شود

2□ خواندن ترانه ها یا اشعار مخصوص اطفال یا گوش دادن به آنها

3□ صحبت کردن

4□ بازی کردن و یادگیری با حروف و اعداد

5□ رسامی و تحریر ابتدایی

6□ رنگ آمیزی

7□ بازی کردن گیم های تعلیمی

8□ استفاده از کمپیوتر

9□ تماشای تلویزیون، ویدیو، دی وی دی و فلم

10□ گوش دادن به سی دی، رادیو، موسیقی

11□ بازی کردن با سامان بازی

12□ آشپزی کردن با یک بزرگسال

13□ بازی تخیلی

14□ بازی کردن در بیرون اتاق در منزل

15□ بایسکل سواری، سه چرخه سواری

16□ سایر فعالیت ها (مثلاً آب بازی، رقص، دوش)

17□ بازی کردن با یک دوست یا خواهر

### سفر کردن

18□ سفر کردن در پوشر یا روی سیت بایسکل

19□ سفر کردن در موتر یا یک واسطه نقلیه دیگر خانگی

20□ سفر کردن با وسایط نقلیه عمومی، کشتی موتوری یا طیاره

21□ قدم زدن برای رفتن به جایی یا برای تفریح

### فعالیت های سازمان یافته

22□ اشتراک در مرکز مراقبت طفل

23□ اشتراک در مرکز مراقبت مناسبی

24□ اشتراک در گروه بازی

25□ اشتراک در یک جلسه درسی فعال (مثلاً رقص، آب بازی، جیمناستیک)

26□ اشتراک در یک جلسه درسی کتابخانه

### سیاحت ها

27□ دیدار از زمین بازی

28□ دیدار از کتابخانه

29□ دیدار از فروشگاه ها

30 □ تعامل اجتماعی با خانواده و دوستان

31 □ دیدار از موزیم، گالری هنر، نمایشگاه، نمایش

32 □ سایر موارد

#### IV. دیدگاه‌ها درباره مکتب آمادگی

با استفاده از مقیاس 1 الی 5 ذیل، لطفاً با تیک مارک زدن درست‌ترین جواب، مشخص بسازید که تا چه اندازه با بیانیه‌های ذیل موافق هستید.

- | 1 □         | 2 □   | 3 □    | 4 □   | 5 □         |     |  |
|-------------|-------|--------|-------|-------------|-----|--|
| قویاً مخالف | مخالف | بی‌طرف | موافق | قویاً موافق |     |  |
| 1.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من فکر می‌کنم که تعلیمات قبل از مکتب برای آماده ساختن طفل من برای مکتب اهمیت دارد                        |
| 2.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من می‌دانم که برای آغاز کردن مکتب از طفل من چه چیزهایی انتظار می‌رود                                     |
| 3.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | 15 ساعت تعلیمات آمادگی برای آماده شدن برای مکتب کفایت می‌کند.  |
| 4.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من به توانایی خود در آماده ساختن طفل خود برای مکتب اطمینان دارم.   |
| 5.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من فکر می‌کنم که انتظارات از اطفالی که مکتب را شروع می‌کنند بیشتر از زمانی است که من وارد مکتب رسمی شدم. |
| 6.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | طفل من در برنامه‌های انتقالی مکتب اشتراک خواهد کرد.  |
| 7.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من اطمینان دارم که طفل من برای مکتب آماده خواهد بود.   |
| 8.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | انتقال موفقیت‌آمیز به مکتب برای کامیابی‌های آینده در مکتب اهمیت دارد.                                    |
| 9.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | دسترسی به تعلیمات آمادگی برای طفل من آسان است (یعنی به لحاظ وقت و شرایط)                                 |

#### V. دیدگاه‌ها درباره مکتب آمادگی طفل من

اگر طفل شما در مکتب آمادگی شامل نیست، لطفاً این قسمت را رها کنید و از بخش VI. تبصره‌ها ادامه بدهید.

با استفاده از مقیاس 1 الی 5 ذیل، لطفاً با تیک مارک زدن درست‌ترین جواب، مشخص بسازید که تا چه اندازه با بیانیه‌های ذیل موافق هستید.

- | 1 □         | 2 □   | 3 □    | 4 □   | 5 □         |     |  |
|-------------|-------|--------|-------|-------------|-----|--|
| قویاً مخالف | مخالف | بی‌طرف | موافق | قویاً موافق |     |  |
| 1.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من فکر می‌کنم طفل من از تدریس با کیفیت بالا در این مکتب آمادگی برخوردار است. |
| 2.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من از برنامه‌های آموزشی که در مکتب آمادگی طفل من ارائه می‌شود راضی هستم.     |
| 3.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | مکتب آمادگی از یک محیط آموزشی عالی برخوردار است.                             |
| 4.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | طفل من علاقه مند است که در این مکتب آموزشی تعلیم ببیند.                      |
| 5.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | طفل من امسال از مکتب آمادگی راضی است.  |
| 6.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | اطفال دارای مواد و منابع کافی برای یادگیری خود می‌باشند.                     |
| 7.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | این مکتب آمادگی به انکشاف مهارت‌های شخصی و اجتماعی طفل من کمک می‌کند.        |
| 8.          | 1 □   | 2 □    | 3 □   | 4 □         | 5 □ | من معلومات مفید درباره پیشرفت و دستاوردهای طفل خود دریافت می‌کنم.            |

9. این مکتب آمادگی فرصت بحث درباره میزان پیشرفت طفل من را فراهم می کند. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□
10. مکتب آمادگی امسال به خوبی سازمان یافته است. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□
11. من درباره نحوه مدیریت مکتب آمادگی اطمینان دارم. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□
12. در مجموع، من از پلانگذاری مکتب آمادگی راضی هستم. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□
13. من به توانایی مکتب آمادگی در آماده ساختن طفل من برای مکتب اطمینان دارم. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□

## VI. تبصره ها

### 1. هرآن تبصره دیگر درباره این پرسشنامه

---

---

---

---

### 2. هرآن تبصره دیگر درباره تقرر 15 ساعته جدید تعلیمات آمادگی مکتب برای اطفال چهار ساله طبق پالیسی دسترسی همگانی دولت استرالیا

---

---

---

---

### 3. هرآن تبصره دیگر درباره تعلیمات آمادگی مکتب در استرالیا جنوبی

---

---

---

---

## تشکر از شما بخاطر سهمگیری از ارزشمندتان

این طرح مطالعاتی از پرسشنامه‌ها (یا بخش‌هایی از آن) که برای «اداره رشد در استرالیا» تهیه شده است استفاده می‌کند: مطالعه طولی اطفال استرالیایی (LSAC). این پرسشنامه‌ها تحت مالکیت اداره مشترک المنافع که از سوی وزارت خدمات خانواده، مسکن، اجتماع و امور بومی نمایندگی می‌شود، می‌باشد. LSAC یکی از طرح‌های ابتکاری وزارت و وزارت خدمات خانواده، مسکن، اجتماع و امور بومی ([www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)) می‌باشد، و در همکاری با انستیتوت مطالعات خانوادگی استرالیا ([www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)) و اداره احصائیه استرالیا ([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)) و تحت مشاوره اتحادیه محققین پیش‌تاز در نهادهای تحقیقاتی و پوهنتون‌های سراسر استرالیا در حال انجام است.

