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**Teachers' perspectives and implementation of the child-centred
curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.**

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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at

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by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Abstract

Timor-Leste has been an independent nation for more than 15 years. However, the acts of decolonisation and the rebuilding of the education system has been a dilemma. Today, providing health care, quality education, and upholding the rights of children continue to be fundamental problems for the country. Ensuring the quality of education at any level is pivotal. The quality of teachers' pedagogy and knowledge are the foundation for providing a positive experience in preschool education in Timor-Leste. The Ministry of Education introduced reforms to the curriculum in 2014 that holds important principles, particularly the enforcing and encouraging of a child-centred curriculum. The teachers implementing this curriculum are mainly high school graduates, trained through INFORDEPE – the Ministry's teacher training institution.

This study examines and explores teachers' perspectives, understanding, and methods of implementing a child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste. Through an interpretive paradigm, this study uses primary data to identify the need for changes in teaching practice and explores how child-centred approaches contribute to quality learning in preschools that reflect the learning outcomes desired in the curriculum. Multiple methods including semi-structured individual interviews, focus-group interviews, classroom observations and questionnaires were used in gathering data. Data were collected from four preschools, with the participants consisting of six teachers, four principals, four groups of parents, and four groups of students. The analysis of these data was informed by social constructivist perspectives, particularly those of Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky.

The key findings revealed that preschool teachers in Timor-Leste are in a process of transition from a colonised rote learning style curriculum to a child-centred curriculum. The recent policy values a child-centred curriculum and learning through play. However, there is a mismatch between the policy and its implementation. Although schools and parents view the preschool curriculum reform as a positive change and there is commitment from the principals and teachers to engage with and implement the new curriculum, a lack of professional knowledge, resources and basic needs remain as significant barriers. In addition,

establishing supportive relationships between parents and schools remain under development.

Therefore, a key policy priority should be to provide a robust plan for professional development, including follow-up and addressing the needs and barriers that preschool teachers may encounter. Additionally, a plan for the management and distribution of resources to all preschools, as well as providing for basic needs around toileting and clean water remain critical issues that are yet to be fully addressed.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to some people who have influenced my life.

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To my husband, nieces and nephews, I hope some of you can follow in my path; having the courage to aim high, dream big and be willing to take risks; remember you can be anything you want to be.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Outline

1.1 Background for the research

In most developed countries, child-centered curriculum's (CCC) is common and well established, whereas the acceptance and implementation of a child-centered curriculum is still an issue for many developing countries such as Timor-Leste. A country grows and builds from knowledge and intelligence, and a country does not exist without its youth. Thus, providing and creating better learning spaces in the early stages of children's lives, such as in preschool seems essential. It is highlighted that children's participation in early learning could bring advantages for academic achievement (Kimer, Tuul, & Õun, 2016).

Education is a means and key to breaking out of poverty. Having an education system that is of good quality in early learning may result in a better life and future for the individual, society and the nation (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007). Through the teaching and learning processes, teachers have an immense influence on their students' success and development. As a logical consequence, the quality, success, and outcomes of the students' learning processes are also tied to the teachers' approach in how and what they teach (Quinn, 2013). In relation to the education system in Timor-Leste, in 2011, the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced a system of nine years free, compulsory, basic education, comprising of two cycles of primary education, grades 1-4 (6-9 year-olds) and 5-6 (10-11 year-olds), and a third cycle of pre-secondary education, grades 7-9 (12-14 year-olds) (TDLP, 2011). Education is mainly delivered through government schools, with a small private sector of schools operating (SitAn Committee & UNICEF, 2015).

During the 2013-14 period, pre-school education in Timor-Leste underwent curriculum reform resulting in a more child-centred approach to learning. This thesis explores the perceptions of teachers, parents, principals and students regarding the implementation of the child-centred curriculum within preschool education in Timor-Leste. This chapter introduces the research topic and provides some background and context for the research.

This chapter consists of seven sections. The first section provides the background for the research. The second section discusses the context, which includes the

historical background of Timor-Leste in relation to its education. In addition, an outline of the current curriculum with its main principles, legal, and policy context is described. The third section provides an overview of the researcher's personal narrative. This is followed by the main objectives of the research and a discussion of the importance of the study, outlined in sections four and five. The last section outlines the structure of this thesis.

1.1.2 Preschool in Timor-Leste

Preschool is not compulsory in Timor-Leste, yet current law and policy (Government of Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015) acknowledges and affirms the value of preschool education for young children and families. Having positive preschool learning opportunities and improving the quality of early learning is recognised as a significant component of the support required for students when they embark on basic education and is integral to achieving the aim of universal education (UNICEF, 2014). Thus, preschool acts as a solid foundation that is valuable for children's learning and development, as well as preparation for primary/basic education.

According to the Government of Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2011), only 11 percent of children between three and six years of age currently attend preschool. The country's strategic plan for education also points out that the quality of preschool education is currently low, with no standard basic curriculum and variable teaching standards. USAID points out that issues such as educational underachievement, grade repetition and early dropouts are three common problems in Timor-Leste (as cited in Taylor-Leech, 2013). There is evidence that nearly 30 percent of students in grade one were considered to have a lack of school readiness, and were required to repeat the first year of their schooling (SitAn Committee & UNICEF, 2015).

1.1.3 Teachers in Timor-Leste

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) (2010) indicated that nationally, only 40 percent of teachers in 2010 met national qualification standards and only 6 percent met the preschool standards. A significant number of teachers were employed and paid by the government as temporary contracted teachers in 2014. The majority of those teachers held volunteer experiences without sufficient

qualifications and training opportunities (SitAn Committee & UNICEF, 2015). Moreover, the teachers' lack of familiarity with the official languages of instruction (Tetum and Portuguese) have hampered the effectiveness of the teaching process. On a similar scale, the income levels of school teachers are relatively low and the impact of this is that some teachers have a second job. These phenomena highlight that issues related to teaching quality and status are pervasive in the education sector.

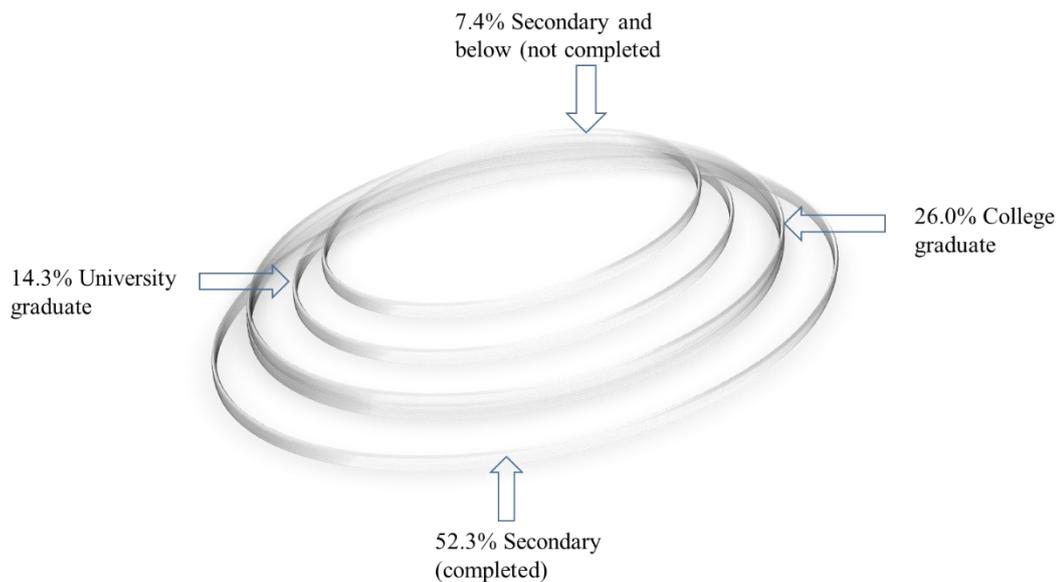


Figure 1.1: School teachers' educational background (Source: EMIS 2010, MoE-SDP 2011-2030)

In the context of preschool education, only 6 percent of teachers meet the national qualification standard (bachelor's degree or equivalent) irrespective of qualification. Very often they become teachers through volunteering and are later recruited as a teacher after several years (SitAn Committee & UNICEF, 2015). Figure 1.1 shows that only 40.3 percent of school teachers held a tertiary qualification. As can be seen above, the government has not done enough to acknowledge the urgent need to address these issues and to do what is best for the people after the country's independence.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 The Previous curriculum

The emphasis of the previous preschool curriculum (2004) was mainly teacher-centered. There is very little research in Timor-Leste exploring this previous curriculum. For ten years the preschool education that was implemented was based on a curriculum that was translated and not written specifically for a Timorese context. In the previous bilingual curriculum there were two languages used: Portuguese and Tetum. However, it was challenging to teach the children bilingually as the teachers' qualification levels were low, so the teacher themselves had difficulties understanding the language of instruction (explained in the following section), which created a number of shortcomings. In addition, issues around education from the legacy of colonisation have persisted through to the present time.

In conversations the researcher has had with some teachers regarding their perspectives about the previous curriculum, they commented that they frequently found there was no consistency or unification across all preschools. The teachers stated that the previous curriculum contained general themes, which they then had to develop based on their own abilities. Some teachers were able to do this while some were not. As a result, teachers tended to focus on the themes. This meant that in each school different teachers would not use the same themes, and some children who were moved or transferred from one preschool to another may encounter confusion and inconsistency.

1.2.2 The new curriculum reform

Preschool curriculum reform began in 2013-2014 and was developed under the banner of *Decree Law No 3/2015, National Curriculum of Basic Education Preschool*. The fundamental purpose of the reform was to support and provide simple guidance for teachers to deliver quality teaching and learning processes in their daily teaching practices. Another objective of the curriculum was to serve and provide support for children's learning outcomes (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). In line with this new vision of preschool education, programmes drew attention to all aspects of child development (social-emotional, language, cognitive and physical), and provided a solid foundation for the child's success in early primary education (Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2012).

There were four layers of planning for the revised preschool curriculum: a syllabus, trimester programming, weekly plans, and session plans. The session plans were separated into two age groupings: Group A for children aged 3-4, 4-5, and Group B for children aged 5-6. The learning areas of the curriculum comprised literacy, mathematics, and general development. The major pedagogical shift in this curriculum reform was the highlighting of several new and essential elements, specifically learning through play; learning focused on the development of the whole child; developing early literacy, numeracy, and social skills; and valuing the process of learning.

In addition, other features of the curriculum document reinforced the languages and cultures of Timorese people, and contextualised learning for Timorese communities and the development of a national identity. For instance, the document states that it values mother tongue languages in instruction, and requires Tetum to be used in daily teaching, as this is a common language which most Timorese people use to communicate. Using local resources, valuing the culture of Timor through what is taught and considering how the curriculum is taught are all strongly emphasised. In this way, curriculum reform in the RDTL is specifically about having a curriculum that is contextual and relevant to the Timorese people, with the inclusion of culturally appropriate resources and mother tongue languages of the various regions. An emphasis is also placed on learning through play, using language that children are familiar with, and connecting to a context that is relevant to the children's culture and daily life.

1.2.2.1 Eight main principles in the Preschool curriculum

There are eight main principles that formulate the core curriculum reform:

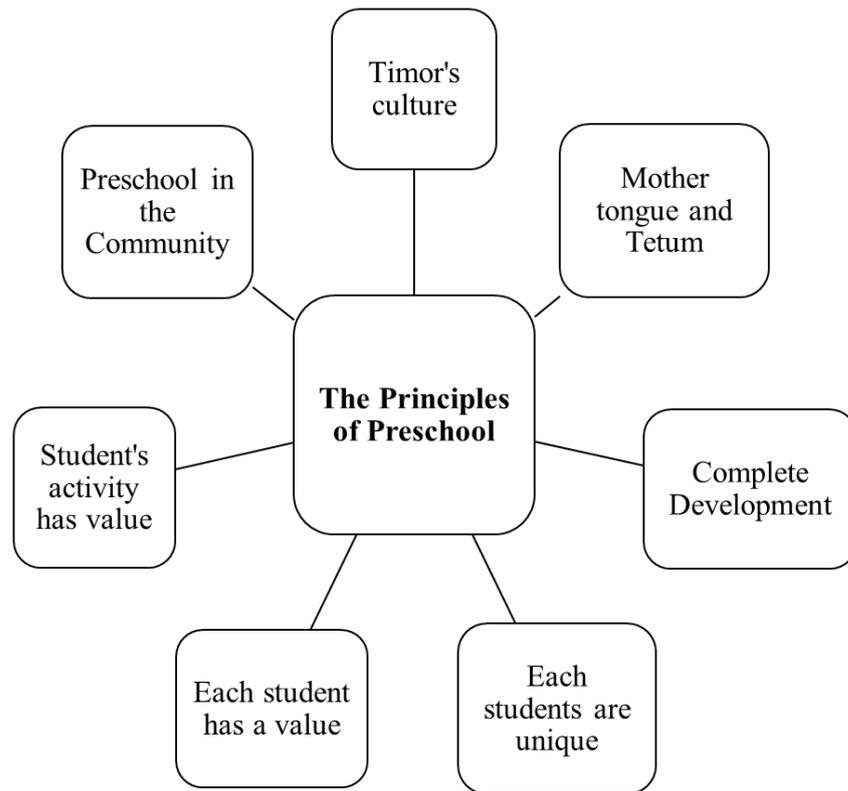


Figure 1.2: Eight principles of preschool in Timor-Leste (Source: The national curriculum for pre-school education in Timor-Leste, 2014)

These eight principles show how the reforms of this curriculum focuses on providing a learning framework where the values and respect for each child as a whole are addressed in their learning development. For example, the child should be respected and valued regardless of who the child is or the work the child does, and any opinions or questions of the child asks or searches for are considered as pertinent to the child’s learning and development. The child’s language, culture and society should be valued and used as tools for learning (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014).

Throughout the four layers of the revised curriculum, help and support is offered for teachers to implement those eight principles in preschool education. Starting from the preschool curriculum syllabus, the session plans provide a clear connection and objective, setting out the intended learning results within both the curriculum and the session plan. The trimester programming consists of three trimesters for a one-year programme. Based on this trimester programme, weekly plans are made that comply with each pedagogy or learning outcome of the curriculum and are written and prepared by the preschool curriculum reform

committee. The session plans are a set/package of plans that serve as a tool for the teachers and include instruction on how to use them in daily teaching practices (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). This draws attention to the relationship between the teachers' backgrounds and the results of the low quality of education in Timor-Leste. Hence, within the four layers of the curriculum reform, an entire set of descriptive packages of the content, planning, type of activities, and methods on how teachers can utilise the documents are provided (SitAn Committee & UNICEF, 2015). From there, teachers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the appropriate learning pedagogy and how to create their own plans. Before we go further into the details of the curriculum, it is important to understand the background of Timor-Leste, particularly in terms of how its educational practices has been influenced by various laws and policies. What follows is as brief history of Timor-Leste, as well as a look at the current legal and policy context around education.

1.2.3 Historical background of Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is a small, mountainous country located at the eastern end of the Indonesian archipelago. It is classified as lower middle income, with a population of 1.167 million (Census, 2015) and spends 9.4 percent of its US\$1.3 billion GDP on education (World Bank, 2013). It was a Portuguese colony for almost five hundred years, and when the Portuguese abruptly left in 1975, Indonesia invaded. For 24 years this regime ruled with an iron fist. It is estimated that one third (200,000) of the population died because of violence, famine, and sickness. In 1999, a referendum supported independence. The Indonesian withdrawal sparked a wave of retribution and destruction: 75 percent of people were displaced, thousands killed, property was razed to the ground and most of the country's infrastructure was destroyed (Nicolai, 2004).

This left the Timorese people traumatised, and the country lacking in basic infrastructure, human resources, public administration, and the political experience to govern a democracy (RDTL, 2011). After three years of UN governance, in 2002, Timor-Leste became the world's newest nation. The country continues to face significant challenges, particularly in the education and health sectors, with "over 50% of the population under 18" (SitAn, 2015 p. 24), UNICEF estimated that 41.8 percent of people live below the national poverty line; there is malnutrition and one

of the highest rates of stunted growth (49.9 percent) globally (UNICEF, 2014 p.20).

Figure 2 presents a map of Timor-Leste.

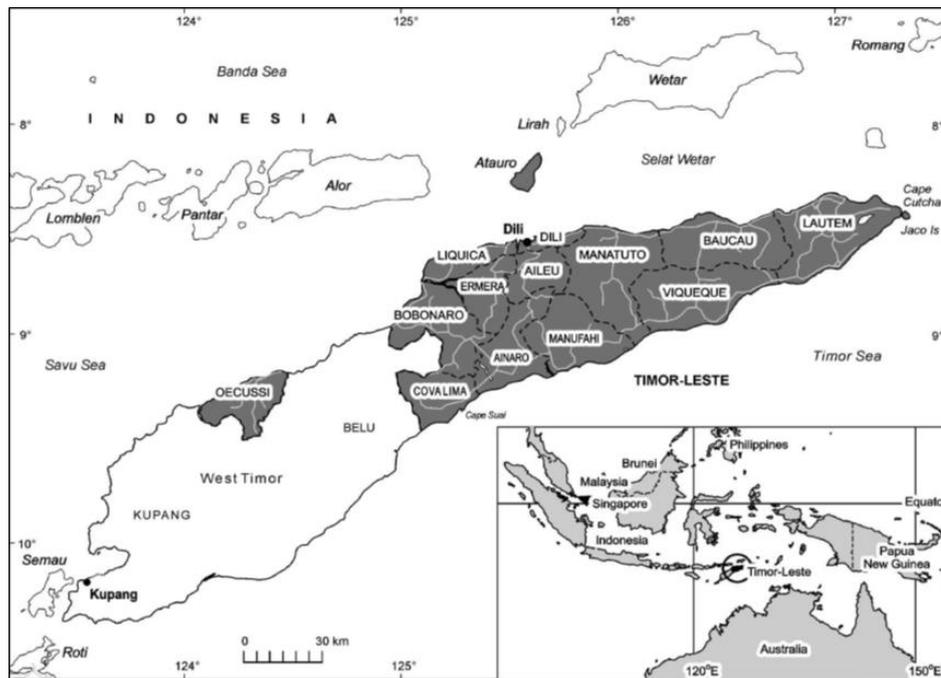


Figure 1.3: Map of Timor-Leste

Prior to Indonesian occupation, for nearly 500 years Timor-Leste was a Portuguese colony (1515-1975), with education conducted in Portuguese that was introduced through the Catholic Church and was exclusively for the elite. Then, during the Indonesian occupation (1975 to 1999), the policy was changed to be ‘education for all’. This predominantly occurred in government schools with Bahasa, the Indonesian language, as the medium of instruction (Lutz, 1991). Although literacy and numeracy levels increased, the system was tightly regulated with an emphasis on controlling the population by introducing Indonesian culture and language instead of on the quality of education, and furthermore diminishing Timor-Leste’s indigenous languages and cultures. In the third period, during the UN transitional administration (UNTAET: 1999-2002), and subsequently under the Timorese government, the administration was faced with the challenge of restarting the education system, defining what it would look like, and addressing the inequalities that had resulted from the country’s colonial history.

In 2004, education was recognised as so fundamental to the country’s development that seven out of ten Timorese listed it as the top national priority (World Bank, 2004,). However, there were limited research sources outlining evidence around

educational child-centred curriculum during periods of external rule. What is known about this historical background indicates that the education available to the Timorese people was highly affected and influenced by the various dominant political interests that controlled the curricula and processes of teaching and learning. A summary of the history of education and its key characteristics in Timor-Leste is described in the following timeline.

Table 1.1: History of education in Timor-Leste

Years	Description	Source
1515-1975	Education conducted in Portuguese Education was introduced through the Catholic Church Education exclusively for the elite	(Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015; Nicolai, 2004)
1975-1999	Education available for all Predominantly occurred in Bahasa, the Indonesian language Teacher directed learning The objective of education was to rule the people and introduce Indonesian language and culture	(Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015; Nicolai, 2004) (Lutz, 1991)

1999-2002	<p>Education in transition period from restoration of independence.</p> <p>A crisis in education with a lack of teachers, poor infrastructure</p> <p>Need to develop a new national and relevant curriculum for all levels of education</p> <p>Education was delivered through the few resources left by Indonesia</p> <p>Lack of learning and teaching materials</p> <p>Education was delivered through the convention of the teacher as the centre of learning</p>	(Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015; Nicolai, 2004)
2002-2013	<p>Conventional learning as above continued</p> <p>Portuguese and Tetum were the medium of instruction.</p> <p>A curriculum and pedagogy that was not contextually relevant to Timorese culture.</p> <p>Challenges of the education system were monumental.</p> <p>Quality of education continued to be a major challenge.</p>	(Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015)

2013-2017	<p>Education with the aim of learner-centred pedagogy.</p> <p>Curriculum reform based on inclusion of explicitly local content and contextualized concepts emphasising and utilizing local resources.</p> <p>Education that values the Timorese culture and national identity.</p> <p>Misconceptions and beliefs of teachers through the new curriculum still vague.</p>	<p>(Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015; Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014; Ogden, 2017)</p>
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1.2.4 Legal and policy context

After independence was gained, the government of Timor-Leste chose Portuguese as the main language of instruction in a country where very few people speak it proficiently. In 2002 under the constitution, the government declared the country to be of a multilingual nature (Taylor-Leech, 2009, 2011, 2013). The two-official languages of Timor-Leste are Portuguese and Tetum, with Bahasa and English as working languages. This phenomenon has had a remarkable influence and impact on education and society as a whole (Quinn, 2015; Shah & Quinn, 2014; Taylor-Leech, 2013). Changing language requirements and education systems through the three periods of external occupation have had a significant impact on the quality of education for the Timorese people. In addition to this challenge, while some Timorese teachers might be aware of the child-centred curriculum, many still lack basic knowledge about the importance of a child-centred curriculum and how to implement it.

The vision of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2011-2030 is that:

In 2025 the population of Timor-Leste will be educated, knowledgeable and qualified to live a long and productive life... [and] children between 3-5 years of age will have access to

begin their quality education in a school that is close to the place where they live. In pre-school they will develop the basic skills and knowledge to be prepared for basic education.

(National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), 2011-2030, p.7-8)

This vision may become a reality if issues around the language use and familiarity for Timorese teachers and children are addressed. The short term goal of the RDTL (2011) was that by 2015, half of all Timorese children between the ages of 3 and 5 would be enrolled in and receiving quality preschool education. However, the report from SitAn Committee and UNICEF (2015) shows that the approximate enrolment rate in preschool education in 2013 was only 14.4 percent of the national average of 3 to 4 year-olds. Issues around poor-quality education continue today.

Regarding providing quality education and the notions around language, the government of Timor-Leste considered the issue of active child participation in the preschool education process through the development of self-expression and communication during the children's learning journey. For example, Article 13 (Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2012) cites that the fundamental purpose of oral and written languages in the decree of law is to provide the child with the opportunity to develop their communication skills. These include the ability to voice their own ideas to others both orally and in written form, and likewise, to be able to perceive and understand the ideas of other people (Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2012). However, the government's vision and decree for preschools and language might not be in line with the actual learning outcomes and languages being used.

1.2.4.1 The preschool policy framework

In conjunction with the aforementioned policy, the curriculum reform was revised based on the *Policy Framework for Preschool Education*. This new vision for preschool in Timor-Leste aims to address all aspects of children's development including: socio-emotional, language, cognitive, physical and preparation for the next stage of primary school (Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2012).

The policy framework also acknowledges and highlights the benefits of early learning using a fundamental metaphor: *Weaving a Tais for Children in Timor-Leste*.



Figure 1.4: Tais. Source: Google image

Tais is a type of traditional cloth that is woven by Timorese people and is considered a fundamental part of identity and culture. In this metaphor, the *Tais* represents the child:

As an integral part of the fabric that achieves its artistic splendor when threads mutually intertwine and support each other in an adequately, supportively and consistently (*sic*) manner. [The] Tais design that weaves the child's own needs and rights, emphasis the right to protection, health, food, education and the right to play (Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2012, p. 14).

As such, the *Tais* metaphor is used to explain the inclusive and supportive experience children should have in their education. It emphasises holding strong principles that value Timorese culture and using these to interpret how learning should be conducted. Furthermore, it accounts for and highlights the multiplicity of levels that should influence and be involved in the children's education, areas of community, family and school. This concept of inclusive cultures and values also influences how research is conducted and implemented. The section that follows is a description of the researcher's personal narrative.

1.3 Personal Narrative

I was born in Timor-Leste and grew up during the period of the Indonesian occupation. The education system I experienced was one where the learning process was teacher oriented and based on rote learning. I had to memorize what had been

taught in class, do what I was told, and prepare for exams. As a consequence, making mistakes was not an option and expressing my ideas or asking questions appeared rude and was not allowed. This way of learning continued from elementary to high school. Very often, I found that my inner self was full of worry, concerned about ‘stepping out of line’, and to obey the system that I was used to. As a result of my own experiences, I believe that in the 21st century the younger generations in Timor-Leste have the right to receive a better education.

I worked in an international school (Quality Schools International) in Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste, as an Assistant Teacher. I found the experience of working in an international education environment very enlightening, particularly in reference to teaching and learning methodology; how a child-centred approach influences students’ development. More recently, working in the Ministry of Education in Timor-Leste provided me with a deeper understanding of what is encountered by students and teachers in their schools. Many preschool teachers and directors still lack a fundamental understanding of the importance of the effective implementation of student-centred learning.

I like working with young children and the process of the development of their learning is important to me. It is my personal and working experience with children that has driven my motivation to do this research to explore teachers’ perspectives and the implementation of a child-centered curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste. I believe education is the key to improving the country’s civil society and economy. I would like to use the knowledge and expertise I gain from this research to improve education standards in preschools in Timor-Leste. I am passionate about teaching and educating and I want a better future for the Timorese people. I hope my study will contribute to the development of Timorese people, particularly the younger generation in the preschool sector.

1.4 Research main objectives

This study aimed to investigate and explore teachers’ perspectives and implementation of a child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste in order to provide and improve quality learning for children. Furthermore, this study also aimed to explore what overall ideas, knowledge, and perceptions are currently held by the teachers, parents, principals and

students in regard to the implementation of a child-centred curriculum within preschool education in Timor-Leste.

The overarching aims were supported by the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' understanding of child-centred curriculum within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
2. In what ways do teachers implement child-centred teaching practices?
3. What are parents' understanding of child-centred curriculum within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
4. In what ways might child-centred teaching be enhanced?

1.5 Importance of the study

The child-centred curriculum approach is a significant means of supporting children's learning and development. This approach allows children to unfold and grow in their own way of learning. In addition, preschool is an important foundation to ensuring an appropriate and quality education in the early stages that will contribute to a more positive learning experience for students and a better future for the country. This research aims to support and identify teachers' perspectives and the implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste. Moreover, this research may also provide information to assist the teachers in teaching and the Ministry of Education in planning professional development.

1.6 Chapter outlines

The outline of the remainder of the thesis is thus. Chapter two presents a review of literature, including theory about child-centred curriculum (CCC), perspectives, and the benefits and effects of a CCC for students, teachers, and parents. Chapter two also discusses the application of CCC in the classroom and its links to assessment. In addition, educational transitions and CCC in Timor-Leste are discussed. In chapter three the research design, methodologies, and methods are presented, while chapter four provides the findings of the study. Then, in chapter five the discussion of the findings of the study are articulated. Finally, in chapter six, a conclusion to the study is provided, and some suggestions and recommendations for future study are included.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has described the background to the research including the current situation of preschools and teachers in Timor-Leste. It also provided the context of the historical background of the country where the research was based. The preschool curriculum reform and the eight principles were briefly highlighted, as was the legal policy context around the language and framework of policy for preschool education. Furthermore, an overview of the researcher's personal narrative and the main objective of the research were outlined. The chapter closed by considering the importance of the study and offered an account of the structure of the thesis with short description of the contents for each chapter. The following chapter will cover the literature review.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on exploring the literature around teachers' perspectives and the implementation of a child-centred curriculum (CCC) in Timor-Leste. Child-centred curricula are not a new phenomenon globally, particularly in developed countries where there have been numerous studies about child-centred curriculum over many years by many researchers. However, this is often not the case in developing countries like Timor-Leste where a child-centred curriculum in preschool is a newly introduced phenomenon.

This chapter is divided into several sections beginning with a definition of a CCC and the theories that support a CCC approach. These theories are mainly derived from sociocultural perspectives. In addition, studies about the perspectives, advantages and effects of CCC regarding teachers, students and parents are highlighted. Subsequently, the method in which CCC is implemented in the classroom from other countries and Timor-Leste will also be discussed. Another major section included in this chapter explores CCC in Timor-Leste; considering the legal and policy context. Finally, the gap between the literature and research questions are presented towards the end of the chapter.

2.1 What are child-centred curricula (CCC)?

A child-centred curriculum is defined in various ways. As the name suggests, CCC stands for children taking command of their own learning. The history of the development of child-centred education can be thought of as a root or key factor in teaching people to think and use their rational powers in order to become better at problem solving (Attard, Di Ioio, Geven, & Santa, 2010; Langford, 2010; Song, 2015). CCC are known by various names and have been studied by many researchers. They are sometimes categorised as child-centred learning (CCL), child-centred pedagogy (CCP), and/or student-centred learning (SCL). This method of learning is well known in developed countries and in the international sector where it is considered a Western type of learning (Smail, 2014; Song, 2015; Sriprakash, 2010).

The idea of a “child-centred” curriculum has spanned almost two centuries and focuses on how and in what ways teaching is conducted and the processes involved in learning. The fundamental impetus is to shift conventional or traditional learning to innovative learning systems in order to emphasise and respond to the needs and interests of individual students who have unique characteristics (Attard et al., 2010; Langford, 2010; Song, 2015). According to Attard et al. (2010) the educational pedagogy created within the concept of CCC has spread throughout the world and has been discussed for many years among higher institutions and national policy-makers. A considerable amount of literature has defined CCC. All definitions emphasise that children are positioned at the heart of education processes and that children themselves have agency. For example, CCC could be seen as placing the child at the centre of learning and focusing on what is best for the child (Fung, 2015; Kimer et al., 2016).

Follari (2011) offers an explanation of CCC that emphasises learning instruction being driven by a focus on children, for whom the learning processes are devised. Likewise, Ryan (2007) argues that in CCC children should be positioned as active agents within the context of CCC, and with a clear role for teachers to support the child. A slightly different perspective is given by Langford (2010), who focuses more on the idea of development and progression in children’s schooling and on the child directing the activities in which they are engaged. It is clear from the above that the literature suggests that CCC is not adult/teacher-directed and that learning is more student-directed. Having defined what is meant by CCC, the following section will explore in more detail the core features that comprise CCC within various educational theories and practices.

2.2 The parameters of CCC

2.2.1 Human Rights

Common to the definitions of CCC is the concept of education as a human right and of the preschool child as a citizen with rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 has recognised education as a human right and declared that every person has the right to be educated (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007). Thomas (2009, p. 135) quotes Eleanor Roosevelt’s explanation of a right as “not something that somebody gives you; it is something that nobody can take away”. Similarly,

Dworkin (1978) explains that rights have a fundamental quality that justifies the force attached to them as differing from wants or needs (as cited in Thomas, 2009).

Human rights-based approaches to education aim ‘to assure every child a quality education that respects and promotes her or his right to dignity and optimum development.’ (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007, p. 1). Thus, the convention sets the children’s best interests as a primary consideration, including participation and decision making in their own learning (Thomas, 2009). Within this profound base or right Tomaševski (2001) sets out a conceptual framework, the 4As scheme, making education ‘Available’, ‘Accessible’, ‘Acceptable’ and ‘Adaptable’, which aims to remove barriers to the right to education. ‘Using human rights as the lens for examining education necessitates challenging exclusion from education and also asking what education is for’ (Tomaševski, 2006, p. xxviii). It highlights the interconnectedness and relationships between different types of governmental human rights responsibilities and how these rights can be translated into real educational needs through the relationship between the right to education, rights within education and rights through education.

Tomasevski states that there need to be specific assurances at an international and national level for the right to education to be effective. It is the government’s responsibility to provide education that is available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable. Education that is ‘available’ is free, with adequate infrastructure and trained teachers. ‘Accessible’ education is non-discriminatory and open to all including the marginalized. ‘Acceptable’ education is relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate. ‘Adaptable’ education is a system that is able to adapt to the changing needs of society. Thus, Tomasevski’s work provides a useful framework for the identification and rectification of what education should be offered to children as whole.

2.2.2 Play

Play is integral to a CCC and therefore holds an important part in strengthening independent/autonomous learning, problem-based learning, literacy and language development, manipulative and motor skills and socio-affective development (Fleer, 2010; Lillard et al., 2013; Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017; Ryan, 2007; Wood & Bennett, 1998). Reynolds and Jones (2007) explain that play acts as the cornerstone of a child-centred curriculum. They define play as intentional actions

where the child is the agent of his or her own action in both context and plot. Brumbaugh (2008) hypothesises that learning should not become a chore if the objective of learning is to promote lifelong learning, because at the early stages of learning children should experience and internalise joy in discovering, answering, and exploring the curiosity that the child brings to preschool.

Reynolds and Jones (2007) and Ryan (2007) highlight that play is intrinsically/naturally tied to children's interests. Burman (1994) focussed on play which fosters persistence and competence in CCC, because in play children find learning meaningful. However, the literature points out that play does not always contribute to the child's learning and development. What counts is where play is set up, how it is prepared, and what tools are available for it to occur (as cited in Ryan, 2007). This notion is supported by Vygotsky's views on how children are capable of doing many things within a supportive social context (Smidt, 2013).

Therefore, the autonomy of the child can be expressed by allowing and providing space for the child to choose and take responsibility, and this eventually instils self-control and independence (Ryan, 2007). In regard to placing the emphasis on play in child's development, the current Timorese preschool curriculum also acknowledges play as one of the main areas of focus in the curriculum (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014).

Reynolds and Jones (2007) illustrate seven roles that teachers could take when children are playing. The seven roles are stage manager, mediator, player, scribe, assessor, communicator, and planner. Their research focuses on teacher support to ensure constructive play to engage children, resulting in the child exercising their own mental construction of the activity and making meaning. Kimer et al. (2016) conducted a study in Estonia in which 25 preschool teachers were assessed and observed during their teaching. One of the findings revealed that the adults/teachers did not encourage the children to a higher level of thinking and that they interfered when the children played.

2.2.3 Theoretical perspectives on a child-centred curriculum

“You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself-Gallelo” (as cited in Follari, 2011, p. 72)

Human evolutionary theory, science and philosophy established and created a paradigm that guides and supports the way people do things, creating a set of practices within each discipline (Follari, 2011; Kiraly, 2000; Prawat, 1992). The constructivist paradigm is a perspective that places emphasis on a person's understanding of the world and proposes that people can only perceive and make meaning from their own context and experiences. As such, Kiraly (2000, p. 34) claims that "we cannot know the world objectively, but only from our own privileged position as unique experiencers of the world". This theory has had an influence on practice in contemporary society and education, as it is grounded in the highly influential work of the psychologists Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bronfenbrenner (Follari, 2011). Piaget's fundamental theory is based on cognitive development through self-discovery. In a more specific way, Piaget sees the child's mental model of the world as a biological maturation, and interaction with the environment as part of cognitive development where the child seeks equilibrium between their beliefs and understanding of experiences. Therefore, as knowledge is not a fixed trait, the new information is processed by the child through assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1969). However, Piaget's theory placed insufficient consideration on learning within a social and cultural context or on the child's own agency, as instead maturation was emphasised through biologically determined stages (Chung & Walsh, 2000; Cicciarelli, 2007; Follari, 2011).