این طرح مطالعاتی از پرسشنامه‌ها (یا بخش‌هایی) تهیه و اجرا شده در استرالیای جنوبی از سوی وزارت معارف و انکشاف طفل (DECD) منحبث بخشی از سروی آمادگی مکتب استفاده می‌کند.



**Mrs Sarah Wight**  
**EdD Candidate**  
**School of Education**

School of Education  
Flinders University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2100  
Adelaide 5001

Tel: xxxx xxx xxx

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

---

## सूचना पत्रक

---

**शीर्षक :** यह मायने रखता है (इट मैटर्स) फॉर ऑस्ट्रेलियन प्री स्कूलों के चार साल के छोटे बच्चे पूर्व स्कूल शिक्षण को किस प्रकार अनुभव करते हैं और कैसे स्कूल में प्रवेश से पहले का एक वर्ष का समय निकालते हैं।

**Investigator:**

Mrs Sarah Wight  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Supervisors:**

Dr Susan Krieg  
School of Education  
Flinders University

Dr Kerry Bissaker  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**सर्वेक्षण का वर्णन :**

इस अध्ययन से ये खोजने का प्रयत्न किया जाएगा कि साउथ ऑस्ट्रेलिया में चार साल के बच्चों के चार समूह प्री स्कूली शिक्षा को किस तरह अनुभव करते हैं और स्कूल समय से पहले के एक साल में अपना शेष समय किस प्रकार बिताते हैं। माता-पिता अपने बच्चों के प्री स्कूल में जाने और नहीं जाने को लेकर कौन से

विकल्प चुनते हैं, यह भी अध्ययन का विषय है। इस कार्य को फ्लाइंडर्स यूनीवर्सिटी के स्कूल ऑफ एजुकेशन का सहयोग प्राप्त है।

### **अध्ययन का उद्देश्य :**

इस अध्ययन का उद्देश्य यह पता लगाना है :

--चार साल के बच्चों के चार समूहों को प्री स्कूल में कितने समय के लिए जाना चाहिए और वो कितने समय के लिए जाते हैं?

--स्कूल प्रवेश से पहले के साल में ये चारों भागीदार समूहों के बच्चे अपना शेष समय कैसे बिताते हैं?

--प्री स्कूल प्रशिक्षकों के क्या पूर्वाग्रह हैं, सभी बच्चों तक पहुंच बनाने के बारे में, प्री स्कूल के उद्देश्यों के बारे में और उनके कार्यक्रमों में ये बातें कैसे काम करती हैं?

--सर्वे के भागीदार प्री स्कूल के बच्चों के माता-पिता ने किन आधारों पर अपने बच्चों को उन प्री स्कूलों में प्रवेश दिलाया तथा उनको वहां भेजा?

### **मुझे क्या करना होगा?**

आपको एक प्रश्नावली बनानी होगी कि आपके बच्चे की प्री स्कूल में उपस्थिति, उसके क्रियाकलापों आदि से सम्बंधित है जब वह प्री स्कूल में नहीं जाता है तथा उसके प्री स्कूल में अनुपस्थिति या उपस्थिति के बारे में आपके क्या विचार हैं। प्रश्नावली में मातृत्व से सम्बंधित कुछ सवाल हैं। इसको भरने में लगभग 10 मिनट लगेंगे और आपकी व्यक्तिगत पहचान उजागर नहीं की जाएगी।

### **इस सर्वे में शामिल होने से मुझे क्या लाभ होगा?**

आप अपने अनुभव बताएंगे तो उससे साउथ ऑस्ट्रेलिया के प्री स्कूल में जाने वाले चार वर्षीय बच्चों के जीवन की अधिक स्पष्ट तस्वीर हमारे आएगी, जिससे प्री स्कूल की उपलब्धता और अनुभवों पर चर्चा के लिए सूचनाएं एकत्रित हो सकेंगी। भविष्य में इससे इन कार्यक्रमों की योजना तथा उपलब्धता में सुधार होगा।

### **क्या मेरे सर्वे में भागीदार होने की व्यक्तिगत पहचान की जाएगी?**

आपका नाम गुप्त रखा जाएगा। प्रश्नावली को डाक द्वारा भेजा जा सकता है और आपकी प्रतिक्रियाएं तथा टिप्पणियों को आपसे जोड़कर नहीं देखा जा सकेगा।

### **सर्वे में शामिल होने के क्या खतरे या असुविधाएं हो सकती हैं?**

खोजकर्ता को आके इस सर्वे में शामिल होने के कोई खतरे नजर नहीं आते। यदि आपको इस बारे में अधिक पूछताछ करनी है तो खोजकर्ता से सम्पर्क कर सकते हैं।

**में इसमें शामिल होने के लिए कैसे सहमति दिखा सकता हूँ?**

इसमें भागीदारी ऐच्छिक है। आप 'नो कमेंट्स' कह सकते हैं या प्रश्नावली के किसी भी प्रश्न का उत्तर देने से मना भी कर सकते हैं। यदि आप इसमें हिस्सा लेते हैं तो कृपया प्रश्नावली को पूरा भरें तथा अपने बच्चे के प्री स्कूल के बाहर लगे कलेक्शन बॉक्स में डाल दें, जिस पर लिखा है : प्री स्कूल सर्वे-4 : इट मैटर्स या एक लिफाफे पर अपना पता लिखकर व स्टाम्प लगाकर इस पते पर भेजें : सारा वाइट, ईडीडी केंडीडेट, फ्लाइंडर यूनिवर्सिटी, स्कूल ऑफ एजुकेशन, जीपीओ बॉक्स 2100, एडिलेड 5001. आपका योगदान सराहनीय है।

**मुझे फीडबैक कैसे मिलेगा?**

यदि आप चाहते हैं तो शोधकार्य के परिणामों का सारांश आपको दे दिया जाएगा।

इस सूचना को पढ़ने का समय देने के लिए धन्यवाद। आशा है आप इसमें भागीदारी का आमंत्रण स्वीकार करेंगे।

यह शोध कार्य फ्लिंडर्स विश्वविद्यालय सामाजिक एवं व्यावहारिक शोध मूल्य समिति (परियोजना संख्या 5581) से मंजूरी प्राप्त है। परियोजना की मूल्यगत मंजूरी के बारे में ज्यादा जानकारी लेने के लिए समिति के कार्यकारी अधिकारी से टेलीफोन नंबर 82013116 अथवा फैक्स 82012035 अथवा ईमेल [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au) पर संपर्क किया जा सकता है।

4: यह मायने रखता है : फोर साऊथ ऑस्ट्रेलियन प्री-स्कूल के चार साल के बच्चे प्री-स्कूल तक कैसे पहुंचते हैं और शिक्षा को किस प्रकार अनुभव करते हैं तथा स्कूल में प्रवेश से पहले का समय कैसे बिताते हैं।

आईडी : \_\_\_\_\_

#### I परिचय

साऊथ ऑस्ट्रेलिया के प्री-स्कूल के चार वर्षीय बच्चों के चार समूहों पर किया गया यह अध्ययन यह पता लगाने का प्रयत्न है कि बच्चे अपने स्कूल की शिक्षा आरम्भ होने से पहले का एक वर्ष कैसे व्यतीत करते हैं और उनके माता-पिता उनके लिए पूर्व स्कूली शिक्षा के विकल्पों में किस प्रकार चुनाव करते हैं। आपकी प्रतिक्रियाएं हमें साऊथ ऑस्ट्रेलिया के अध्ययन के बारे में बेहतर जानकारी प्रदान करेगी कि जब बच्चे बालवाड़ी में नहीं होते हैं, तब पूर्व स्कूली शिक्षा वो कैसे प्राप्त करते हैं और किस प्रकार की गतिविधियों में हिस्सा लेते हैं। अध्ययन के उद्देश्य से प्री-स्कूल शब्द का प्रयोग किंडरगार्टन (बालवाड़ी) के स्थान पर किया गया है तथा इसमें सभी प्री-स्कूल व किंडरगार्टन कार्यक्रम शामिल किए गए हैं, जो चार वर्षीय बच्चों के लिए स्कूली शिक्षा आरम्भ होने से पहले वर्ष में चलाए जाते हैं।

कृपया अपनी प्रतिक्रिया 'टिक' लगाकर स्पष्ट रूप से अंकित करें। यदि कहीं सुधार करना हो तो उसके समाने क्रॉस का निशान बनाएं तथा सही स्थान पर निशान लगाएं। पूरा होने के बाद अपनी प्रश्नावली अपने बच्चे के प्री-स्कूल के कलेक्शन बॉक्स जिस पर प्री-स्कूल सर्वे- 4 : इट मैटर्स लिखा हो। या एक लिफाफे पर अपना पता लिखकर व स्टाम्प लगाकर इस पते पर भेजें : Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide 5001. आपका योगदान सराहनीय है।

#### I. पृष्ठभूमि

##### 1. प्रश्नावली भरने वाले का लिंग :

1  स्त्री

2  पुरुष

##### 2. माता का शैक्षिक स्तर (कृपया उच्चतम स्तर पर निशान लगाएं)

1  प्राथमिक विद्यालय

2  कक्षा 10

3  कक्षा 12

4  व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण प्रमाण-पत्र प्राप्त

5  डिप्लोमाधारी और उसके समकक्ष

6  अंडर ग्रेजुएट डिग्री

7  पोस्ट ग्रेजुएट डिग्री

8  मान्य नहीं

3. पिता का शैक्षिक स्तर

(कृपया उच्चतम स्तर पर निशान लगाएं )

- 1  प्राथमिक विद्यालय
- 2  कक्षा 10
- 3  कक्षा 12
- 4  व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण प्रमाण-पत्र प्राप्त
- 5  डिप्लोमाधारी और उसके समकक्ष
- 6  अंडर ग्रेजुएट डिग्री
- 7  पोस्ट ग्रेजुएट डिग्री
- 8  मान्य नहीं

4. माता का रोजगार :

- 1  बेरोजगार
- 2  अवकाश प्राप्त
- 3  पेड, पार्ट टाइम(प्रति सप्ताह 35 घंटे से कम)
- 4  पेड, फुल टाइम(प्रति सप्ताह 35 घंटे से अधिक)
- 5  मान्य नहीं

5. पिता का रोजगार

- 1  बेरोजगार
- 2  अवकाश प्राप्त
- 3  पेड, पार्ट टाइम(प्रति सप्ताह 35 घंटे से कम)
- 4  पेड, फुल टाइम(प्रति सप्ताह 35 घंटे से अधिक)
- 5  मान्य नहीं

6. घर में बच्चों की संख्या

- 1  1
- 2  2
- 3  3
- 4  4 या अधिक

7. चार वर्षीय बच्चे का लिंग

1  स्त्री

2  पुरुष

8. घर पर इंग्लिश के अलावा बोलचाल की दूसरी भाषा :

(कृपया यहां लिखें )

---

9. पोस्ट कोड

(कृपया यहां लिखें )

---

II. प्री-स्कूल के विकल्प

1. क्या आपकी बालवाडी (केयर) के बच्चे प्री-स्कूल में जाते हैं।

1  हां, कृपया प्रश्न संख्या 4 से आगे बढ़ें

2  नहीं

2. यदि नहीं तो आपकी बालवाडी के बच्चों का प्री-स्कूल नहीं जाने का क्या कारण है?

---

---

---

---

---

3. क्या आप अपनी बालवाडी के चार वर्षीय बच्चों के प्र-स्कूल ना जाने पर पुर्नविचार करेंगे?

---

---

---

---

---

कृपया प्रश्नावली भाग III. आउटसाइड ऑप प्री-स्कूल से जारी रखें।

4. आपका बच्चा किस प्रकार के स्कूल में जात है?