Constructivism can be understood to reflect the way the nature of knowledge is constructed by children through their own understanding of the world. This paradigm provides a useful account of child development in early learning. However, the theoretical framework for this thesis will focus on a social constructivist paradigm, as the social, cultural and contextual factors are important in understanding CCC.

2.3 Social constructivism theory

Social constructivism can be defined and seen as a sociological theory of knowledge within which human development is situated (Kiraly, 2000; Lall, 2011; Thompson, 2013). This paradigm asserts that people learn by constructing knowledge through social interaction with others and through culturally meaningful activities. In the social sciences, and particularly psychology, the term social constructivism is relatively new (Burr, 2015). Yet, the phenomena of social

constructivist studies are important in understanding how people learn effectively, and why different learners construct and reconstruct knowledge in different ways (Attard et al., 2010). According to O'Neill and McMahon (2005a) CCC has an interconnection with social constructivist views as it places emphasis on activities and the importance of communities of practice and/or other interactions that occur in a child's learning development. Thus, the key principle of social constructivism is to enact "our knowledge of the world, including our understanding of human being, [and see this as] a product of human thought rather than grounded in an observable, external reality"(Burr, 2015, p. 222). Social action is thus understood in a broad sense as people interacting with each other, through which something is produced (Detel, 2015). I turn now to Vygotsky's and Bronfenbrenner's theories which are considered to be more social constructivist than constructivist. Their influences will be discussed in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, followed by an analysis of how their principles contribute to *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand ECE framework.

2.3.1 Vygotsky's social constructivism

Vygotsky is a famous scholar and proponent of sociocultural theory, where the focus is on the social context of learning development and cognition of the individual (Tzuo, 2007; Wood & Bennett, 1998). The development of a child consists of various elements that contribute throughout his/her own life experiences. Vygotsky believed that learning occurs in social situations when a child takes part in communication with peers and adults. He emphasised the importance of language as a tool for facilitating and organising cognitive development (Dowling, 2014; Follari, 2011; Smidt, 2011). Language is not merely a tool for communication between people, but a key factor in how children organise their thinking to perceive the world around them.

Through meaningful and supportive language, a child processes their thinking and makes sense of the world through self-talk or private speech. This term is used by Vygotsky to define the process by which children use language to organize their thinking. A child will hear words spoken aloud and then reflect on the words internally to make sense of them as part of their own knowledge. In turn, how a child hears and interacts with adults or their peers (including family) who are more knowledgeable, will contribute to a child's development through his/her experience (Follari, 2011; Smidt, 2011). Therefore, a child or individual internalises ideas and

processes that they observe or participate in during social interaction as new ways of thinking and knowledge. In addition to language, other cultural tools such as objects and people's norms and beliefs also contribute meaning to a child's development by shaping values and knowledge. For instance, teachers, peers, and the language used at home and in school all matter and contribute to the process of the child's progress in learning.

2.3.2 Bronfenbrenner's social constructivism

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory acknowledges the importance of cultural and social contexts of childhood (Follari, 2011; Smidt, 2011). Bronfenbrenner believes in calling attention to a number of environmental and societal influences which influence how a child or individual's development is shaped. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory directs attention to different levels of the environment that can impact on the child, namely: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). A microsystem refers to settings in which the child resides and interacts in his/her daily activity. This includes family, school, neighbourhood, siblings and the home, which acts as a base core that influences the child. A mesosystem comprises of the interrelationship between microsystems, so different elements in the microsystem can affect the child in a negative or positive way depending on how the interaction works. The exosystem encompasses settings in which the child is not involved directly, yet these factors can impact on the processes within the child's immediate setting. An example is the impact of work or local government that relates to the child's family. The macrosystem refers to the dominant beliefs, policy and ideologies which are remote from the everyday life of both the child and family, but do also indirectly contribute to the development of the child. Finally, a chronosystem refers to time and historic influences during development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Smidt, 2011). Therefore, it is suggested that a child's development does not occur as a single model or system but is instead tied and connected to the whole system where a child lives and the environmental context around this lifestyle. All have a significant impact in contributing to the development of each child or individual.

2.3.2.1 Social constructivism - Te Whāriki

Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner's ideas of child development as social constructivism are key principles in the New Zealand Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum Te Whāriki. Te Whāriki is a curriculum that is valued and recognised internationally. The four principles and five strands in Te Whāriki highlight “a sociocultural view of learning as empowering, relational, interconnected and holistic” (Lee, Carr, Soutar, & Mitchell, 2013, p. 18).

In Timor-Leste, the current curriculum has eight principles (see chapter one), with a focus on culture, language, the development of the child, work, and the value of the child, and the value of the contribution the child brings into learning (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). Hence, there is a link between the Timor-Leste preschool curriculum and the principles of Te Whāriki.

The vision of Te Whāriki is of children as “Competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society” (Ministry Education of New Zealand, 2017, p. 5). This vision underpins and broadly encompasses all experiences in ECE settings. It includes activities and events that occur both directly and indirectly. The statement above expresses the ideology that learning is not limited to any particular domain, time or place, yet community, language, society, and beliefs are all tied to one another (Peters & Paki, 2015). Te Whāriki is an internationally recognised CCC framework. The four broad principles in Te Whāriki in ECE are empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships. These align with the five strands, which emphasise well-being, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. These strong principles embrace diversity in learning. “A child is a treasure, to be nurtured, to grow, to flourish” (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017, p. 2). As can be seen, empirical evidence from theory around social constructivism aligns with Te Whāriki, indicating the pertinent elements that constitute CCC. Having defined the theory of social constructivism, I will now move on to discuss the importance of relationships in the CCC setting.

2.4 The importance of relationship in CCC

In CCC, relationships are categorised as a fundamental aspect and the rote to successful outcomes (Brumbaugh, 2008). *Te Whariki*, the New Zealand ECE curriculum, positions children as confident and competent learners from birth. It states that children “learn by engaging in meaningful interaction with people, places and things” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 12). As such, the relationships between the teachers and the children are an important part of the process that continues throughout the child’s learning process. Empowerment, reciprocal relationships, respectful and responsive relationships are all aspects that are contained within the relationship (Brumbaugh, 2008; Ministry Education of New Zealand, 2017).

Brumbaugh (2008) and Maeda (2015) note that family engagement in education is essential for a child’s development, confirming that parents or family understand their child well in terms of a child’s behaviour, either good or bad, as most of the child’s time is spent with his/ her family. As the child spends time with both parents and teachers, there is information there that both parents and teachers can share for the benefit of the child. Therefore, building a constructive relationship between parents and teacher is an important component for a child’s successful learning in preschool.

2.5 The Implementation of CCC

On a global scale, the implementation of CCC differs from one place to another. A fundamental principle of CCC is to enhance the quality of education through promoting child friendly learning and providing space to develop the child’s interest and needs. Yet, teachers still hold the primary role in regard to making the principles of CCC come to reality during the teaching and learning processes (Fung, 2015; Hughes, Bullock, & Coplan, 2014; Thompson, 2013). Several studies have revealed that regardless of how long a CCC has been in existence, the application of CCC will vary according to the policy, cultural norms, beliefs and the historical background of a country or/and places which influence the education system (Attard et al., 2010; Sriprakash, 2010; Thompson, 2013).

For example, Song (2015) reveals that although CCC has been promoted in Cambodia for nearly two decades, there is still a mismatch between teachers’ beliefs and in their teaching practice in implementing CCC. The results from Song (2015) study shows while teachers understand CCC on the surface, their beliefs influence

the extent to which they shift and support CCC. As a result, the predominantly front-oriented classroom style of instruction still persists. This may be perhaps due to “lack of familiarity with the term” (O’Neill & McMahon, 2005a, p. 33). In addition, Thompson (2013, p. 52) research shows that cultural translation plays a part in implementing CCC. For instance, if the norms of a society claim that “children are meant to be seen and not heard”, then introducing CCC will be hard to put into practice. In regard to CCC, Fung (2015) points out that balancing and reducing the control of teacher-directed learning with children-centred learning might be challenging for teachers who have long standing teaching habits. However, a recent study involving three kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong shows that when teachers are active and less controlling in the classroom, they can offer promising learning experiences in the style of a CCC, and thus, promote a better quality of education.

Findings from several studies have identified factors that make it difficult to implement a CCC in developing countries. These include factors such as large numbers of children in a classroom and lack of resources (O’Neill & McMahon, 2005a; Song, 2015). Reasons around why teachers may find it hard to implement a CCC include teachers’ lack of understanding and knowledge of how to implement CCC in their teaching practice, and the difficulty in shifting from their habitual teaching methods (Attard et al., 2010; Langford, 2010; O’Neill & McMahon, 2005a). All these factors are applicable to Timor-Leste. In relation to teachers’ beliefs, Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982) illustrate three criteria needed for conceptual change processes to help change teachers’ understanding and practice. The first criterion requires the individual to be dissatisfied with their existing beliefs. Then both useful and intelligible alternatives to extend their comprehension to the new situation must be revealed. Finally, the earlier conception must be figured out and connected to the new beliefs. Hence, using these three criteria may lead to changing the beliefs of an individual into new concepts of teaching. Misconceptions in implementing CCC not only occur with teachers, but policymakers and parents also struggle to accept this approach. A child-centred curriculum could be one of the ways of solving this dilemma and helping the teacher to teach students on many levels. In cases such as this, CCC may not be applicable in all countries if the policy and people involved are not familiar or informed of the advantages of CCC.

2.6 Professional development acts as a factor that contributes to effective change

The manifestation of CCC has resulted in a shift from teacher oriented to child-centred pedagogy. Its implementation has a strong relationship with the training and professional development (PD) that teachers receive (Lowenstein (2007); (Murray, 2010). According to Kuijpers, Houtveen, and Wubbels (2010), PD serves an important role in the education sector, particularly in enhancing and improving teacher-teaching capacity to assure quality in children's learning outcomes. Ongoing PD is required to support teachers to improve and make changes in their teaching practice (Armour & Makopoulou, 2012; Helmer, Bartlett, Wolgemuth, & Lea, 2011; Murray, 2010; Tournaki, Lyublinskaya, & Carolan, 2011). However, what the PD constitutes and its relevance and application by the teacher will depend on how institutions are served within the programme (Lowenstein, 2007; Tournaki et al., 2011).

Lowenstein (2007) refers to the notion that teachers who have both formal education and specialised training are most likely to produce high quality preschool education. Formal education refers to teachers having achieved some university qualification; whereas credentials focused on the skills to work in the preschool arena are referred to as specialised training. In addition, Lowenstein (2007) points out that in order for PD to be effective, “a core body of knowledge (specific knowledge)” and “a set of core competencies (observable skills)” (p. 661) are required to clearly address the specific expectations in the preschool field. This can be categorised as PD infrastructure. Moreover, acknowledging the relevance of PD, Kuijpers et al. (2010) state that the planning of a programme should take place prior to commencement of the training together with a comprehensive programme of school-improvement introduced and implemented by the teachers. Effective PD addresses and serves the needs of the teachers (Çelik, Bayraktar-Çepni, & İlyas, 2013). This finding is supported by Murray (2010) who highlights that there is no recipe for PD that can work for every teacher, as each teacher's needs are different.

Murray (2010) advocates that effective PD relies on self-empowerment, with PD defined as an ongoing process which emerges through teachers assessing and re-examining their teaching beliefs and practices. Examples of a method for empowering teachers in PD are the promotion of reflective teaching (Bleach, 2014),

individual or collaborative techniques such as peer coaching or mentoring, forming a teacher support group or participating in workshops following a conference (Armour & Makopoulou, 2012; Murray, 2010). The most pertinent element of effective PD is that it empowers teachers to be able to discover various ways to direct and help improve their own and each other's teaching practices. The section that follows will focus on how coaching and mentoring contributes to helping teachers shift their beliefs and teaching practice.

2.6.1 Coaching and mentoring could enhance the transition process for effective teaching in Timor-Leste

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on coaching and mentoring based on leadership and its part in improving teaching and learning (Cox, 2003; Jenkins, 2013). The role of coaching and mentoring provides some similar objectives: to facilitate exploration of need, motivation, skills and thought processes, to assist and help the individual teacher or student in making real and lasting changes, although both aspects have different perspectives. In other words, the main objective of both coaching and mentoring is *Helping* (Jenkins, 2013; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005).

Mentoring relates primarily to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person. It can be a long-term relationship, where the goals may change but are always set by the learner. Whereas coaching relates primarily to performance improvement (often over the short term) in specific skill areas. The goals, or at least the intermediate or sub-goals, are typically set with or at the suggestion of the coach. While the learner has primary ownership of the goal, the coach has primary ownership of the process (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2005). Both terms of coaching and mentoring can be applied to CCC, applied between the teacher and children, or between their teachers in professional development.

Megginson, Clutterbuck, Garvey, Stokes, and Garret-Harris (2006) defined mentoring as help by one person to another in making important transitions in knowledge, work or thinking. Adding to this, Fibkins (2011) asserts that with caring intervention by mentors, teachers can learn new effective approaches and overcome problems such as a lack of self-awareness and difficulties in transiting from their own values or beliefs. After five hundred years as a Portuguese colony (1515-1975) Timor-Leste was invaded and occupied by Indonesia (1975- 1999) (Nicolai, 2004;

Quinn, 2013; Shah, 2012; Taylor-Leech, 2008). The education system is still in a state of transition from outdated colonial principles to ideas better suited to the new society. Shah and Cardozo (2016, p. 4) strongly assert that Timorese teachers were “tightly framed and classified within a colonial-era framework in which particular epistemologies were indoctrinated through the schooling system”. The teacher-student relationship is still based on a model of powerful authority rather than an interactive learning approach. As a result, to establish effective teaching, training and guidance are required.

A relationship-based approach is the core of mentoring or coaching. Megginson and Clutterbuck (2005) define that as part of ongoing development, relationship-based mentoring techniques can address and assist strategic purposes within a particular learning context. Thus, it is pertinent to investigate preschool teachers’ values and practices in relation to the needs of the situation. Some key teaching values relevant to Timor-Leste that a mentor would serve to implement include trust and confidentiality, self-awareness, and collaboration for change. According to Sutton (2005); Portner (2008) the relationship between the mentor and the mentee should build and rely upon mutual trust, respect, and professionalism.

Moreover, Hampton, Rhodes, and Stokes (2004) state that one of the mentor’s roles is to support all kinds of circumstances in which the teachers are operating. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) highlight that knowing or being aware is pertinent to change - the individual should achieve and understand their own behaviour and become aware of why they should make changes. Morrison and Ferrier-Kerr (2015) list some strategies to build self-awareness; “Focused questioning”, “profound listening”, “guided reflection”, “going on retreat”, and “setting short- and long-term goals” (p. 270). Any ordinary changes/shift within teaching and learning from one context to another context may require different ways of approach and introduction to the new context. As such, CCC teachers need to be aware of both the purpose of changing and the benefits of those changes.

2.7 Assessment of and for learning in CCC

In contemporary society, a good assessment could be categorized as assessment that can promote learning to the students, and fulfil the demand of a

dynamic world where children are continuously changing and responding to their social environments (Clarke, 2003; Ussher & Earl, 2010).

There are two types of assessment within educational settings; formative and summative assessments. Moreover, each type of assessment may have different elements and serve a specific role or purpose towards the process of assessment practice and may vary depending upon its objectives.

2.7.1 Formative assessment

Formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning (AfL), is a common tool used under the banner of education in many countries, including Timor-Leste. Black and Wiliam (1998) define formative assessment as “encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged” (as cited in Wiliam, 2011, p. 37). Thus, formative assessment is more likely to bring benefits for both students and teachers in CCC. Another definition expressed by Cowie and Bell (1996) is that formative assessment is “the process used by teachers and students to recognise and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning” (as cited in Bell & Cowie, 2001, p. 5). In conjunction with the aforementioned definitions, the purpose of formative assessment is to serve as a guide for teachers and students and to improve teaching and learning processes. Additionally, it also reinforces and places the student at the centre of learning.

Conversely, formative assessment may become an obstacle and not be effective for teachers or students if it is not implemented well within the learning process in a CCC context. This might occur due to various circumstances such as a large class size, lack of teaching resources, and poor teacher implementation of formative assessment practices. The way teachers implement formative assessment can be related to their level of skill in relation to handling students (Wiliam, 2011). Keeping the learning objectives in mind, the teacher makes a plan for what is to be taught, and uses formative assessments to identify and explore further what the students need to improve on (Absolum 2006 & McMillan, 2013). This manifestation needs to be understood by teachers of CCC in Timor-Leste for improvement in future practice.

In a country like Timor-Leste, teachers often attend professional development programmes offered by the Ministry of Education to provide knowledge and enhance teachers' teaching capacity. However, reports have shown that the quality of student outcomes has made little improvement despite the amount of training the teachers have received (SitAn Committee & UNICEF, 2015; World Bank, 2004). Stobart (2008) emphasises that schooling is about passing qualification rather than becoming critical and problem-solving learners. Furthermore, evidence by Wiliam (2011) and Webb and Jones (2009) show that although teachers attend professional development, the nature of this professional development influences the impact on children's achievements. These dilemmas can be solved through implementing formative assessment with the right characteristics and following the correct procedures.