- 1  डीईसीडी प्री-स्कूल ऑन स्कूल साइट
- 2  डीईसीडी प्री-स्कूल एज ए स्टैंड एलॉन
- 3  कैथोलिक प्री-स्कूल ऑन स्कूल साइट
- 4  इंडेपेंडेंट प्री-स्कूल ऑन स्कूल साइट
- 5  इंडेपेंडेंट प्री-स्कूल एज ए स्टैंड एलॉन
- 6  लॉन्ग डे केयर विड प्री-स्कूल प्रोग्राम

5. आपका बच्चा एक सप्ताह में कितने घंटे के लिए प्री-स्कूल जाता है?

- 1  3 घंटे
- 2  6 घंटे
- 3  9 घंटे
- 4  12 घंटे
- 5  15 घंटे
- 6  अन्य \_\_\_\_\_

6. पिछले सप्ताह आपके बच्चे ने कितने घंटे प्री-स्कूल में बिताए?

- 1  3 घंटे
- 2  6 घंटे
- 3  9 घंटे
- 4  12 घंटे
- 5  15 घंटे
- 6  अन्य \_\_\_\_\_

7. यदि अपेक्षित समय से कम प्री-स्कूल में बिताए तो क्यों

- 1  बीमारी
- 2  अवकाश
- 3  अन्य \_\_\_\_\_

8. आपके बच्चे ने कितनी आयु में प्री-स्कूल जाना शुरू किया ?

- 1  3 वर्ष की आयु में
- 2  4 वर्ष की आयु में
- 3  अन्य \_\_\_\_\_

9. क्या आपके बच्चे ने प्री-स्कूल प्रवेश से पहले ट्रांसजीशन पूरा किया ?

- 1  हां
- 2  नहीं
- 3  मान्य नहीं

10. आपने ऐसा प्री-स्कूल क्यों चुना? (सभी योग्य विकल्पों पर टिक करें)

- 1  शैक्षिक कार्यक्रम है
- 2  घर के पास है
- 3  माता या पिता के कार्यस्थल के पास है
- 4  बालवाडी से बच्चे को प्री-स्कूल लाने-ले जाने की सुविधा है
- 5  बच्चे के दूसरे भाई-बहन उसी स्कूल में जाते हैं
- 6  मित्र या परिवार के अन्य लोग भी उसी स्कूल में जाते हैं
- 7  प्री-स्कूल के बाद प्राथमिक विद्यालय कार्यक्रम भी उपलब्ध है
- 8  अन्य \_\_\_\_\_

III. आउटसाइड ऑफ प्री-स्कूल (प्री-स्कूल के बाहर)

1. जब आपका बच्चा प्री-स्कूल नहीं जाता तो उसकी देखभाल कौन करता है?

(सभी योग्य विकल्पों पर टिक करें)

- 1  मैं करता हूँ/करती हूँ
- 2  मेरे पति/पत्नी, या साथी जो मेरे साथ रहते हैं
- 3  स्कूल में ही स्कूल समय से पहले तथा बाद में केयर उपलब्ध है
- 4  चाइल्ड केयर सेंटर, स्कूल से अलग
- 5  फैमिली डे केयर प्रोवाइडर
- 6  ऑकेशनल केयर सेंटर (उदाहरण : जिम, लीजर या कम्युनिटी सेंटर), सामयिक देखभाल केंद्र
- 7  नाना/नानी
- 8  दादा/दादी
- 9  माता-पिता जो कहीं और रहते हैं
- 10  अन्य रिश्तेदार या सगे सम्बंधी जो 18 वर्ष या अधिक आयु के हैं
- 11  अन्य व्यक्ति जो 18 वर्ष या अधिक आयु के हो. (जैसे आया या कोई मित्र)
- 12  18 वर्ष से कम आयु के सम्बंधी या भाई बहन
- 13  18 वर्ष से कम आयु का कोई अन्य व्यक्ति।
- 14  बच्चा स्वयं अपन ध्यान रखता है

2. कृपया उन गतिविधियों को इंगित करें, जिनमें आपके बच्चे नें भाग लिया, जब वह प्री-स्कूल नहीं गया था

(सभी योग्य विकल्पों पर टिक का निशान लगाएं)

घरेलू गतिविधियां

- 1  कहानी पढ़ना
- 2  गीत या सिखाई गई कविताएं
- 3  बातें करना
- 4  अक्षरों और आंखों के साथ खेल खेल कर सीखना
- 5  अक्षरों को लिखने की कोशिश या चित्र बनाना
- 6  रंग भरना
- 7  शैक्षिक खेल खेलना
- 8  कम्प्यूटर का प्रयोग
- 9  टीवी, वीडियो, डीवीडी, मूवी देखना
- 10  सीडी रेडियो, संगीत सुनना
- 11  खेलों से खेलना
- 12  किसी बड़े के साथ खाना बनाना
- 13  परिकल्पनाओं वाले खेल खेलना
- 14  घर पर ही बाहर खेलना
- 15  दो या तीन पहियों वाली साइकिल चलाना
- 16  अन्य व्यायाम जैसे तैराकी, नृत्य, दौड़
- 17  दोस्त या भाई-बहन के साथ खेलना

यात्रा सम्बंधी

- 18  दुपहिया साइकिल सवारी या गडौलने (पुशर) में
- 19  कार या घर के किसी अन्य वाहन से यात्रा
- 20  जन यातायात से यात्रा, किराए पर या हवाई जहाज से
- 21  यात्रा के लिए या मस्ती के लिए पैदल घूमना

प्रतिबंधित क्रियाकलाप

- 22  बालवाडी में जाना
- 23  ऑकेशनल केयर में जाना
- 24  खेल समूहों में खेलना
- 25  क्रियात्मक कार्य (जैसे : नृत्य, तैराकी, जिम)
- 26  पुस्तकालय अध्ययन

सैर करना (आउटिंग)

- 27  खेल के मैदान में जाना

- 28□ पुस्तकालय जाना
- 29□ दुकानों में जाना
- 30□ परिवार और मित्रों के साथ सामाजिक क्रियाकलाप
- 31□ संग्रहालय, आर्ट गैलरी, प्रदर्शनी, कला
- 32□ अन्य \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. प्री स्कूल के बारे में विचार

नीचे दिए गए 1-5 कोष्ठकों का प्रयोग करते हुए अपनी सहमति के स्तर टिक करके इंगित करें।