Characteristics of formative assessment

Black and Wiliam (1998) assert that there are seven components to formative assessment:

the active involvement of pupils in their own learning; sharing learning goals with pupils; involving pupils in self-assessment; effective questioning; providing feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next step and how to take them; adjusting teaching to take account of the result of assessment; confidence that every student can improve (the 'untapped potential rather than fixed IQ' belief). (As cited in Clarke, 2003, p. 2)

Successful formative assessments will not work well unless all these components are implemented. Black and Wiliam (1998) argue that students' engagement in any type of learning is crucial for their development. Components such as sharing learning goals with the students is one of the pertinent aspects to fulfil and create a better understanding for students' learning processes, clarifying what they will do, and what is expected will smooth the learning processes. This aspect will guide and inform the student at an early stage and help the teacher without informing the student each day of what is expected in each session (Absolum, 2006; Wiliam, 2011). Moreover, it highlights that the component of involving students in self-assessment allows them to monitor their own work. The Assessment Reform Group

(2002) suggests that teachers should “equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skill of self-assessment”. This will allow the students to analyse and be constructive about their own work (as cited in Clarke, 2003, p. 131).

Any feedback plays a big part in students’ learning. Effective feedback is one that creates and motivates students’ learning rather than discourages students’ willingness to learn (Clarke, 2003). Similarly, effective feedback helps students to recognise that making mistakes is part of learning. Davies (2009) identifies that it is essential for learning, it illustrates what may or may not be working, and brings the student closer to what will work. Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins, and Reid (2009) state that good feedback is also tied to quality and clarity of learning intentions. This includes giving quality feedback at the right time about students’ work and asking good questions that guide their learning forward. Preschool teachers in Timor-Leste often mark the students’ work by giving a percentage or comment, however, oral feedback is critical in learning (Quinn, 2013).

2.7.2 Summative assessment

The term summative assessment is also known as assessment of learning (AoL). In some literature, summative assessment is known as assessment of learning; wherein students are given a test at the end of a unit so the teacher can measure students’ competency and understanding (Harlen, 2005). Like other types of assessments, a summative assessment is conducted to serve its own purposes. For instance, standardised tests, specific projects, end of year grades and report cards, or small tests and quizzes at the end of each quintile or term. In relation to evidence gathered for assessment, Ange (2009) highlights that “... Summative data from assessment can be used to benefit student learning if it used appropriately and it depends on the teacher having the skills to use the data effectively ...” (as cited in Ussher & Earl, 2010, p. 55). No matter what type of assessment a teacher uses, each assessment will play the same role; the purpose will be based on evaluation of students’ understanding and seeing their final product rather than the self-monitoring of students’ progress.

It seems that formative and summative assessments cannot stand alone. Both aspects have to work in parallel in order to achieve the optimal objective; however, the teachers’ skill and knowledge still play’s a fundamental role in leading and

guiding the assessment. The current preschool curriculum in Timor-Leste no longer uses exams as a mechanism to assess children's ability as was previously the case. The new preschool curriculum uses both summative and formative types of assessment which is known as formal and informal assessments (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). The preschool teacher utilises both formal and informal assessment to assess and observe the children's daily development in the classroom. Tools such as verification lists, anecdotal notes, and work examples are used to assess the children; while teachers observation of a child's daily development through activities such as asking questions to enhance children's learning is categorised as informal assessment (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014).

The summative assessment therefore has been utilised as a way of measuring success/knowledge acquisition within a traditional model of transmission education. However, CCC calls for different forms of assessment to also be used such as formative assessments.

2.8 CCC in Educational Transition

One of the fundamental roles in CCC is preparing a child to embark into a new setting in their educational journey (Arndt & McGuire-Schwartz, 2008). Knowing and understanding the knowledge around the characteristics and elements of a successful transition is important in life. People often experience changes in their daily lives, so the phenomenon of transition might be seen as a never-ending process for some people. The term transition is defined in the literature in various ways. One example by Fabian (2007 as cited in Perry, Dockett, & Petriwskyj, 2014, p. 75) states that transition is a "process of moving into a new setting", this includes transitions on a small or large scale. Another interesting point from Perry et al. (2014) is that transition is a multifaceted phenomenon which involves a range of interactions and processes over time, and is experienced in different ways by different people or children in different contexts. Understanding the components of transition may help teachers and students who are in process of transition, help to shape a person who is about to enter a new setting or embark on a journey of transition.

2.8.1 Successful transition

Studies have revealed several themes that can support the achievement of a successful transition. These themes include: belongingness, recognition and acknowledgment of culture, and respectful and reciprocal relationships (Peters, 2010).

2.8.2.1 Belongingness

The feeling of belongingness to a new setting can act as one of the core elements that contributes towards a successful transition in CCC. According to Stevenson (2015), belongingness is a multifaceted concept related to feelings of connectedness, attachments to other people, places, and modes of being. In addition, Woodhead and Brooker (2008 as cited in Peters, 2010, p. 15) define the term belongingness as ‘feeling secure’; ‘feeling suitable’; ‘feeling like a fish in the water’; ‘feeling recognised’; and ‘feeling able to participate’. Thus, having a sense of belongingness is transformative to a child or any person in his/her new setting, and will add to the engagement of the transitioning person to his/her social environment.

Aside from that, before leading to the stages of belongingness and being able to participate in a new arena, readiness and having a signal of early support are essential in embarking on a transition journey (Peters, 2003). In relation to CCC, if a child in preschool has enough early support, this could help a child to cope more easily before moving into a new setting such as from home to preschool, preschool to primary school, and strengthen the readiness for each child in approaching each new place.

2.8.2.2 Recognition and acknowledgment of culture

Feeling recognised with what a child brings in his/her “virtual backpack” (values, cultural, language resources that the child bring from home) can contribute to positive transitioning (Thomson, 2002). Hohepa and Paki (2017), writing from a New Zealand context, provide a clear example in which they emphasise the fundamental principles of Māori indigenous values, cultural identity, and language as core factors determining successful navigation to the next phase in transition. When there is acknowledgment of what an individual carries with him/her, this may add to their belongingness, so they are not considered an outsider.

Peters and Paki (2015, p. 95) explain that cultural context plays a significant part in the relationship between students and teachers. In addition, they declare that people need to “understand their own unique and common experiences so that they are better prepared to engage in an exploration of commonality and uniqueness of another”. Recognition and acknowledgement of culture is integrated with change or transition, and is influenced by people’s beliefs and perspectives. Hohepa and Paki (2017) emphasise that language, culture, values and identity within the individual are bound and tied to one another.

2.8.2.3 Having respectful and reciprocal relationship

The notions of gaining respect and having reciprocal relationships are part of people’s lives, not only in Timor-Leste but also in other countries. There are various types of relationships that contribute to an individual’s transition process. In relation to the ecological system developed by Bronfenbrenner (1986), it is claimed that for individuals to reach their full potential, they require trusting bonds and relationships with people close to them. This covers internal and external factors, as well as some levels of environmental features (micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems). A healthy ecological relationship among family, schools, peers, society, culture and the political context should be founded on building complex interactions and forming more relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; New & Cochran, 2007). Therefore, it is important that relationships are recognised as involving more than the need to build simple social contact. This also involves active processes of interaction which develop shared understandings among individuals such as teachers and children, likewise family and teachers. With this, a positive and successful transition can be achieved that fosters relationships between the settings and the people involved. These characteristics are required to create a positive environment for CCC to exist.

2.9 Postcolonialism

Timor-Leste’s historical context and background (see chapter one) highlights that it is a post colonial country, and its Portuguese colonisation, Indonesian occupation, and UN transitional period has had a significant influence on the people, education, culture and languages (Nicolai, 2004; Taylor-Leech, 2008, 2009). The transition from colonialism to postcolonialism has been experienced differently by different groups at various times in history. Andreotti (2011) describes it as an interface

between unequal systems of power and knowledge, and between economic and cultural processes with an emphasis on how culture frames relationships and injustices. Historically, colonisation has provided powerful and influential views of how developing countries have been conveyed from a western perspective.

In Timor-Leste, education was introduced through the Catholic Church during the Portuguese era, and at that time, was only available for elite Timorese people (Nicolai, 2004). The general populous were treated as slaves, and the administration system was hierarchical, with people in power possessing both authority and resources (Molnar, 2010). According to Nicolai (2004), some influences of the colonial administration have remained, resulting in the colonial epistemologies having been internalised and adopted by the people in education and within Timorese culture (Ogden, 2017; Shah, 2012). From this, it seems that the legacies that were attached to colonial influences within the culture are still evident and cannot be overlooked.

Said (1994) focuses on the differences and oppositions of the coloniser and colonised. Whereas Kapoor (2003) points out that Bhabha approaches postcolonial theory from a contrasting perspective, Bhabha uses psychoanalysis and post structuralism to highlight the similarities between the beliefs and values of colonisers and those who have been colonised. The concept of ambivalence is central, whereby the coloniser wants the colonised to develop similar values and behaviours (mimicry), but not become exactly the same as this threatens their supremacy". "Bhabha refers to 'mimicry' as a strategy of both colonial subjection and subterfuge. (Kapoor, 2003, p. 565). Mimicry, therefore, has a subversive side, as it may camouflage menace or mockery on the part of the colonised and serve to undermine colonial authority. He suggests cultures interact in complex ways where the coloniser and colonised transform each other and create hybrid spaces and cultures within the colonial space.

In Timor-Leste, the legacy of colonisation remains evident in education. While indigenous people are involved in formal education, the legacy of Portuguese and Indonesia colonisation remains evident in the attitudes of teachers, and parents' beliefs about the role of teachers in the classroom. Molnar (2010, p. 24) states that "indigenous conceptions of hierarchy, power and authority, along with the special

position enjoyed by such indigenous political elites, ensured that they became the administrators and thus the people in power in the historical development of Timor-Leste.” However, on independence, the indigenous political elites adopted the language and culture of the colonial education systems and in the postcolonial era have continued to reinforce and replicate colonial positioning in term of educational expectations and outcomes. These expectations and outcomes are also reinforced by parents and teachers in the post colonial era.

2.10 The gap in the literature

Previous studies have examined closely what happens in the primary school classroom in Timor-Leste, the teaching practices in the classroom (Quinn, 2013), and the connections between language of instruction and policy (Shah, 2012). Comparative studies of the vision of the country, particularly in primary education and curriculum reform and the creation of policy have also been made (Ogden, 2017). However, there has not any research being done at all in CCC. Due to this significant gap in the context of Timor-Leste, research has not yet investigated the teachers’ perspective on implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste. The primary objective of this research is to examine teachers’ perspectives and their ways of implementing CCC within the preschool curriculum reform in Timor-Leste.

2.11 The research questions

To help the researcher learn more about the teachers’ perspective and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are teachers’ understanding of the child-centred curriculum within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
2. In what ways do teachers implement child-centred teaching practices?
3. What are parents’ understanding of child-centred learning within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
4. In what ways might child-centred teaching be enhanced?

2.12 Chapter summary

This chapter has described the literature of CCC, including the definition and parameters of CCC. Social constructivism perspectives are used as fundamental

theories, particularly those of Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky. In addition, the way in which CCC is implemented is also highlighted. Several elements related to CCC and teachers, such as professional development, assessment, and educational transition are also included in this chapter.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The intent of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology used in this study. It starts by presenting the research design, then a philosophical framework is discussed, referring to the paradigm that underpins this research. The methods used for data collection are discussed, as is the data analysis process. This chapter then considers how participants were selected, any ethical issues present, and the researcher's position. Finally, the limitations of the research methodology and a summary of the chapter is provided.

3.2 Research Design of this study

A research design can be seen as a plan for the whole research project and this plan should be written to describe what the researcher is going to do (Myers, 2013). According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 33), a research design offers “the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions.” In a similar way, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) emphasize that a research design is governed by the notion of “fitness for purpose” (p. 537). They continue to highlight the purpose of research in determining its subsequent methodology and designation. Thus, whatever research design a researcher employs must be driven by the research problem and its sub-problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). As such, the research design acts as a fundamental tool about how the research is set up, including the philosophical world views it is based on, which research strategies frame the research, and the types of methods of data collection utilised. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) claim that the objective of a research design is to provide the most valid and accurate answers possible for the research questions. Figure 3.1 illustrates the research design for this study, a framework that presents the logical connection and interrelationship of the three main components that summaries this interpretive research design.

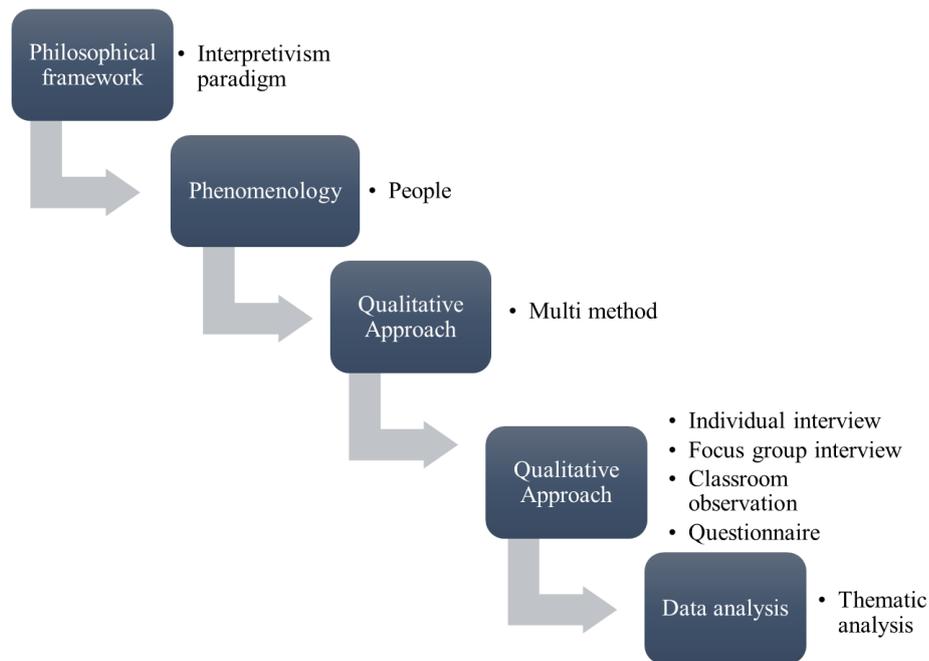


Figure 3.1: A framework for the research design

3.3 The research questions

The aim of this study was to investigate and explore teachers' perspectives and the implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste to provide and improve quality learning for children. Furthermore, this study also explored the overall ideas, knowledge, and perceptions currently held by teachers, parents, principals and students regarding the implementation of the child-centred curriculum within preschool education in Timor-Leste.

The overarching question for this research was:

- What are teachers' understanding of child-centred learning within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?

This question was supported by the following sub questions:

- In what ways do teachers implement child-centred teaching practices?
- What are parents' understanding of child-centred learning within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
- In what ways might child-centred teaching be enhanced?

3.4 Research Paradigm - Interpretive

To fully answer the research questions, the research paradigm that was used in this research was an interpretivist paradigm, which falls under the banner of qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011; Mutch, 2005). As cited in Mutch (2005, p. 65), Newman defined an interpretivist approach as “the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action, the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings, and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds.” Similarly, Cohen et al. (2011) assert that interpretive research begins with individuals and sets out to understand their interpretation of the world around them. Blumer (1969) says that the interpretivist paradigm is compatible with a phenomenological perspective, and basic to the approach is the assumption that human experiences are mediated by interpretation (as cited in Luttrell, 2010, p. 33)

According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 18), phenomenology is a “theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value.” The role of phenomenological studies is to examine human experiences through the descriptions that are provided by the phenomenon involved (Creswell, 2013). There are two types of phenomenological movements: transcendental “*Husserl*”, and existential “*Schutz*” phenomenology (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 18). For this study, it was determined that existential phenomenology would be the most suitable, a phenomenology which attempts to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations (Luttrell, 2010). Therefore, the phenomenology approach to investigating teachers’ comprehension of child-centred teaching and learning in relation to the new preschool curriculum is used for this study.

Using the interpretive paradigm, the researcher would focus only on the complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges, and to try to understand the phenomena using the meaning that people assign to the phenomena rather than using predefined dependent and independent variables (Cohen et al., 2011; Myers, 2013). As the proposed research project involves teachers, principals, students, and parents’ voices and opinions in regard to a child-centred curriculum within the new preschool curriculum, the only way to understand their complex social and cultural

phenomena is to examine the issues from the inside, rather than looking from the outside as the positivist paradigm would allow (Creswell, 2013).

3.5 Multi-method qualitative approach

A multi-method approach to data collection was utilised for this study (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Wahyuni (2012, p. 73) describes multi-methods in qualitative research as “using more than one data collection techniques and applying multiple methods to analyse data using non-numerical (qualitative) procedures to answer the research question”. Some examples outlined by Creswell (2013) are interviews, observations, and documents from multiple sources. As such, McMillan and Schumacher (1993) point out that multiple strategies allow a more collaborative form of data collection. Multi-method approaches also enable the researcher to triangulate the data gathered. Triangulation as per Cohen et al. (2011); Maxwell (2013) is the study of some aspect of human behaviour through using two or a variety of methods in collecting data. A triangulation strategy purports to minimise the associated risk with systematic biases in using only one particular method. In addition, triangulation also permits a better assessment of the generality of the explanations as compared to development from only one method (Maxwell, 2013). A more detailed explanation regarding triangulation as validity-testing will be presented further on (Section. 3.8.1).

The multi-methods used in this study were: interviews, focus groups, observations and questionnaires. Elaboration of each method will be presented in the following sections.

3.6 The Sample

The participants in this research were Timorese preschool principals, teachers, and groups of students and parents from four preschools. Since the participants have local experience and have witnessed the real situation in the country, it was believed that credible information could be gathered. The reason for selection of a combination of principals and teachers was because they have first-hand experience of preschools and they are the ones who encounter and confront the child-centred curriculum in their daily professional lives. The target preschools were randomly selected to include a representative range according to ownership of preschools (government preschools and catholic preschools), geographical factors (rural and

urban), easy travel distance to the capital city Dili, and size (large preschools and small preschools).