- |    | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   |  |
|----|--------------------|----|-------|-------|------|--|
|    | पूर्ण रूप से असहमत |    | असहमत | तटस्थ | सहमत | पूर्ण रूप से सहमत  |
| 1. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | मुझे विश्वास है कि प्री स्कूली शिक्षा मेरे बच्चे को तैयार करने में सहायक है                  |
| 2. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | मुझे जानकारी है कि मेरे बच्चे को स्कूल जाने से पहले क्या-क्या चाहिए                          |
| 3. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | एक सप्ताह में प्री-स्कूली शिक्षा के 15 घंटे स्कूल के लिए पर्याप्त तैयारी है।                 |
| 4. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | मुझे अपनी योग्यता पर विश्वास है कि मैं अपने बच्चे को स्कूल के लिए तैयार कर सकता हूँ।         |
| 5. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | मुझे लगता है कि आजकल स्कूल प्रवेश से पहले बच्चों से अपेक्षाएं मेरे समय से ज्यादा बढ़ गई हैं। |
| 6. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | मेरा बच्चा स्कूली ट्रांजिशन कार्यक्रमों में हिस्सा लेगा।                                     |
| 7. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | मुझे विश्वास है कि मेरा बच्चा प्रवेश के लिए तैयार हो जाएगा।                                  |
| 8. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | स्कूल के बाद की सफलता के लिए सफल स्कूली ट्रांजिशन आवश्यक है।                                 |
| 9. | 1□                 | 2□ | 3□    | 4□    | 5□   | मेरे बच्चे को प्री-स्कूली शिक्षा आसानी से उपलब्ध है (जैसे समय, व्यवस्था)                     |

V. मेरे बच्चे के प्री स्कूल के बारे में विचार

यदि आपका बच्चा प्री स्कूल नहीं जाता तो इसे छोड़कर

इकट्ठ. 6. कमेंट्स से जारी रखें

नीचे दिए गए 1-5 कोष्ठकों का प्रयोग करते हुए अपनी सहमति का स्तर टिक करके इंगित करें।

1□

2□

3□

4□

5□

पूर्ण रूप से असहमत

असहमत

तटस्थ

सहमत

पूर्ण रूप से सहमत

1. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ मुझे लगता है मेरा बच्चा इस स्कूल प्री स्कूल में उच्च स्तर की शिक्षा प्राप्त करता है।
2. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ मैं मेरे बच्चे के प्री स्कूल के कार्यक्रमों से संतुष्ट हूँ।
3. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ प्री स्कूल में सीखने का वातावरण बहुत अच्छा है।
4. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ मेरे बच्चे को इस प्री स्कूल में सीखने की प्रेरणा मिलती है।
5. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ इस वर्ष मेरा बच्चा इस प्री स्कूल में खुश है।
6. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ बच्चों के पास सीखने के लिए काफी सामग्री और सुविधाएं हैं।
7. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ ये प्री स्कूल मेरे बच्चे की व्यक्तिगत और सामाजिक निपुणताओं को सुधारने में सक्षम है।
8. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ मुझे मेरे बच्चे की प्रगति की बहुत सहायक सूचना मिलती रहती है।
9. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ ये प्री स्कूल मेरे बच्चे की प्रगति पर चर्चा करने का अवसर प्रदान करता है।
10. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ इस वर्ष इस प्री स्कूल का प्रबंधन बहुत अच्छा है।
11. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ मुझे इस प्री स्कूल के प्रबंधन पर विश्वास है।
12. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ कुल मिलाकर मैं इस प्री स्कूल की योजना से संतुष्ट हूँ।
13. 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ मुझे मेरे बच्चे के स्कूल की तैयारी के लिए उसके प्री स्कूल पर विश्वास है।

VI. टिप्पणी

1. इस प्रश्नावली पर कुछ अन्य टिप्पणी?

---

---

---

---

2. ऑस्ट्रेलियाई सरकार के सार्वभौमिक उपलब्धता योजना के चार साल के बच्चों के लिए 15 घंटों के प्री स्कूल के नए प्रस्ताव पर कुछ अन्य टिप्पणी

---

---

---

---

### 3. साउथ ऑस्ट्रेलिया में प्री स्कूली शिक्षा पर टिप्पणी

---

---

---

---

#### आपके मूल्यवान योगदान के लिए धन्यवाद

इस अध्ययन में ऑस्ट्रेलिया के बढ़ते बच्चे: ऑस्ट्रेलिया बच्चों के लिए देशांतरीय अध्ययन (एलएसएसी) , के लिए विकसित (अथवा उसका एक हिस्सा) प्रश्नावली का प्रयोग किया गया है। यह प्रश्नावली राष्ट्रमंडल की संपत्ति हैं, क्योंकि परिवार, आवास, सामुदायिक सेवाएं और गृह मामलों के विभाग द्वारा इनका प्रतिनिधित्व किया जाता है। एलएसएसी ऑस्ट्रेलियाई सरकार के परिवार, आवास, सामुदायिक सेवाएं और गृह मामलों के विभाग ([www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)) की पहल है और ऑस्ट्रेलियाई पारिवारिक अध्ययन संस्थान ([www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)) एवं ऑस्ट्रेलियाई सांख्यिकीय ब्यूरो ([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)) के तत्वावधान में इसे कार्यान्वित किया जा रहा है। साथ ही ऑस्ट्रेलिया के विभिन्न संस्थानों और विश्वविद्यालयों के अग्रणी शोधकर्ताओं के एक समूह द्वारा सलाह भी प्रदान की जाती है।

इस अध्ययन में प्री स्कूल सर्वे के हिस्से के तौर पर शिक्षा एवं बाल विकास विभाग (डीईसीडी) द्वारा दक्षिण ऑस्ट्रेलिया में किए गए सर्वे के लिए विकसित प्रश्नावली (अथवा इसका एक हिस्सा) इस्तेमाल किया गया है।



**Mrs Sarah Wight**  
EdD Candidate  
School of Education  
School of Education  
Flinders University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2100  
Adelaide 5001

Tel: xxxx xxx xxx

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

---

## BẢN THÔNG TIN

---

**Chủ đề:** 4: Có tính chất quan trọng. Tìm hiểu ở các trẻ em 4 tuổi đến từ bốn vườn trẻ Nam Úc được tham gia và học hỏi từ sự giáo dục của vườn trẻ và sử dụng thời gian theo cách cân đối trong một năm trước khi bắt đầu nhập trường.

**Nhân viên nghiên cứu:**

Mrs Sarah Wight  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Nhân Viên Giám Sát:**

Dr Susan Krieg  
School of Education  
Flinders University

Dr Kerry Bissaker  
School of Education  
Flinders University

**Miêu tả của bài nghiên cứu:**

Bài nghiên cứu này nhằm để tìm hiểu về bốn nhóm trẻ em 4 tuổi đến từ bốn vườn trẻ Nam Úc được tham gia và học hỏi từ sự giáo dục của vườn trẻ và sử dụng thời gian một cách cân đối trong năm trước khi bắt đầu nhập trường như thế nào. Các lựa chọn của cha mẹ về sự tham dự hoặc không tham dự của các em tại vườn trẻ cũng sẽ được khảo sát tỉ mỉ. Dự án này được sự hỗ trợ của Trường Giáo Dục tại Đại Học Flinders.

**Mục đích của bài nghiên cứu:**

Dự án này nhằm để tìm ra:

- Trong bốn nhóm trẻ em bốn tuổi được ghi danh học và đang dự học có bao nhiêu giờ học ở vườn trẻ?
- Các em ghi danh học trong bốn trường tham gia nghiên cứu này cân bằng thời gian của các em như thế nào trong một năm trước khi nhập trường?
- Các nhà giáo dục của vườn trẻ có những nhận thức gì về áp dụng tiêu chuẩn chung, các mục đích của vườn trẻ là gì và làm sao được nằm trong ban quy định của chương trình họ đưa ra?

- Các cha mẹ của những trường được tham gia nghiên cứu này đã dựa trên căn cứ nào để đưa đến những quyết định liên quan đến sự lựa chọn vườn trẻ, đăng ký ghi danh và có mặt tại lớp cho con mình?

#### **Tôi sẽ được yêu cầu làm gì?**

Quý vị sẽ được yêu cầu trả lời một bản câu hỏi về sự có mặt của con mình tại vườn trẻ, các hoạt động mà con bạn tham gia khi không hiện diện tại vườn trẻ và những lý do khi sắp xếp cho con mình có mặt tại trường. Cuộc thăm dò này cũng sẽ có những câu hỏi liên quan đến cách giáo dục con cái. Thời gian để hoàn tất các câu hỏi sẽ mất khoảng mười phút và hoàn toàn không lấy tên tuổi chi tiết của quý vị.

#### **Tham gia vào dự án này sẽ mang lại cái lợi gì đến cho tôi?**

Chia sẻ các kinh nghiệm của quý vị sẽ giúp chúng ta có một cái nhìn hoàn hảo hơn về một cuộc sống của đứa trẻ bốn tuổi đang tham dự vườn trẻ tại Nam Úc và cung cấp các thảo luận về địa thế và kinh nghiệm của vườn trẻ tại Nam Úc. Đây có thể sẽ đưa đến sự tiến bộ về mặt phát triển dự án và mang lại các chương trình khác trong tương lai.

#### **Tham gia vào dự án này có cần phải lấy tên tuổi của tôi không?**

Quý vị sẽ được dấu tên. Câu hỏi có thể được gửi lại bằng thư và các câu trả lời và bình luận của quý vị sẽ hoàn toàn không đề cập đến chi tiết của quý vị.

#### **Nếu tôi tham gia thì có rủi ro hoặc phiền phức gì không?**

Nhân viên nghiên cứu không thấy có rủi ro gì đến sự tham gia vào bài tham khảo này cả. Nếu quý vị thấy có chút lo lắng hoặc khó chịu nào cho tương lai, xin vui lòng báo cho nhân viên nghiên cứu biết.

#### **Làm sao để lên tiếng đồng ý tham gia?**

Tham gia hoàn toàn do tình nguyện. Quý vị có thể trả lời “không ý kiến” hoặc có quyền từ chối trả lời câu hỏi và không hề đem đến ảnh hưởng hay hệ quả gì. Nếu quý vị đồng ý tham gia, xin hãy trả lời các câu hỏi và để vào thùng thu tại vườn trẻ của con mình có đánh dấu Preschool Survey- 4: It matters hoặc gửi trả lại bằng thư để trong phong bì có dán tem và địa chỉ sẵn đến: Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide SA 5001. Sự đóng góp của quý vị rất được cảm kích.

#### **Tôi sẽ nhận được sự nhận xét bằng thế nào?**

Kết quả của dự án sẽ được nhân viên nghiên cứu tóm tắt và gửi câu trả lời cho quý vị theo sự yêu cầu

**Xin cảm ơn quý vị đã bỏ thời gian đọc bản thông tin này và tôi hy vọng quý vị sẽ chấp nhận lời mời để góp phần tham gia.**

*Dự án nghiên cứu này đã được The Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 5581) cấp giấy phép. Muốn lấy thêm chi tiết về nội quy phê chuẩn của dự án, xin hãy liên lạc The Executive Officer of the Committee qua số điện thoại 8201 3116, bằng fax qua số 8201 2035 hoặc email đến [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)*

*4: Có tính chất quan trọng. Tìm hiểu ở các thiếu nhi 4 tuổi đến từ bốn vườn trẻ Nam Úc được tham gia và học hỏi từ sự giáo dục của vườn trẻ và sử dụng thời gian theo cách cân đối trong một năm trước khi bắt đầu nhập trường như thế nào*

**Số nhận:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHẦN HƯỚNG DẪN**

Bài nghiên cứu này nhằm muốn tìm hiểu sâu về bốn nhóm thiếu nhi 4 tuổi đến từ bốn vườn trẻ Nam Úc tham gia vào vườn trẻ như thế nào; cách các em sử dụng thời gian trong một năm trước khi bắt đầu nhập trường và các cha mẹ đã lựa chọn như thế nào khi tìm vườn trẻ cho các em tại Nam Úc. Các câu trả lời của quý vị sẽ làm rõ thêm những gì đang hoạt động trong Nam Úc về cách trẻ em tìm đến sự giáo dục ở vườn trẻ và trẻ em có những hoạt động khác khi không đi vườn trẻ. Để phù hợp cho sự nghiên cứu, từ vườn trẻ được thay thế cho từ nhà trẻ và có ý định muốn bao gồm tất cả các chương trình của vườn trẻ và nhà trẻ dành cho trẻ em bốn tuổi trong năm trước khi nhập trường.