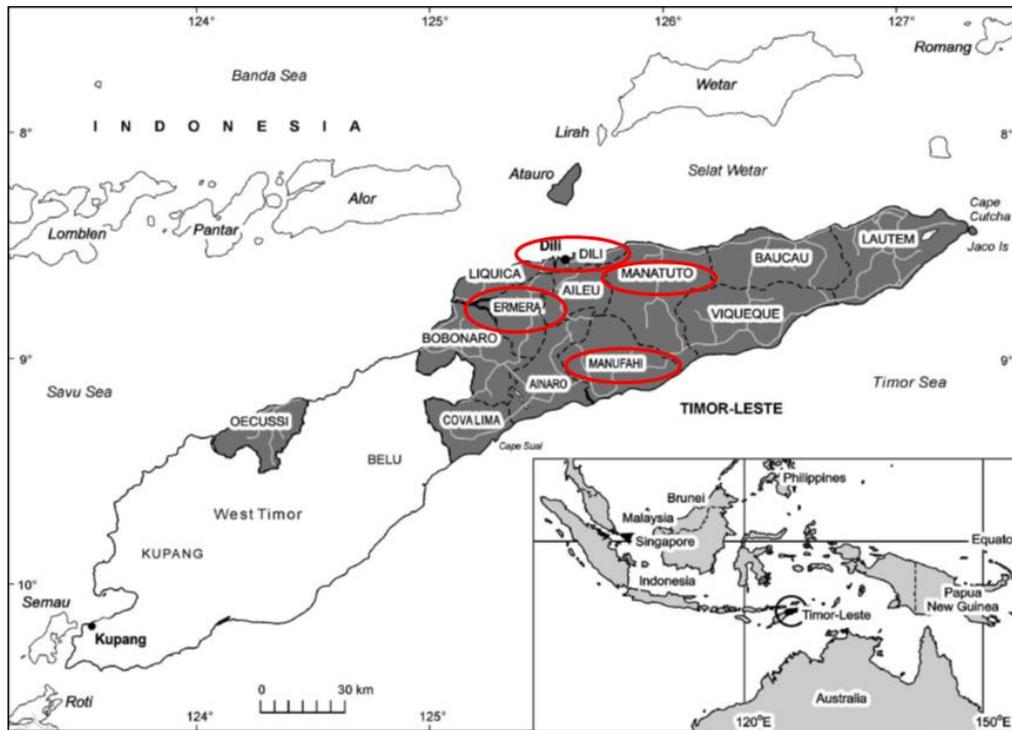


Figure 3.2: The location of the four preschool where the data was collected.

This research was conducted in four preschools, with the researcher spending a maximum of one week in each preschool. The participants were: four principals (one from each preschool): six teachers (one or two from each preschool); a maximum of twenty parents (a group of five from each preschool); and a maximum of 16 students (a group of four from each preschool).

3.6.1 Demographic Information/ Background of the Teachers

A questionnaire was used to gather background information on the teachers. The data obtained from teachers responding to the questionnaire (Appendix 16) are presented in Table 3.1. All the teachers who participated in the study were female and the majority were high school graduates, but only one was a trained preschool teacher. In addition, out of the six teachers, only one of the teachers claimed that she understood 100 percent of the content of the new curriculum. The remaining participants said they only understood approximately 75 percent of the content. All six teachers said they use Tetum language in the classroom. Two said they mixed Tetum with their mother tongue, and only one said she mixed Tetum with Portuguese. However, during the classroom observations in all four schools, all the

teachers reverted to the Portuguese language either through songs, counting numbers and/or pointing out some pictures and written formats for the children to copy on to paper. Among the group of six teachers, two teachers held roles of both principal and teacher. Table 3.1 summarises the information about the position, qualifications and experience of the participating teachers and their reported use of language in the classroom and understanding of the preschool curriculum, alongside the type of preschool they were part of.

Table 3.1: Background information about teachers, teaching practice and type of preschool

Name	Years of teaching	Current position	Qualification	Language used in the classroom	Understanding curriculum content %	Type of preschool and Location
Ela	10 years- volunteer for 6 years	Contract	High school	Mother tongue/ dialect and Tetum	75	Catholic-Sub Urban/ District
Amada	11- years volunteer for 8 years	Contract	High school	Tetum	75	Catholic-Sub Urban/ District
Shinta	9 years	Contract	High school	Tetum	75	Public-Sub Urban/ District
Suzi	4 years	Contract	High School	Tetum	75	Public-Rural area
Deoneia	11 years	Contract	High School	Portuguese and Tetum	75	Private- City
Ameta	17 years	Permanent	Bachelor and trainer	Mother tongue/ dialect and Tetum	100	Private-City

3.6.2 Accessing participants

To assist the researcher, advance visits to the randomly selected preschools were conducted before hand. A brief explanation and review of the purpose of the study was given to encourage involvement and cooperation from the various participants. Then, permission to approach the preschools in Timor-Leste was sought from the Department of Education Division Head, whose office is located in Rua de Vila Verde, Dili, Timor-Leste. A letter seeking permission and outlining the purpose of the study, the target participants, and the procedures for data gathering (Appendix 1) was personally handed to the Division Head via the secretary in the first instance.

In Timor-Leste, as the internet is not reliable using hard copy documents is the best approach. Within two to three days the researcher followed up to find out the status of the request. After permission was granted, the researcher went to the Division Office to collect the signed letter giving permission and an endorsement note was

attached to it. After receiving approval from the Division Head, the researcher then approached the preschools that were randomly selected to formally explain the purpose of the research and invite their participation.

3.6.3 Informed consent

In order to be eligible to conduct any research, the prime step required is to get the permission of approval in the research setting. As Cohen et al., (2011) and Mutch, (2013) suggest, official permission to undertake the study must be done in the initial stages, whether by government institution or other organizations. Moreover, at the stage of getting permission, the researcher needs to provide a clear explanation of the objectives of the research and the benefits. Informed consent is one of the most important principles in qualitative research. According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 77) the principle of informed consent “arises from the subject’s right to freedom and self-determination”.

Cohen et al. (2011) further explain that having freedom refers to living in a democracy, so a justification needs to be addressed if restrictions and limitations are placed on the subject’s rights. Self-determination refers to subjects having the right to weigh up the advantages and drawbacks of being part of a particular research. This means that the participant engaged in the study should be protected from any kind of harm. Creswell (2009) also suggests that consent forms should be given to the participants to sign as one way of ensuring that they will be protected from harm. In addition, Creswell (2009) also emphasises that some elements of the consent form should point out that participants have the right to withdraw if they do not want to continue.

In order to obtain consent from participants, the researcher personally went to the principals, teachers, and parents and handed them an introductory letter (Appendices 2, 3 & 4) and consent form (Appendices 5, 6, &7). Moreover, prior to giving the informed consent form, the researcher orally explained to the participants the purpose of the study and their rights. Participants were then invited to ask questions about anything that was not clear to them. In correspondence concerning the students’ agreements, an explanation of what the researcher was doing was posted on a notice in front of the classroom to inform parents and caregivers, as well as on a printed form (Appendix 7, 8 and 9).

In the introduction letter, participants were informed that they have a right to participate and that they also have a right to withdraw from participating in the study. Participants could withdraw their participation and data at any time during the study until 1st August 2017 when the analysis began. The researcher gave her e-mail address and contact number in case participants needed to inform her that they wished to withdraw from the study. In this way, before the data was collected both the participants and the researcher came to an agreement that the rights and welfare of the participants would be protected, and no harm would come to them, nor would they be coerced into taking part.

3.7 Methods of data collection

3.7.1 Interview Method

The interview is known as an instrument for collecting data which pervades and permeates the information through oral questioning (Cohen et al., 2011; Sarantakos, 2005) that involves a subject (the informant or interviewee) (Myers, 2013). Wellington, 2000, states that “interviewing people of any age can be one of the most enjoyable and interesting activities in a research study” (as cited in Mutch, 2013, p. 119). Similarly, Kvale (1996) claims that through conversations, knowledge can be generated between humans, and interviews allow a shift of attention from treating humans as simply manipulatable subjects (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). Myers (2013) acknowledges that a good interview can support and help people to focus on the subject’s world. The role of the interviewer is to listen, prompt, encourage and direct (Myers, 2013).

There are three types of interview method - structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Mutch, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005). To collect the qualitative data required for this study, semi-structured interviews were the ideal instrument to use for the research questions (Creswell, 2013). Sarantakos (2005) explains that semi-structured interviews are placed between structured and unstructured types. In other words they contain elements of the two types of interview. A brief definition of semi-structured interviews by Myers (2013, p. 121) is “ the use of some pre-formulated questions, but no strict adherence to them. New questions might emerge during the conversation”. As a result, some sections may be closer in format to a structured interview, while others may be closer to unstructured.

This means that a semi-structured interview allows and gives participants the space to express meaning in his/her own words and allows them to give their own direction to a set of questions that is undertaken in an open-ended manner (Mutch, 2005, 2013). Thus, semi-structured interviews were systematically used as one of the primary tools employed in gathering information to better understand teachers' perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.

A total of four preschool principals and six teachers participated in individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendices 2, 3, 5, 6, 12 and 13). The interviews lasted a total time of up to 70 minutes with up to 40 minutes for the interview and 30 minutes for participants to check the interview transcript (See Appendix 17). What follows is a description of the focus group interview methods that were used with the groups of parents and children in each preschool.

3.7.2 Focus group method

A focus group interview can be described as a loosely constructed discussion using an interview technique that brings together a group of participants in a comfortable environment to respond to questions (Mutch, 2005; Sarantakos, 2005). As an adjunct to focus groups, the purpose is to elicit a collective view from a group of people who are known to have had certain experiences regarding the topic of interest and which is then guided by the researcher and addressed as a group (Myers, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005). Therefore, focus group interviews create and emerge in a social situation/environment. The quality and richness of the data can be stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each group member (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993); similarly, it also allows the group members to engage in thoughtful conversation (Myers, 2013).

However, skill is required in conducting focus group interviews and in recording and transcribing the data after it is collected (Mutch, 2013). As cited in Cohen et al. (2011), Morgan suggests that deciding the size of the group is also pertinent, as a large group size can cause difficulties which the researcher must manage. Meanwhile, having a smaller size of group will not meet the proportionate effect for strong/valid data. Hence, the appropriate number for these groups was suggested to range from 4 to 12 members for each focus group. A researcher needs to be clear when directing the questions, to make sure that there is an interaction occurring

between the group members. This requires the interviewer to act as both a close observer and facilitator to ensure equitable participation (Myers, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005).

There are two forms of focus group methods that are addressed by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, as cited in Sarantakos, 2005), unstructured or semi-structured and the structured form. Semi-structured interviews were utilised in this study.

The focus groups were conducted in the four preschools noted in Table 3.2. A maximum of six students and 5 parents took part in the focus group interviews (see Appendix 14 Parents focus group questions; and Appendix 15 Students focus group questions). The allocated time for the students' and parents' focus group interviews was up to 30 minutes in total. Before the focus groups were conducted, a notice informing and inviting parents was placed on the school board, in addition to verbal conversations between the researcher, teachers and participants (see appendix 6, 7,9,10 and 11).

Table 3.2: Number of parents and students in each preschool.

Parents	Children	Type of Preschool
5	6	Catholic- suburban
4	5	Public- rural
4	5	Private- urban
4	5	Public- suburban

3.7.3 Observation method

Another method used in this study was observation. Observation is a common tool used for data collection in primary research. Podmore (2006, p. 14) states that observation can be defined as “the systematic watching and noting of people or phenomena”. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2011) points out that observation is a method that provides the researcher with the chance of collecting ‘live’ data in a situation where something happens naturally. On a separate note, Sharp (2012) illustrates

that in an educational context, observation relies on capturing the dynamics and complexities of particular events and/or activities. In addition to this, he points out that observation requires being able to both hear and see simultaneously. Therefore, observation could be seen as a process or an activity that occurs while the observer perceives, listens and notes specific behaviours or changes. Morrison, 1993, introduces four settings through which the researcher conducts their data collection. These are: “physical setting”, which is related to the environment and its organization; “human setting”, which links to the organization of people whether they be groups or individuals; “interactional setting”, that is the situation where the interaction takes place, formal or informal, planned or not planned and verbal or non-verbal; and finally, the “program setting” that relates to resources and their pedagogic styles and curricula and their elements (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 457).

3.7.3.1 Semi-structured observation

Semi-structured observations could be considered as the best approach for individual research projects under circumstances which respond to the purposes of the research (Sharp, 2012). According to Sharp (2012), the semi-structured type of observation is sufficiently adaptable to accommodate unexpected happenings while allowing for the observer to have an agenda for what is to be observed firmly in mind. Given the nature of the data generated by observation, Mutch (2013) states that observation can be quantitative or qualitative. It allows the researchers to focus on specific behaviours or wide descriptors, and provides a choice for the observer to choose either short or continuous activities in a certain setting. However, those alternatives will be dependent on the objective or aim of the researcher, and they will rely on the specific purpose of what the observer wants to observe from the research question (Menter, 2011).

Qualitative observation is related to words or descriptions. Menter (2011) asserts that a qualitative approach is well suited for the researcher who seeks to explore how, why and what, and understand human behaviour, values and beliefs when perceiving their situation. In contemporary society, observation methods can be used in varied ways. Observation may be used as a form of acquiring background knowledge pertaining to a problem for developing their hypothesis, or it could be used to gather data for testing the hypothesis and developing conclusions only after

observing the results of the data collection (Hopkins, 1980, p. 49). Adding to this, Scott and Usher (2011) assess that observation techniques may be used on their own or as a complement to other strategies. This method is likely to be used in educational research.

3.7.3.2 Participant/Non-Participant Observation

The observation process can be further categorized into two parts: participant observation and non-participant observation (Sharp, 2012). Participant observation can be defined as the observer taking part with what he/she is observing, whereas in non-participant observation the observer is detached from what they are observing. In this study, the researcher positioned themselves as a non-participant observer. Gold, 1958, illustrates four roles in observation. These are known as the “complete participant”, where the observer works together with the participants but conceals his/her the role as observer. “Participant as observer” means that the observer makes known their role and takes part in the group. The “observer as participant” is not a member of the group but he/she might take part in some of the activities, and the “complete observer” means that the observer fully takes on the role of the observer and is detached from the group (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p.457). This means that before conducting an observation, the observer should know and understand their role in the process.

As can be seen above, there are a variety of ways to use the observation method. Due to the advantage of eliciting data that may be more ‘truthful’ than interviews, observation can have significant advantages in research topics where participants may be less than forthcoming due to societal bias, social/performance anxiety, and/or unconscious behaviours. Quinn (2013) and O'Sullivan (2005, 2006) showed that this observation method is useful when conducting research in developing countries as it brings a deeper sense of understanding of the study when observing the situation directly. Observation was therefore one of the methods used in this study to investigate teachers’ perspectives and implementation of CCC curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.

Classroom observation was conducted in four preschools, using video recording and note taking of particular events. Advance notice about video recording was placed in front of the school (Appendix 8) to seek permission from parents or caregivers of the children. According to Cohen et al. (2011), the advantage of video

recording is that it captures non-verbal data that other methods may not be able to capture. A specific situation such as observing children's likes or dislikes in the classroom, and/or the engagement of children in learning may be insufficiently determined to hypothesis or define in an audio recording. Hence, live data in video recording may provide richer detail that the observer may otherwise miss during data collection. The time allocated for classroom video recording was up to 40 minutes for certain episodes – literacy, numeracy and general development of the lesson in a week. It should be noted that while the researcher was making the videos the participants were asked to carry on with their usual timetable and work.

During the classroom observation, with permission from parents, teachers and children, the researcher took photographs of wall displays, assessment documentation, and activities during the programmes.

3.7.4 Questionnaire

The questionnaire method is categorised as one of the best techniques to obtain information from subjects that other methods may not be able to reach, such as for example personal information. A questionnaire normally refers to a subject responding to something written, either in statements or question form (Hopkins, 1980; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). McMillan and Schumacher (1993) cite that justification and defining objectives is crucial in questionnaires before conducting the research. In addition, Babbie (1989, as cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 1993) proposes seven guidelines to writing effective questions “Make items clear, avoid double-barrelled questions, respondents must be competent to answer, questions should be relevant, simple items are best, avoid negative items, and avoid biased items or terms” (p. 240-241).

Mutch (2013) highlights the importance of understanding what type of question design should be used - whether closed questions or open questions will derive a clear objective in collecting data or/and in data processing. This is reinforced by McMillan and Schumacher (1993) who propose that the format of the questions should be determined based on the information desired and the objective itself. A closed-ended question is a form of question which restricts the respondents to choose from pre-determined categories or a provided list. An open-ended question is a form of question that permits the respondents to state or create an answer in

their own way (Hopkins, 1980; Mutch, 2013). Thus, each type of form of question serves its own purpose and has its own advantages and drawbacks.

In this study, a semi-structured questionnaire was utilised to collect data from the six participating preschool teachers. The questions consisted of a combination of closed and open-ended questions (Appendix 16). The time allocated for each respondent was 10 minutes. Before being handed the questionnaire, an oral explanation and an invitation letter informed the teachers of the research and addressed their willingness to participate and answer the questionnaire. In addition, a trial questionnaire was done beforehand with the researcher's colleague who speaks the same language. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect demographic data about preschool teachers in Timor-Leste.

3.8 Organising Data and Analysing Data

After collecting data in the qualitative approach, the next step is organising and analysing the data. Mutch (2013) explains that having a well organised filing system can help the researcher in the data analysis stage. In addition, a device like a computer or laptop can be one means of organising data. Another possible method of analysis is doing it manually through labels and cut and paste using paper (Hopkins, 1980; Mutch, 2013). McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 385) explain that data analysis starts with construction of "the fact" as found in the researcher's recorded data. Organising, accounting for and explaining the data is part of the procedure in data analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). Cohen et al. (2011) further emphasises that analysing data is a way of making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definition of the situation after the data is collected. For example, Cohen et al. (2011); Creswell (2013) point out that organising data can be done through transcribing the audio recorder, noting patterns, coding, then reducing the data into themes/categories and subthemes. However, fundamental to any and all mediums is that it should retain its "fitness for purpose" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537).

In this study, all the individual interview data from preschool teachers, preschool principals, and focus group interviews from parents and students were transcribed, and the Nvivo pro software programme developed by QSR was used to help the researcher organise and sort the data (Richards, 1999). The video recordings of the classrooms were viewed, and notes were taken of any particular events that related

to the study which emerged from the teaching process. The questionnaire data was tabulated into table format according to each of the questions asked.

In conjunction with the aforementioned research framework, the data was analysed using themes. Mutch (2013) illustrates several steps in thematic analysis: perceiving, comparing, contrasting, aggregating, ordering, establishing linkages and relationships, and speculation. Cohen et al. (2011) point out that it is important, with qualitative data, that the interpretation of the information represents the social interaction accurately. Mutch (2013) argues that thematic analysis is unlike quantitative strategies because quantitative analysis uses predetermined categories, whereas qualitative strategies take their categories from the data after it has been collected. Thematic analysis refers to important content that has emerged into themes from the data (Mutch, 2013). For this study, patterns or themes were identified from the data by the researcher.

3.8.1 Reliability, validity and trustworthiness

Reliability, as defined by McMillan and Schumacher (1993) in qualitative research, refers to a consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis, and interpretation of participant meanings from the data. To ensure quality in this study, the principles of reliability was incorporated into the main objective for investigating and exploring teachers' perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste. All participants in the four preschools were asked the same questions. However, within the different schools (principals, teachers, parents, and students) the questions were tailored to be relevant and fit each different group. Reliability was further strengthened through the process of the semi-structured interviews, where follow up questions were asked reciprocally to see if there was any lack of clarity from the participants or researcher. Moreover, reliability was further achieved by participants checking and amending transcripts for accuracy to establish whether the transcript data presented was in accordance with what they meant to say.

In regard to validity, a number of measures were undertaken. First, prior to the research instruments design, approval was sought from feedback given by the research supervisors, and before commencing the study ethical clearance was sought from the University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee. Secondly, questions were checked by peers and feedback given before the researcher went to

collect the data. The purpose of allowing the peers to check all the questions was to gauge whether the questions were clear and easy to understand for the participants. In addition, another validity measure was that the data translations from Tetum into English were checked by a Timorese translator to ensure that the original meaning was maintained. Finally, cross-referencing data from classroom observation, focus group interviews, individual interviews, and questionnaires provided a further measure of the accuracy and validity of the responses. According to Mutch (2013), triangulation is a common technique that provides other perspectives on the case or setting which emerge from different sources, while Myers (2013, p. 9) suggests triangulation allows the researcher to achieve a “fuller” panorama of what is happening.

3.9 Ethical issues

Ethical issues in qualitative research are need to be considered as an integral aspect of the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) points out that the methods, the researcher’s goals, the selection of research questions, validity issues and the conceptual framework should all abide by ethical principles and practices in every aspect of design. The American Psychological Association (2002) established five general principles, namely “beneficence and non-maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice and respect for people’s right and dignity” (as cited in Cohen et al., (2011, p.99). These five principles clearly highlight that in any circumstances, a researcher who conducts any study that involves human beings is obliged to follow ethical procedures. Cohen et al. (2011) assert that one of the major ethical dilemmas that a researcher needs to face is to strike a balance between their obligatory roles as a professional scientist, and to pursue the truth and the welfare of their potential threatened subjects. Creswell (2013) insists that the researcher must be honest and indicate that taking part in a study should be voluntary. Moreover, for sensitive populations like children, special provision and permission is required from the parent or caregiver (Creswell, 2013; Mutch, 2013). Wilson and Powel, 2002, highlight that “to be able to interview and [video] a child, one must first have a basic understanding of how a child thinks and communicates (as cited in Mutch, 2013, p. 147). A child’s thinking is dependent on a number of factors including memory, conceptual development and language

information.” Therefore, some ethical procedures which are explained in the following subsection underpin the way this research was undertaken.

3.9.1 Anonymity/Confidentiality

As highlighted by The University of Waikato (2009) Research Ethics Committee requirements, it is necessary for the researcher to ensure all provisions have been made to safeguard a participant’s identity. They also point out that a researcher must declare any potential conflicts of interest that could occur when the researcher is reasonably likely to obtain personal advantage as a result of or in connection with the research.

The anonymity of the participants (principals, teachers, parents and students) and their preschools are protected in this study by ensuring that any published information does not reveal their identity (Cohen et al., 2011). Pseudonyms have been used in transcribing the interview and video data, and in writing the results data and information has been securely stored. However, while every effort has been made to ensure confidentiality, this cannot be guaranteed because the data is being reported.

3.9.2 Arrangements for participants to receive information and use of the information

Principal and teacher participants were able to review the interview transcripts within a week of the interviews. Upon review they had the opportunity to edit statements, delete information, and add details to ensure that the interviews were an accurate representation of their intended meaning. Notwithstanding, only half of the participants made some changes while the others just agreed without seeming to recheck the transcript. With regard to participants in the Parent Focus Group and the Student Focus Group, the participants were not able to review and amend the transcripts because they contained the contributions of other members of the group. However, a one-page result of the study will be sent to participants after the completion of the thesis.

The participants in this study were informed of and were aware of the use of the information. The fundamental information from this research will be submitted as a requirement for the completion of the researcher’s degree, Master of Education from the University of Waikato. When the thesis is completed, an electronic copy will be lodged in the University of Waikato Research Commons. Findings may be

used in scholarly publications and conferences as indicated in the participant information letter. (Appendix 2, 3, or 4).

3.9.3 Conflicts of Interest

The researcher has not had any connection with the participants before. However, the researcher has had a professional relationship in the previous year with the Department of Education in the curriculum reform project. However, Department staff are only indirectly involved through granting permission. Thus, there was no conflict of interest.

3.10 Researcher position

As a researcher conducting the study in my own country, speaking the same language and growing up in the culture, the situation in the country is familiar to me. I therefore consider myself to be an ‘insider ‘. Through the four different schools I visited, using Tetum as the language of communication with participants appeared to be successful. Children were jumping up and down trying to see the video and pictures that were taken, perhaps also due to the familiarity of being with an insider. An example is that the during the student focus groups discussions, the participants talked without hesitation. Likewise, some teachers, some groups of parents, and the principals seemed comfortable to share their experiences, although sometimes attitudes and feelings of insecurity in certain situations in the teachers’ teaching practice came through. Regarding classroom observation, I witnessed first-hand information from the teachers and students during the school hours.

3.11 Limitation

This study encountered challenges. Among the four preschools, in two parents focus groups the participants hardly engaged in the discussion and as a result there were limited answers to the questions asked. In the other two groups, the total number of participants was fewer than expected due to a misunderstanding between the teacher, researcher and parents. In addition, the researcher noted that some teachers felt insecure during the one week when the researcher was in the classroom observing and video recording their teaching practice. Most of the individual interviews, either with principals or teachers went well, but when follow up questions for clarification were asked, they were sometimes rejected, or the same answer was repeated. It is possible that the participants did not understand the

questions, or the questions might not have been clear enough for the participant to answer. On the other hand, in reviewing transcripts after the data was collected, half of the participants agreed upon what was said in the paper without amending the transcript, while half of the participants did amend the transcripts by making some changes and returned these to the researcher.

3.12 Chapter summary

The main goals of this chapter were to present and focus on the processes and procedures in collecting data. An interpretivist paradigm and phenomenology have been used for this research under the banner of a qualitative approach. Multi-methods - individual interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and questionnaires - were used as instruments to collect data.

The data of the study was organised through thematic analysis with the support of the Nvivo software that was used to help sort and organise the data. In regard to the participants, this study included a total of four principals and six teachers from four preschools in Timor-Leste. Participants in each preschool also included a maximum of five parents and a maximum of six students. Ethical concerns in regard to participants' rights were highly valued, and as such, informed consent for each participant was sought and gained. However, challenges emerged during this study while in the field.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings from the data that emerged in the study, which were both interesting, and at times surprising. The organisational framework for this chapter will now be addressed in relation to the research questions for this study. Following this will be a description of the themes, which emerged from analysis of the data. This data was derived from individual and focus group interviews, daily classroom observations, anecdotal evidence, documentary forms, including video recordings, photographs of wall displays, assessment documentation and activities during the learning process.

This chapter is divided into eight sections. The first describes the various respondents' viewpoints of the curriculum including their understanding of child-centred learning. The second section reports the ways in which child-centred (CC) is implemented by teachers and also includes information about what teachers enjoy the most in the classroom. The third section addresses teachers' views concerning their achievements in their teaching practices, followed by the fourth section where barriers and challenges are identified. The findings concerning assessment and cultural factors are then reviewed in section five and section six. Finally, the last two sections present any other issues that emerged from the research in the field and a summary of the chapter is included in section eight.

4.2 Viewpoints/perspectives on child-centred learning within the new preschool curriculum

4.2.1 General views about the new curriculum

The first set of questions aimed to find out the principals' perspectives of the new preschool curriculum. Notwithstanding the fact that the teachers and groups of parents were not asked the same questions as the principals, some of the answers given by both parents and teachers were similar in nature. Findings from all groups indicated positive perspectives about the curriculum revision conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2014.

Across the four preschools visited, a common theme amongst all the principals was that the new curriculum offered **“guidance and help”**. For example, all four

principals claimed that the curriculum has been a massive help to the teachers. It acts as guidance as well as assists the teachers on a daily basis. Examples include

“I think the new curriculum in preschool helps teachers through the teaching and learning process.” (Principal Ela)

“The current curriculum which exists acts as guide for us teachers.” (Principal Jinha)

Principal Ameta answered that the new curriculum is useful for both teachers as well as for children. She focused on the content and activities in the session plan:

“In my opinion, the current curriculum is really helpful, for the teachers and children. Why do I say so? Because all the activities focus on children, and the teachers only supervise/guide. This means that the children can demonstrate their ability and talent, they can express and apply it through their [learning] process.” (Principal Ameta)

Principal Abui expressed a similar view about the session plans and the curriculum, stressing that what teachers need to do is read the session plans in order to guide their practice.

“In my opinion, this new curriculum helps teachers a lot, particularly focusing on the activities which are clearly written in the session plans. [Therefore], teachers need to read a lot in order to implement the session plan based on and /or in the curriculum.” (Principal Abui)

Another theme that was dominant among parents and teachers was in the category of “**improvement or progression** in teaching approach from teacher directed to child-centred learning”. An example of some comments from parent group 4:

“...we see there are changes in education from preschool to higher levels of education. We can see that a few years back, the curriculum that teachers used was not good enough. So we appreciate the new curriculum because it contributes to some changes for our children.” (Parents group 4)

Teacher Deoneia, also found that children have an interest in this method of teaching.

“Children really like it, because in the previous way of teaching, teachers just teach, and they are the central focus, not the children. So, this [curriculum] is good for the children.” (Teacher Deoneia)

In line with this, teacher Shinta added that the new curriculum also helps give a clearer direction in her daily teaching.

“I can see that following the new curriculum, according to the information I received from my preschool, I can keep on improving my teaching. I feel I can achieve even better improvements in the future.” (Teacher Shinta)

The results suggest that the current preschool curriculum has been received positively in the preschool arena, not just by principals and teachers, but by parents who have also seen some progress in their children’s development.

4.2.2 Understanding of CC learning within the new curriculum

Responses associated around participant understanding of CCC (child-centred curriculum) from the individual interviews and focus group discussions highlighted questions about their understanding of the preschool new curriculum. While the findings indicated different perspectives about the notions of what child-centred learning is, both teachers and principals identified some elements of child-centred learning. Some common themes that emerged concerned “**collaborative learning**” and “**independent learning, and play**” which are presented below.

Examples of collaborative learning were mentioned by two principals:

“... child-centred (CC) means, as teachers we cannot just merely explain [what we are teaching to the children], but we have to also listen to the children and ask the children questions to attract their views and engage them.” (Principal Jinha)

“My understanding of CC learning is that teachers and children work together during the teaching and learning process.” (Principal Ela)

Another principal and some of the teachers clarified that independent learning and play were at the centre of child-centred learning.

“Based on my understanding of the CC approach in the new curriculum teachers are able to identify, each child’s talent and knowledge.” (Principal Ameta)

“Based on my understanding children are able to learn to read and write through play.” (Teacher Deoneia)

Teacher Amada and teacher Shinta remarked that independent learning was central to their definition of the child-centred curriculum.

“CC means: teachers give activities to the children, and let children do them on their own. And the children are at the centre of learning not the teachers.” (Teacher Amada)

“...teachers have to give opportunities for the children to participate in all activities...” (Teacher Shinta)

In contrast to all teachers and principals who defined what child-centred learning is in terms of the teaching processes in the classroom, teacher Suzi stated it in a different way.

“The CCC is a guide for teachers to prepare all the materials before the learning process starts, before teaching children in the classroom.” (Teacher Suzi)

Across the four schools, one group of parents (Parents group 2) were silent and just smiled when they were asked to participate in explaining what child-centred learning meant to them. Meanwhile, the other three groups of parents tried to answer as best they could, with only one group providing positive responses on participation of the children in learning. The differing responses could be due to location (rural, suburban and city) and the higher educational background of those groups of parents and teachers. For example, in an informal conversation the researcher had with Parent group 3, it emerged that most of them are preschool teachers.

In relation to some quotes highlighted above, parents also acknowledged that the underlying principles of how children learn through participation was critical. It provides an opportunity for children to have their own space.

“For me CC means the teacher is not in command of the learning, but they take part [with students]. Children are free to learn, they learn through action, words, drawings, and these help them learn faster. This is instead of the teacher being in the centre, which does not make the children independent.”

(Parents group 3)

One of the parents in group 3 recalled

“As parents what we see in our children’s progression in relation to CC is: teachers in school give one word to engage the children then children will develop the word by themselves.” (Parents group 3)

While parents group 1 declared that they did not know about CC

“No. We do not know about this, because teachers are the ones who teach [our children].” (Parents group 1)

In contrast, parent group 2 did not give any verbal responses and, just smiled.

Together these results provide some important insights into the broad ranging understandings held by school principals, some teachers, and some parents about what CC means within the context of the current curriculum. With regards to these results, there are some contradictions between what was said and what was observed in the classroom.

4.2.3 How teachers implement a child-centred approach in their teaching practice (When the child-centred approach is implemented)

In responses to the questions: “how and when do you implement CC learning in your classroom? Would you give some examples?”, a range of responses were elicited from the teachers. During the interviews the teachers suggested that the session plans are descriptive plans which serve as an instruction for the teacher to use and implement in their teaching practices. Although, the curriculum guideline is structured for the teacher to follow, the resources only contribute to generation of a child-centred curriculum. As two teachers commented, an amount of preparation is needed to be done before hand, and another said teachers cross-checked with the session plan to see what they need to prepare in advance. However, a common example of CCC given by the teachers was the use of a “*Halimar Kantu*”

play corner, where children were asked or sent to play with a group in a particular activity.

“[For example], prior to starting the session in the class, we send the children to play in the play corner. This helps us find a good way for them to learn.” (Teacher Amada)

Principal Ameta, who was also a teacher in the classroom recalls,

“...an example is that each area of activity that the children will play is explained [in the session plan], for example the blocks area, or area of concentration, thus helping children to be able to do it by themselves.”(Principal Ameta)

Teacher Shinta pointed out that a teacher’s early preparation can help them to manage the children.

“Through teacher preparation, then dividing the children in accordance with the number of the children in the classroom... hence, the teacher is able to control all the children in the classroom.” (Teacher Shinta)

The same question was asked to teacher Suzi, who believes that “through music” children’s learning may be motivated.

“Learning should be encouraged with music so [it can help to develop] the child’s mentality, this also happens through sending the children to play in the play centre.” (Teacher Suzi)

The way teachers implemented child-centred learning is through their preparation and following the session plan. Child-centred learning took place mainly in developmental play, where children were divided into groups and were sent to play with the activities set out in the classroom.



Figure 4: Children play in Halimar kantu/Play corner

Discussions with groups of children in all four preschools revealed a mixture of answers to questions about what students liked about school, their favourite activities, their learning and having fun, and what they would like to do more of. Nevertheless, the overall responses from Question 1 to Question 4 (Appendix 15) was “*Halimar*”, play. Play emerged as the favourite part of their school activities. Other common threads that emerged during the conversations with the children were about reading, writing, study, drawing, and things related to the home. Eating and playing in the play corner area (where the children may choose their own recreation) were also activities that the children clearly stated that they like doing. The comments below illustrate the children’s voice from multiple answers the above questions.

Children in group 2 indicated a range of things that they like to do:

“[I] like playing ball; looking at books; dolls; seeing pictures in the books; reading; writing and counting.” (Students group 2)

Some answers related to food were mentioned by students in groups 1, 3 and 4. Playing with local materials, such as beans or bottle lids was also endorsed.

“I like everything; playing with toys; playing ball; playing with dolls; I want to write; I want to study; I want to play maths; I like to eat porridge.” (Students group 1)

“Study; eat veggies; play; play blocks; play with the lids of the bottles.” (Students group 3)

“Play; eat rice; study; draw; dance; wash hands; play on the swings; [and] listen to stories.” (Students group 4)

Thus, there was a relationship between what the teachers prepare in the classroom and part of the session plans that were offered in the curriculum. It seems that the principles of the current curriculum appealed to the children’s interests in learning when play is included. Food is also mentioned in conversation as most public preschools provide a free meal. But very often this free meal was not continuously available for the whole year of schooling.