Xin hãy đánh dấu kiểm rõ ràng vào những câu trả lời thích hợp. Nếu muốn sửa đổi câu trả lời, xin hãy gạch 1 lần ngang trên câu sai và chỉ đánh dấu kiểm trên câu đúng. Khi trả lời xong, xin để bản đó vào thùng thu tại vườn trẻ của con mình có đánh dấu **Preschool Survey - 4: It matters** hoặc gửi trả lại bằng thư để trong phong bì có dán tem và địa chỉ sẵn đến: Sarah Wight, EdD Candidate, Flinders University, School of Education, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide SA 5001. Sự đóng góp của quý vị rất được cảm kích.

**I. BỐI CẢNH**

**1. Phái tính của người điền đơn này:**

- Đàn bà
- Đàn ông

**2. Mẹ học đến lớp mấy:**

(Xin đánh dấu đến lớp cao nhất)

- Hoàn tất tiểu học
- Hoàn tất lớp 10
- Hoàn tất lớp 12
- Hoàn tất lớp học nghề
- Tốt nghiệp có bằng cấp hoặc tương tự
- Chừa tốt nghiệp đại học
- Tốt nghiệp đại học
- Không áp dụng/ không trả lời được

**3. Cha học đến lớp mấy:**

(Xin đánh dấu đến lớp cao nhất)

- Hoàn tất tiểu học
- Hoàn tất lớp 10
- Hoàn tất lớp 12
- Hoàn tất lớp học nghề
- Tốt nghiệp có bằng cấp hoặc tương tự
- Chừa tốt nghiệp đại học
- Tốt nghiệp đại học
- Không áp dụng/ không trả lời được

**4. Nghề nghiệp của mẹ:**

- Hiện đang thất nghiệp
- Đang nghỉ phép
- Làm việc bán thời (làm ít hơn 35 giờ một tuần)
- Làm việc toàn thời (35 giờ hoặc hơn một tuần)
- Không áp dụng/ không trả lời được

**5. Nghề nghiệp của cha:**

- Hiện đang thất nghiệp
- Đang nghỉ phép
- Làm việc bán thời (làm ít hơn 35 giờ một tuần)
- Làm việc toàn thời (35 giờ hoặc hơn một tuần)
- Không áp dụng/ không trả lời được

**6. Số con còn đang sống trong nhà:**

- 1
- 2
- 3

4  4 hoặc nhiều hơn

**7. Phái tính của đứa 4 tuổi do bạn trong nom:**

- 1  Gái  
2  Trai

**8. Ngoài Anh ngữ, ngôn ngữ khác được sử dụng tại nhà: (Xin điền vào)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Số vùng/ thuộc địa: (Xin điền vào)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**II. SỰ LỰA CHỌN CHO VƯỜN TRÈ**

**1. Đứa con 4 tuổi do bạn trong nom có đi vườn trẻ không?**

- 1  Có *Xin tiếp tục đến câu số 4.*  
2  Không

**2. Nếu không, hãy cho các lý do tại sao đứa con 4 tuổi do bạn trông nom không đi vườn trẻ?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Nếu được, có điều gì sẽ làm cho bạn xem xét lại không tham dự tại vườn trẻ của đứa con 4 tuổi này không?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Tiếp vào phần III. KHÔNG DỰ VƯỜN TRÈ*

**4. Con bạn đang dự vườn trẻ nào?**

- 1  DECD vườn trẻ nằm trong trường học  
2  DECD vườn trẻ nằm riêng biệt  
3  Vườn trẻ nằm trong trường học Công Giáo  
4  Vườn trẻ độc lập nằm trong trường học  
5  Vườn trẻ độc lập nằm riêng biệt  
6  Vườn trẻ nguyên ngày với chương trình

**5. Con bạn được ghi danh học bao nhiêu giờ trong 1 tuần?**

- 1  3 tiếng  
2  6 tiếng  
3  9 tiếng  
4  12 tiếng  
5  15 tiếng  
6  Nếu khác \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Trong tuần qua con bạn dự vườn trẻ được bao nhiêu giờ?**

- 1  3 tiếng  
2  6 tiếng  
3  9 tiếng  
4  12 tiếng  
5  15 tiếng  
6  Nếu khác \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Nếu ít hơn giờ ghi danh, tại sao như vậy?**

Bệnh

- 1  Nghỉ hè  
2  Nếu khác \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Con bạn bắt đầu vườn trẻ lúc mấy tuổi?**

- 1  3 tuổi  
2  4 tuổi  
3  Nếu khác \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Con của bạn có hoàn tất qua khóa chuyển lớp đến vườn trẻ không?**

- 1  Có  
2  Không  
3  Không áp dụng/ không trả lời được

**10. Tại sao bạn chọn vườn trẻ dạng này?**

*(Đánh dấu những câu thích hợp)*

- 1  Chương trình giáo dục  
2  Gần nhà  
3  Gần nơi cha mẹ làm  
4  Ở trung tâm giữ trẻ dành cho những em được đưa và đón từ đó đến vườn trẻ  
5  Anh chị em dự chung một vườn trẻ  
6  Bạn bè và/ hoặc họ hàng dự chung một vườn trẻ  
7  Nằm trong khu vực của trường tiểu học  
8  Nếu khác \_\_\_\_\_

### III. KHÔNG DỰ VƯỜN TRÈ

#### 1. Ai chăm sóc cho con của bạn khi bé không đi dự vườn trẻ?

(Đánh dấu những câu thích hợp)

- 1 Chính tôi
- 2 Ông/ Vợ/ bạn đang sống với tôi
- 3 Những nhà trẻ dành cho trước hoặc sau giờ học
- 4 Những nhà trẻ hoặc những nơi ngoài giờ và không phải nằm trong trường học
- 5 Trung tâm nhà trẻ
- 6 Nhà trẻ ngắn hạn (như trung tâm cộng đồng, gym hoặc trung tâm giải trí)
- 7 Ông bà ngoại
- 8 Ông bà nội
- 9 Cha mẹ sống hai nơi khác nhau
- 10 Hộ hàng trên 18 tuổi trong gia đình (anh chị em)
- 11 Người trên 18 tuổi (như bạn hay người giu em)
- 12 Hộ hàng dưới 18 tuổi (anh chị em)
- 13 Người dưới 18 tuổi
- 14 Cho con tự lo

#### 2. Xin cho biết những hoạt động mà con của bạn tham gia trong tuần vừa qua khi không dự vườn trẻ.

(Đánh dấu những câu thích hợp)

- 1 Đọc truyện hoặc được nghe đọc
- 2 Tập hát và thơ ca thiếu nhi hoặc được nghe hát
- 3 Tập nói
- 4 Trò chơi học chữ và số
- 5 Tập vẽ và tập viết sơ
- 6 Tô màu
- 7 Trò chơi có tính cách giáo dục
- 8 Sử dụng máy vi-tính
- 9 Xem TV, video, DVD, phim hình
- 10 Nghe nhạc, đài phát thanh âm nhạc
- 11 Chơi đồ chơi
- 12 Nấu ăn với người lớn
- 13 Trò chơi sáng tạo
- 14 Chơi ngoài sân tại nhà
- 15 Tập lái xe đạp, xe ba bánh
- 16 Tập thể thao (như bơi lội, nhảy múa, chạy bộ)
- 17 Chơi với bạn hoặc anh chị em
- 18 Du chơi trong xe đẩy hoặc trên ghế xe đạp
- 19 Du chơi trên xe hơi hoặc xe nhỏ trong nhà
- 20 Du chơi trên xe công cộng, tàu lửa, phà, máy bay
- 21 Du chơi bằng đường bộ hoặc giải trí
- 22 Đi dự nhà trẻ
- 23 Thỉnh thoảng đi dự nhà trẻ
- 24 Đi chơi chung
- 25 Dự nhóm thể thao (nhảy múa, bơi lội, thể hình)
- 26 Đi dự các lớp thư viện
- 27 Thăm sân chơi
- 28 Thăm thư viện
- 29 Thăm shops
- 30 Xã giao với gia đình và bạn bè
- 31 Thăm viện bảo tàng, nghệ thuật và triển lãm
- 32 Nếu khác \_\_\_\_\_

### IV. NHẬN XÉT VỀ VƯỜN TRÈ

Dùng thước đo từ 1-5 sau đây, xin cho biết, bằng cách đánh dấu câu trả lời thích hợp nhất, và tùy vào mức độ mà bạn cảm thấy trùng ý với mình nhất.

- 1 hoàn toàn không đồng ý  2 Không đồng ý  3 Trung trung  4 đồng ý  5 Hoàn toàn rất đồng ý
- 1.  1  2  3  4  5 Tôi tin rằng giáo dục của vườn trẻ là bước quan trọng để chuẩn bị cho con tôi trước khi vào trường.
- 2.  1  2  3  4  5 Tôi biết con tôi sẽ phải đối mặt trước những đòi hỏi khi bắt đầu nhập trường.
- 3.  1  2  3  4  5 Mỗi tuần 15 tiếng trong vườn trẻ là một chuẩn bị đủ trước khi nhập học.
- 4.  1  2  3  4  5 Tôi thấy tự tin vào bản năng của tôi để chuẩn bị cho con tôi trước khi nhập học.
- 5.  1  2  3  4  5 Tôi tin rằng những đòi hỏi mà các em phải đối đầu khi nhập học rất cao so với thời xưa khi tôi bắt đầu vào học chính thức.
- 6.  1  2  3  4  5 Con tôi sẽ tham gia vào các chương trình chuẩn bị chuyển lớp.
- 7.  1  2  3  4  5 Tôi có tự tin rằng con tôi sẽ sẵn sàng bắt đầu vào trường học
- 8.  1  2  3  4  5 Chuyển lớp thành công là bước quan trọng cho sự thành công sau này.
- 9.  1  2  3  4  5 Giáo dục vườn trẻ là điều kiện dễ để cho con tôi tham gia (ví dụ như thời gian và cách sắp xếp)

## V. NHẬN XÉT VỀ VƯỜN TRÈ CỦA CON TÔI

Nếu con bạn không đi vườn trẻ, xin hãy bỏ phần này và tiếp vào phần sau VI. NHẬN XÉT

hoàn toàn không đồng ý  Không đồng ý  Trung trung  đồng ý  Hoàn toàn rất đồng ý

1.      Tôi nghĩ con tôi nhận được sự giáo dục \_rất tốt từ vườn trẻ này.
2.      Tôi hài lòng với các chương trình học do vườn trẻ đề ra.
3.      Vườn trẻ này có một môi trường học rất xuất sắc.
4.      Con tôi cảm thấy tích cực để học trong vườn trẻ này.
5.      Năm nay con tôi cảm thấy vui vẻ tại vườn trẻ này.
6.      Con em có đầy đủ tài liệu và \_phương cách để giúp chúng học.
7.      Vườn trẻ này giúp con tôi phát triển cá nhân và \_khả năng giao tiếp trong xã hội.
8.      Tôi nhận được thông tin đầy đủ về sự phát triển và thành tựu của con tôi.
9.      Vườn trẻ này cung cấp điều kiện và cơ hội để bàn thảo về sự phát triển của con tôi.
10.      Năm nay vườn trẻ này sắp xếp rất tốt.
11.      Tôi thấy tự tin vào cách điều hành của vườn trẻ.
12.      Nói chung, tôi thấy hài lòng với dự án do vườn trẻ đề ra.
13.      Tôi thấy tự tin vào vườn trẻ này để chuẩn bị cho con tôi trước khi nhập trường.

## VI. NHẬN XÉT

### 1. Có nhận xét nào thêm dựa trên các câu hỏi này

---

---

### 2. Có nhận xét nào thêm dựa trên cung cấp mới 15 tiếng cho trẻ em bốn tuổi muốn đi học vườn trẻ theo như mỗi Chính Sách Địa Thể Phổ Thông của Chính Phủ

---

---

### 3. Có nhận xét nào thêm về cách giáo dục trong vườn trẻ tại Nam Úc

---

---

Bài nghiên cứu này dùng những câu hỏi (một phần nào) được đề ra cho **Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)**. Những câu hỏi này là sở hữu của Commonwealth là đại diện qua Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs ([www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)) và được đảm trách trong sự kết hợp với Australian Institute of Family Studies ([www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)) và The Australian Bureau of Statistics([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)), theo lời khuyên của liên bang nghiên cứu hàng đầu tại các trung tâm nghiên cứu và các trường đại học trên toàn nước Úc.

Bài nghiên cứu này dùng những câu hỏi (một phần nào) được đề ra và quản lý tại Nam Úc do Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) như là phần của **Tham Khảo Vườn Trẻ**.