4.3 Teachers’ views on their achievements/successful practice

One of the questions asked during the interview was related to the successes that teachers have had in their teaching practices, and what they enjoy the most. Additional information was sought from the principals’ perspectives about the extent to which they observed their teachers’ successes during their practice. A variety of perspectives were expressed in relation to **teachers’ achievement** and **teachers’ favourite parts of teaching**. Examples are:

Phonics

Phonics is an element in literacy pedagogy and this method has been newly introduced along with the new curriculum. Principal Jinha echoes the success she experienced:

“The achievement/success is phonics. The results from the children indicate that some children do understand the phonics that we taught. [In addition,] another achievement is based on the training/professional development through which we learned a lot. We implemented the CCC based on what we learned.” (Principal Jinha)

The voices and evidence in the children’s progression in learning, and the benefits gain from the session plan were highlighted by teacher Deoneia and principal Ameta:

“I felt I have achieved a lot. For example, the session plan [created and provided by the Ministry of Education] really helps me personally to achieve good things. I can tell that my students have learned and improved

a lot I can see my students can create something, which I never expected/imagined.” (Teacher Deoneia)

“The success that I encountered in my teaching practice is evidenced by my students’ achievements. Even though they are naughty, they are also really obedient. When I ask them to do something they will do it straight away.” (Principal Ameta)

Teacher Shinta asserts that what she received from professional development she was putting into practice, although she still requires some help and support.

“An achievement for me is what I gained from the professional development. I think I have implemented around 75 percent. During the time that I have followed the new curriculum I feel my teaching has improved, and in the future I think there will be more and better changes.” (Teacher Shinta)

Teacher Suzi said,

“In my teaching practice, I felt successful.” (Teacher Suzi)

Evidence from principal Abui affirms that she recognised the growth of her teachers’ knowledge around the session plans and their implementation.

“The success that I see from the teachers is they do understand the session plans through their implementation in the classroom.” (Principal Abui)

Together these results provide important insights into the view of achievement and success that the teachers have encountered in their teaching practice. Half of the participants identified success through their students/children’s achievements, while others saw success through being able to follow the session plans and the knowledge the teacher gained from the teacher trainings.

4.3.1 The part that teachers enjoyed the most

In conjunction with the aforementioned ideas, teachers also discussed the parts they liked most about teaching. Some teachers said their favourite activities were reading stories to children or singing songs with the children. Others said they liked to see the children’s work and teach phonics.

Teacher Shinta enjoyed reading,

“What I like best is reading a story to the children. Then, I can ask questions to them.” (Teacher Shinta)

Teacher Deoneia is very fond of the session plans, which bring advantages into her style of teaching.

“I really like using the session plans, especially about the play corner as this helps me a lot to control, assess and discover the children’s ability.” (Teacher Deoneia)

Principal Ameta commented on getting enjoyment from witnessing children explore and discover new things:

“My favourite part is seeing children explore and discover through the play activities.” (Principal Ameta)

Similarly, Principal Ela found that seeing the children’s drawings and writing were the most enjoyable part.

“I most like seeing children’s drawings, some pictures or writing, and how they adjust what I gave and asked them to do, adjusting quickly.” (Principal Ela)

Teacher Amada talked about phonics as the most successful and enjoyable part of her work:

“In the teaching practice my favourite is phonics, because the children can understand quickly. Though some children still have difficulties, the majority of children have a high comprehension of phonics.” (Teacher Amada)

Several aspects were mentioned by teacher Suzi:

“My favourite part is singing songs with the children, and counting, reading the letters of the alphabet and reading pictures. I like to play games with the children.” (Teacher Suzi)

It seems that each of the teachers has different things that they like or enjoy doing in their practice. However, phonics and using the session plans were particular preferences that were raised.

4.4 Barriers and challenges encountered by teachers in their practices

The voices of the teachers, principals and some suggestions from the parent focus groups interviewed highlighted some obstacles which are faced not only by the teachers but also the parents in general. Challenges arising from lack of facilities and materials, lack of security, space, time management, lack of knowledge in phonics, large class sizes, and the need for more professional development occurred as emerging themes. This next section is about professional development

4.4.1 Professional development/ training

Most principals and teachers requested professional development. Some examples were illustrated through the following: in the first instance when the questions were asked, two teachers were specific that they wanted professional development in phonics.

“With [implementing] a child-centred approach, what we need is professional development, particularly in phonics.” (Principal Jinha)

“To implement a child-centred approach, we need more training/professional development in phonics, because for some letters we do not really know the sounds. So sometimes this causes challenges in teaching the children.” (Teacher Ela)

Others who held positions as principals and teachers mentioned that the sharing of best practices with other teachers would be valuable.

“In order to improve [our teaching practice] there should be more professional development and the opportunity to exchange experiences with other teachers from other regions.” (Principal Ela)

“I think the Ministry of Education provides enough support through training/courses every three months. What we can improve is sharing/exchanging ideas with teachers across other districts to help with

issues that each are facing and to bring progress to the teaching and learning process.” (Principal Ameta)

The rest of the teachers pointed out that continuing to have more professional development would support their teaching practice.

“I hope there is a continuation of the training like we have had in each trimester/period, this is what we want.” (Teacher Amada)

“There should be more training and courses to increase our capacities.” (Teacher Suzi)

“For me personally, I need more training to help me develop my approach to teaching children.” (Teacher Deoneia)

One participant commented,

“I suggest the Ministry of Education clearly explains to each teacher that they should know their objectives, and have a passion/love of their job.” (Principal Ameta)

It can therefore be seen that the interview data shows that the majority of participants requested more training/professional development in order to improve their teaching practices. Although some participants specified the kind of training they wanted, in general there was strong indications from participants about receiving more support through training and professional development.

4.4.2 Challenges related to lack of resources, facilities, and security

Although not all four schools mentioned the same issues, during classroom observations concerns around security and the lack of facilities were highlighted in three preschools visited; two public preschools and one Catholic preschool. In the private preschool, these issues were not mentioned by the principal nor the teachers. One interviewee alluded to the national lack of story books that should have been provided by the Ministry of Education as part of the new curriculum’s session plan.

“One of the big problems we encountered in our school is the lack of story books. For instance, in the session plan it suggests teachers use a particular book. However, the book we received is a duplicate of one we received previously. The Ministry keeps sending us the same book, and not the one

we need as mentioned in the session plan. So teachers have to make up or use another book to replace it and sometimes there is not the same connection with the book we choose.” (Principal Abui)

Such issues were not mentioned by other participants across the teachers and principals. Yet in anecdotal evidence from conversations with teachers in the Catholic preschool, it was evident that they encountered similar issues around a shortage of books. For example,

“Challenges I encountered that are hard to control are when there is a child who is misbehaving, and when the resources used for the play centre are not enough or complete.” (Teacher Suzi)

Other anecdotal evidence from three preschools (public and catholic), but not the private preschool, was that they experienced some theft of school materials. Such things as “toys, balls, papers and other things” (Principal Ela and Teacher Amada). In relation to this, when the interviewer asked if there were any additional comments or questions that the parent groups would like to add or ask, there were concerns raised by one of the parents in each of group 1 and group 4 who said that the playground, washing and toilet facilities were concerns for parents:

“First of all we would like to apologise if my response is not related to the question asked. But first of all related to the environment, there are no fences at this school and no playground is available for children to play in. As we know, through play we can encourage [children to come to school]. Primarily they come to learn but also to play.” (Parent group 4)

The principal from this preschool also reinforced the need for a playground.

“In preschool children play while learning. We do need a playground so that, as part of their general development, we can bring the children out of the classroom and they can recognise what a swing is. This aspect is very pertinent, to help children’s development through activity/play outside.” (Principal Neka)

“As parents, it is hard for us and for our children because there is no toilet and clean water that our children can use. When a child needs to go the toilet some have to run home, but if they get a tummy ache or have some accident

and the child dirties his/her pants there is no way to deal with it in school. Some kids just go behind the school and do it. While others will go home but then do not come back to school because some of our children live a bit far.” (Parents group 1)

One of the preschools is located in a rural area that had less facilities, no security in the school, no toilets or access to clean water and no playground. Conditions at the school were not good compared to the other three preschools whose participants did not raise any of these concerns.

Large class size and poor teacher: child ratios was a challenge. One interviewee said: “The challenge that I face is the big number of children in my class, I have 25 children, and when I do just activities or games it becomes harder for me [to control the children]. And one of students has special needs so I have to give them extra care and time.” (Teacher Deoneia)

In summary, there are many challenges encountered by teachers in different ways. Issues around security and a lack of resources and facilities appeared in most schools. Training and professional development for teachers was highlighted as a priority by the majority.

4.5 Assessment in preschool within a child-centred approach

Assessment is a component of the curriculum. There are two purposes to the assessment; assist the teacher in better planning and to help children in achieving good learning results (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). Three questions were asked of teachers related to assessment. These questions focussed on how assessment is done, who is involved in the assessment process, and how information from the assessment is used.

Most teachers said they conducted their assessments during and through play within the curriculum areas. Some teachers said that they assessed children specifically in reading while others said they assessed the children based on the outcomes in the curriculum. However, the teachers’ answers were quite varied, and the following examples of the different approaches illustrate this.

Principal Ameta stated that assessments are being done at the initial stage of children commencing school

“The teachers are ready to assess the children from the beginning of the school year. That, assessment is based on the session plans in phonics, literacy and numeracy. I assessed my children through play development within the curriculum area. Teachers can identify children’s characteristics like which children like to play with a group, and/or a child that wants to change activity after a short of period of time, and I can also assess children through the games that we played.” (Principal Ameta)

Principal Ela held two roles in the school, as principal for the school and as a teacher. She verified the process of assessment in her classroom.

“Our assessment happens during the developmental play. We assess children in the reading area. Each day we assess four children. What we do is bring the *book of assessment* (this is a note book where teachers record or collect information/evidence on children’s learning), and sit near the children that we are going to assess - for instance, can the children open the book in the right way, or tell the story through the pictures, then I will give a tick in the column by the child’s name. Apart from that, we also assess children through questions and answers. Math, geometry, and drawing is also assessed” (Principal Ela)

Teacher Suzi’s criteria of assessment was that children must master the numbers or letters or be able to write and count numbers.

“Children have to recognise all the sounds in the letters, be able to count up to 20, be able to write and read, and from there then I can assess them. For the ones that are able to do this, I will give a tick [in assessment booklet for the students record], and for the ones that need more help I will put a dot” (Teacher Suzi)

Keeping records of the children’s assessments in a book was also reiterated by teacher Amada, whose example was particularly focussed on reading.

“We record and write down our assessments in a book. In the curriculum area for reading we spend 40 minutes in the morning. We focus more on reading than assessing the children.” (Teacher Amada)

Teacher Deoneia indicated that assessment is mainly done through *Halimar Kantu*, and that she found this method to be easier for assessing each child.

“I assess my children through play, in the *halimar kantu* (play corner). This approach helps me a lot. In each area, I am able to assess each child based on their ability, and once I identify what they are able to do I make a note for each child that I assess in my class, each child has their own assessment book” (Teacher Deoneia)

While teacher Shinta identified the value of assessing the child in their play, she focussed on socio-emotional and physical development.

“Prior to assessing the children I identify a child’s knowledge/comprehension. Through developmental play I can see the children’s physical and socio-emotional progress” (Teacher Shinta)

Overall, these results indicate that assessment was carried out during play development across the four schools. Interestingly, while a minority of participants state some assessment of socio-emotional and physical development, the majority focussed mainly on literacy and numeracy. From this, it is evident that literacy and numeracy were the most commonly used assessments, with the exception of one participant who highlighted the importance of socio-emotional competence in children’s learning and development.

Within the four preschools, the tools used in recording children’s achievement varied from one to another. Two preschools used checklists, one used descriptions and narratives together with checklists, and the last one used quantitative forms to measure each child’s abilities. Examples of tools used to record children’s work are shown in the images below:



Quantitative form of assessment



Checklist form of assessment



Description/narrative form of assessment



Combination of narrative and checklist form of assessment

Figure 4.2: Evidence on how assessment was collected and recorded

4.5.1 Who is involved in the assessment, and how the information from the assessment is used.

When the teachers were asked who was involved in the assessment, all respondents reported that the teachers and children take part in the assessment process. With reference to how the information is utilised, most of the teachers stated that it would be handed to and shown to the parents at the end of each trimester/period in order to show the parents the level of progress and work their children had made in preschool. Moreover, a few teachers pointed out that the assessments also gave them information to pinpoint where the children need the most support. Examples of responses in this category were:

Teacher Suzi, who said that assessments was conducted to measure what is being taught and the responses to what is being taught. Children's work was stored in a file and later given to the parents,

“I assessed my students in order to find out what they had learned from what I taught to them. I kept all their work in a file then at the end of each period/trimester we hand it to the parents” (Teacher Suzi)

This was also reiterated by teacher Deoneia,

“We keep records of all the children’s work and activities they did in the school. All their work will be shown to the parents, or a report of the children’s work and progress, is given in a meeting with parents at each trimester/period. I also include the children in the meeting then link the note to their academic report” (Teacher Deoneia)

Teacher Shinta discussed how she communicates with parents about their child’s learning.

“Meetings with parents concerning their children’s work and progress were held each trimester. As usual, before handing the children’s academic report to the parents, we will invite the parents to take part in a school meeting for each trimester/period. I share all the work that their children have done and show the parents what they have learned. Hence, from the academic report the parents can find out the score that I wrote” (Teacher Shinta).

Taken together, these results revealed that assessment is mainly done between the teachers and children. The information from the children’s work and what had been assessed by the teacher each period/trimester will be shown and handed to the parents. Only one teacher included the children and parents in contributing to the assessment process.

4.6 Cultural factors

Parents were asked to indicate where they had seen development or progress in their child from the initial start of preschool until the current time. The majority of parents who responded to the question felt that there was evidence of their child’s progress in the learning process, particularly concerning “**Literacy**”. The responses reflected a traditional Timorese view of education as focussed on core skills of literacy and numeracy, rather than also developing a child’s personal, social and creative abilities. Parents in group 4 avoided answering the question [they remained silent and just smiled]. However, a few interviewees alluded to the notion that their

children seem more **“brave and independent”** and **“more responsible”**. Interestingly, ideas related to children’s personal and social development, were not particularly prominent in the interview data.

Parents from group 1 noticed that a progression has occurred since their children entered preschool.

“They [children] can sing, before they did not know how to write but now they can, they are brave and perform in front [of people/classroom]. When they were young they just played with their friends, but now they have started school, they know how to count 1 2 3, and can write ABC” (Parent group 1)

Parents from group 4 had the same view as parents group 1, though literacy was the main point.

“The progress or development that I see from my child is that before he started school, he could not read, but now he can read 3 to 4 letters. Then he can write his name...” (Parents group 4)

Ideas related to children being more independent were highlighted by both parent groups 3 and 4.

“My child is more independent since starting school. For example, he can dress himself alone, and write without my assistance by the age of five. If I compare him with his brother they are very different. Therefore, his independence, in my view is a good and significant improvement.” (Parent group 3)

“As a parent I feel good, because my child is not brave and is always scared [shy]. But since he started school there are changes occurring. He has the courage to talk, he has started to learn his ABC, and he can tell a story.” (Parent group 4)

In line with this, the views mentioned above were echoed by teachers who provided their perspective of the children’s responses towards learning with a CC approach. Answers around interactive learning and children being active were addressed. Children were seen as more independent and creative, which concurred with some of the views the parents held about learning. Some examples are illustrated below:

Teacher Suzi and Amada claimed that the involvement and understanding of children in learning was obvious.

“Children are able to respond or retell [what they learn]. It helps teachers to understand the play corner. When I bring the children to the play corner, they can read through pictures. When I asked them questions, they can tell/retell the stories to me” (Teachers Suzi)

“Some children are able to respond to learning well, based on what I taught them. Some other children give responses that are not right, but nevertheless they try to respond” (Teacher Amada)

Putting the children in groups could help other children to engage in learning.

“...for example, a subject which children can adapt/engage with quickly is history and math. Through sitting in a circle, when we did subtraction some children can learn quicker. A few children did not yet understand, but they can help and learn from one another while doing it in a group” (Teacher Ela)

Providing space for children through activities in the classroom allows children to be more creative and independent,

“In free drawing, each child creates their own ideas, if they are not sure they ask the teacher. When they play with playdough children might make cake/bread and then they will show to me. Through this I can see the child’s ability” (Principal Ameta)

Teacher Deoneia realised the pertinence of a child-centred approach and the effect on the child’s learning.

“I felt a child-centred approach is much better and it contributes a lot to the children’s learning. Through this approach children feel they have freedom to explore new things, developing their learning. There are four aspects where the child develops physical development, language (communication), socio emotional and cognitive development” (Teacher Deoneia)

These results suggest that there is a progression in the children’s learning from the times they commenced preschool. Moreover, interactive learning was also highlighted. Parents and teachers are more likely to be happy with what the children achieve.

4.6.1 Parents' expectations for their children

In the conversations with parents other findings emerged that emphasise how the parents value education for their children and what the parents want to see at the next stage in their children's learning. Notwithstanding parents group 2 who did not talk a lot during the interview, some emerging themes discussed were around the parent's **value of education**, their **role as parents** to support their child's learning, while others mentioned the **successful transitioning** from preschool to primary school. Examples are:

Parent groups 1, 3 and 4 recognised that they play an important part in their child's learning,

“The child's success in learning also depends on the family, how she/he educate their child” (Parents group 1)

“I value education for my child's future. I cannot just rely on teachers, I need to support and help him/her at home building on from what he/she has learned at school” (Parents group 3)

“As parents we place education as number one. We value education for our child by helping them at home, so what they learned at school is able to permeate through. If they complete their study here, they will be able to continue their study” (Parent group 4)

The need for collaboration to be established between the institution and family was also required by parents group 3

“Education is fundamental for development. Hence, I want the school, Ministry of Education, and family to become *'ahi matan ida'*- working together. And as parents we need to support our children's development to improve” (Parents group 3)

In short, groups 1, 3, and 4 mentioned the importance of education for their child, and that support and help were recognised as being part of the parent's role for their child's learning. Turning now to the parents' expectations for their children; example of responses to this aspect were:

Have knowledge and successful transition

Parent groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 wanted their children to learn something before leaving preschool. The parents' expectations for their children in preschool is primarily about having knowledge around literacy and math to shape their basic foundations before embarking to primary level.

“We want our children to be knowledgeable and when they become older, move/pass easily to primary school.” (Parent group 2)

“We want our children to complete their preschool and continue to primary school.” (Parent group 1)

“When we are talking about preschool, it is not like they are at university level. I expect by the time my child finishes preschool that he/she is at least able to count and recognise letters, and to have achieved some basic development levels.” (Parents group 3)

“I want my child to complete this school, so she/he develop in phonics and math. This will, therefore make it easier for them when he/she is in primary school.” (Parent group 3)

“Before moving to primary, we want our children to learn something- at least recognise letters.” (Parent group 4)

These findings identify that the majority of parents want to see that their children are able to master or know some basic literacy and numeracy skills before embarking to primary school level. It can be noted that parents from group 2 hardly made any contribution regarding this point.

4.7 Other issues that emerged from the research.

The researcher is aware that some of the findings in this section were not directly tied to the research question and the objective of the study. However, there are some issues that came to light during the research that could have a significant impact on the teaching and learning processes and are therefore mentioned in this section.

4.7.1 Language

At the preschool level, the current government policy emphasises and reinforces that teachers should teach in the mother tongue or a language that the children are

familiar with. However, it is evident that teachers tend to revert from Tetum to Portuguese or combine the two languages in their teaching practice whether in written form or verbally. Based on several anecdotal notes from the parents and teachers, a minority mentioned that sometimes their children are confused about the language used and revert to Portuguese in counting their numbers. Examples are presented in the following paragraphs.

Parent group 3 enunciated that language used in the classroom sometimes becomes a barrier and is confusing for the family and the children.

“With the new method and approach [of teaching] there appears that a lot is in Portuguese and Tetum. So using pictures could help children to understand.” (Parent group 3)

“Teachers [might] need to repeat things several times, because there are a lot of languages used at school. Sometimes children come home and get confused. For instance, number 8 and 10, if I show numbers 8 or 10 to them in words, children tend to recognise them only in Portuguese, not in Tetum.” (Parents group 3)

This idea is supported and reiterated by teacher Deoneia, who thinks that using several languages limited the child’s ability to learn as the child is unclear of the distinction between the language used by teacher at school, and the language which is used in their daily lives.

“...this child achieved good progress in counting/recognising numbers from 1-15, but in Tetum language they need more support. Sometimes children count in the Tetum from 1-10 then from 11-15 they revert to Portuguese. They are not able to count all the way through in our own language, so I ask the parents to help their children count at home in Tetum.” (Teacher Deoneia)

In line with this, there was anecdotal evidence in conversations with a teacher in one of the public preschools who complained, “why are we not allowed to teach the children in Portuguese?”. Further evidence from classroom observations identified that all four preschools have a mix of both languages in counting numbers and singing songs with the children. Moreover, the researcher took video recordings

and photographs in the classrooms on a daily basis which showed the use of Portuguese being used in written form.

This data shows that there is some level of confusion and a mismatch between government policy and its implementation by teachers across the four preschools, as well as some confusion among students and parents that none of the four preschools taught in a mother tongue despite ministry support to employ this.

4.7.2 Environmental Factors

One out of four preschools where data was collected was located in a rural area. There were meant to be two classes taught separately (Group A and Group B), however, due to the weather conditions, one classroom was destroyed and both groups were combined together in one classroom. Therefore, a total of 39 children (Group A= 21, Group B=18) were in the one classroom. In an anecdotal conversation the researcher had with one of the teachers about teaching two groups of children with different session plans in one classroom, Teacher Suzi said “We split/divide the room into two parts by putting the blackboard in the centre of the room.”

On the first day of gathering data at this school, out of 39 children only two children came to school. This could be due to bad weather, as some children need to cross a river and the distance from children’s homes to the school is approximately 3-4 kilometres. The number of children increased the following two days up to 13, then by Friday the number had declined to eight children. In addition to this, across the four preschools, another two schools faced the same issues where towards the end of the week the number of students declined. This also happened in the Catholic school and another public school.



Figure 4.3: Only two children come to school

Another conversation the researcher had with teacher Shinta explains why only a few children came to school.

“Children used to come a lot, but since there is no *Merenda Eskolar* (free food provided by the programme through the Ministry of Education) they do not want to come any more. For the ones who live far away from the school, if their elder siblings did not bring them, that means they will be absent on that day.” (Teacher Shinta)

It appears that food is one of the main factors causing children absenteeism. The Catholic preschool encountered the same issues with no *Merenda Eskolar*. During the classroom observation, it was noted that the children bring their own bun or *pisang goreng* to nibble/eat during the process of learning both in public and Catholic preschools.



One of the public and private preschool having their *Merenda escolar*.

Figure 4.4: Two preschool having their Merenda escolar-meal

Thus, the weather, food and the distance between the children’s home and school are all additional barriers to the children’s learning and also to the teachers in delivering the learning processes.

4.7.3 Classroom management

The researcher observed six classrooms. Out of these, only one teacher had set clear rules in the classroom. She had a friendly way of engaging children in learning, the class was divided into groups and was well organised, whereas a number of issues were identified in the other classrooms. Children were fighting in those classrooms, and not all the children were engaged in learning.



All the children are not engage in the learning.

Classroom management can affect the learning process for each children.

Skills needed in engaging student with little resources, thus all children can have the equal opportunity to learning.

Figure 4.5: Mat time

In some cases, the teachers intervened in the learning process for example by holding the children’s hand in some activities like writing on the black board or in the child’s workbook, erasing a child’s work when they made a mistake. In two

schools (public/rural and Catholic preschool), the teachers banned the children from playing and reading books.



Teacher intervention by holding and erasing child work when they make mistake

Figure 4.6: Teachers' intervention in children's learning

The teacher's preparation before or after class was mentioned in the interviews by only a few teachers. But in practice, across all four preschools, 90 percent of teachers placed the session plan by their side and went back and forth to check what should be done and what else had not been covered. This suggests that teachers were not prepared before teaching the children. Hence, evidence from the classroom observation showed that not all teachers had clear rules about how to manage their classroom and engage children in the learning process.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the main themes and sub themes from the four principals and six teachers' individual interviews, focus group interviews with parents and students, and classroom observations through video recording and pictures taken. Eight main themes were drawn through responses given by the participants in order to identify teachers' perspectives and the implementation of child-centred learning within the new curriculum.

The investigation has shown that from the demographic information of the teachers and principals, the majority are high school graduates, and across all four preschools all the teachers were female. In addition, findings also suggest that in general, teachers, students and families point out that they favour the new curriculum and that they are seeing more achievement in the children.

Elements of child-centred learning are mentioned by some teachers. Parents tried hard to answer questions, but overall the data shows that parents are not clear about what child-centred learning is. In the teachers' implementation of child-centred learning the play corner area emerged as being popular. Moreover, from the children's voice in conversation about what they like to do and what they like about their preschool, play was the most prominent. A minority of children also talked about eating, literacy and numeracy. Aligned with this, parents saw a significant improvement in the development of their children who are able to write and read and expect that by completing preschool their shift to primary school with basic literacy knowledge will make the transition easier.

Furthermore, teachers appreciate their achievements in seeing children's accomplishments in phonics, literacy and numeracy through following the session plans in the curriculum. It seems some teachers have specific aspects of teaching they particularly enjoy, for example singing or story telling were highlighted. Play, phonics, and play in the curriculum area (play centre) are a big favourite of teachers and students. Some teachers tend to limit the space for students to play or intervene during the learning processes.

With regard to challenges, a lack of facilities such as books, security and environmental factors appeared as obstacles to teachers, the school communities and families. On the other hand, there was variation from one preschool to another in teachers' use of different assessment tools such as checklists, narratives, quantitative methods.

Although this study did not focus on issues such as language, teacher intervention, classroom management, food and weather, the research showed that these factors also impact on the process of teaching and learning.

This chapter has focussed on reporting the findings of the study. The following chapter will discuss these findings.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' understanding and implementation of child-centred learning in relation to the new preschool curriculum of Timor-Leste. The study also explored parents' understanding of the child-centred approach within the new preschool education curriculum in the Timorese context. The aim of the study was to find out how the social constructivism theory of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory might provide ways and suggestions to address any issues for policy and practice in enhancing teachers' understanding and implementation of the child-centred education curriculum, as well as parents' understanding of child-centred curriculum.

This discussion chapter draws together the key findings gathered from the interviews and focus groups in four preschools of four principals, six teachers (two of the teachers held both positions as a principal and a teacher), four groups of parents, and four groups of students. The findings revealed a range of perspectives and attitudes about the curriculum while also uncovering pertinent contextual impacts, including the influence of cultural factors inherent in colonisation, institutional factors, and political factors. These factors are associated with and encompassed in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and Vygotsky's theory, which are used as a framework to address the research questions investigated. The research questions were:

1. What are teachers' understanding of child-centred learning within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
2. In what ways do teachers implement child-centred teaching practices?
3. What are parents' understanding of child-centred learning within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
4. In what ways might child-centred teaching be enhanced?

What follows are findings related to each of the research questions.

5.2 Research Question 1:

What are teachers' understanding of child-centred learning within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?

There are two main points that address the first research question. They are the views or perspectives of the current curriculum, and the teachers' and principals' understanding of CCC.

5.2.1 Views or perspectives of the current curriculum

CCC has been prevalent in western countries and their education systems for the last two centuries, while in developing countries like Timor-Leste, this concept has only been introduced in the last three years. The reason why Timor-Leste's preschool curriculum was revised was discussed in chapter one. The current preschool curriculum was established in late 2014; thus the curriculum documents might still be relatively new to the teachers and they may require significant time to get used to the new system of learning (child-centred). This is in stark contrast to the previous curriculum, which had the main emphasis on a teacher focused classroom. On the question of their perspectives of the new curriculum, this study found that overall, the current preschool curriculum has been received and seen positively by most principals, teachers and parents.

Principals and teachers voiced that the current curriculum provides constructive guidance for schools, and they see the curriculum reform as an improvement and as providing progression for both teachers' and children's learning processes. There are several possible explanations for these findings. The previous curriculum was designed by Portuguese and Brazilian writers for Timorese preschools and it was written in Portuguese and translated into Tetum. Furthermore, it was not contextually relevant for a Timorese cultural context, and both languages of Tetum and Portuguese were frequently mixed together.

The curriculum's role as a guide/help can be related to the four layers offered in the curriculum reform (syllabus of the curriculum, trimester programming, weekly plan, and session plan) by the school, educators, principals and teachers. In particular, the prescriptive nature of the session plans provides information for teachers about what to do, what to prepare, and how to conduct and manage the classroom; it is therefore more akin to an instruction manual. The session plans provided as part of the curriculum are very structured; for instance, they specify the book of the week

to be used, what teachers need to do in the morning when the children arrive, what to prepare for art, math, literacy (the phonics for the week) and play development. This may be seen as beneficial because of the lack of experience and confidence teachers frequently have in trying new things in their own way. This lack of experience and confidence is mainly due to the fact that only a small percentage of preschool teachers currently meet the national standard requirements for teacher qualification (SitAn Committee and UNICEF (2015)). In addition, issues around grade repetition, early drop out and educational underachievement are problematic in Timor-Leste schools (Taylor-Leech, 2013).

Thus, the structured nature of the session plans is important for teachers. In addition, there is an epistemology reflecting the influence of colonial history, where culturally educators and students are used to instruction, rote learning, and doing what they are told by people in authority (Shah, 2012; Shah & Cardozo, 2016; Taylor-Leech, 2013). Therefore, the provision of prescriptive session plans is considered a safe way to explore and develop new CCC concepts, which are very alien in cultural terms. Whilst normally this approach would not be considered appropriate in a country where CCC is embedded into the education system, given the present stage of Timor-Leste's education system it is a pragmatic way to start the process and development of CCC.

Another reason this style of session plan is so important can be understood by looking at teachers' and principals' demographic backgrounds, which reveals that the highest qualification the majority of the teachers and principals hold is a high school certificate. Therefore, providing descriptive session plans to teachers gives them greater support and guidance. In line with this, studies by Quinn (2005, 2013) looked more closely at what happens in the classroom and how teachers facilitate classroom talk, regardless of their preparation for teaching. She states classroom talk has a direct influence on students in terms of curriculum content and the connection between learning and thinking.

The vision/dream that the country wants to achieve by 2025 is that the people in Timor will be educated and children will have access to a quality education in their schools (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2011). Considering the dilemmas discussed in the previous paragraphs and the vision that the country aims to achieve by 2025, it is possible that having explicit instruction through the session plans could help teachers who do not meet the national standard requirements. A

prescriptive curriculum may give specific directives to teachers' practices on a daily basis that may add and contribute to this vision. Although it has drawbacks of reduced flexibility, due to the stage teachers are at in terms of the entry point, this approach provides more guidance for the moment.

With regards to curriculum improvement/progression, a notable finding was that the current curriculum is having a positive effect in the preschool arena. This was exemplified by the relatively strong connection between teachers' teaching practices in the classroom and the reaction and involvement of children daily. For instance, the researcher observed that some children were so excited when they arrived at school, as they had the chance to play in the play corner and not merely come quietly into the classroom as is specified in the session plan and the weekly schedule. This finding was also supported by parents who recognised the positive effects the new approach is having on their children. For example, children appear to be more confident.

This view is supported by Posner et al. (1982) who developed criteria for understanding the conceptual changes that are associated with changed practice. They argued that people need to see the advantages of a new situation; and emphasised that this is most likely to occur when people are clear about the benefits. Hence, the findings reveal that from the participants' perspectives, the new curriculum does bring positive effects to preschools in Timor-Leste. This section identified that the preschool curriculum reform of child-centred learning is considered to have benefits for teachers, children, and parents. The section that follows discusses participants' understanding of CCC.

5.2.2 Understanding of CCC

Results from semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers provided some important insights into the broad-ranging understandings held by them with regards to what CCC means within the context of the current curriculum. The findings reveal that teachers have sufficient understanding around defining what CCC is, although urban teachers appeared to have a more comprehensive and deeper understanding than those in rural areas. The majority of the interview responses provided by principals and teachers were different from one another and yet putting together those answers encapsulates the pervasiveness of their understanding of CCC. For example, concepts such as collaborative learning, independent learning,

giving space to the child to develop during play, and/or teachers enabling autonomy to the child during activities emerged. Some of these findings are in agreement with Fung's (2015) and Kimer, Tuul, and Õun's (2016) studies, which emphasise that CCC places the child at the centre of learning and the core focus should be on what is best for the child. Similarly, children are positioned as active agents (Ryan, 2007), and the role of teachers is to direct and support the child in whatever activity the child is doing (Langford, 2010).

However, some of the findings in the current study highlighted contradictions between what was said by teachers and principals and what was observed in the classroom. For example, observed practices included teachers holding the child's hand to write and intervening by finishing the activity in which the child was engaged. There are three possible explanations for this inconsistency between understanding the curriculum and what is implemented. Firstly, the inconsistency may be due to the stage that teachers are at in their development in terms of shifting to a new model of teaching. Secondly, the lack of consistency could be related to how professional development is carried out in the field, particularly in rural areas, where there appeared to be very little follow up support for teachers. Thirdly, the difference between understanding of CCC and practice may reflect the extent to which preschool teachers have received support from the inspectorates and/or the Ministry of Education (particularly in the monitoring and follow up of their programme).

5.2.2.1 Shifting to a new model of teaching

Chapter one contains a brief description of the history of education in Timor-Leste and how it has been carried out from the Portuguese era to its current status as an independent state for more than one and half decades. The languages used in education have created a dilemma in the Timorese education system, which has impacted on the quality of education (Taylor-Leech, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013). Corresponding with this, preschool teachers have been through several stages and shifted from one model of teaching to another until the current model of CCC, and also changes in the languages used in education from Portuguese to Tetum in Timor-Leste, as cited by Quinn (2013, 2015) and Shah (2012).

Timorese preschool teachers have had to move to a new model of teaching and have shifted from teacher-directed to child-centred approaches. Teachers' understanding about the value of child-centredness is crucial. The success of teachers utilising CCC in their practice will influence the quality of the learning atmosphere they create. Fisher (2005) highlights that the process of achieving effective change might be difficult and elusive. Moreover, Peters (2010) verifies that knowing or being aware of the changes, and having a sense of belonging, recognition and acknowledgement of culture are also critical. Shifting to a new pedagogy requires clarity for that person to connect with it and hold an understanding of the advantages of the new model. Therefore, research highlights that changing or shifting attitudes and practices requires a connection to be made between the teacher's existing beliefs and the new beliefs, and this relationship should be transparent and clear to the teacher who is involved in the change process (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Posner et al., 1982).

From the data gathered there was some alignment between the teachers' understanding of CCC and the classroom observation. Figure 5.5.1 interprets the current stage of change of the participating preschool teachers. According to anecdotal reflection, when the revised curriculum was established some preschools and teachers resisted following the new curriculum. However, the seminars, socialisation and teacher training offered resulted in most preschool teachers beginning to comply. Now teachers are more likely to commit to the curriculum and to follow the nature and intentions of the prescriptive session plans. Figure 5.5.1 below depicts the stages/processes of Timorese teachers in shifting from the previous system of teaching to a new model of teaching. Data shows that after initial resistance and uncritical compliance, almost all teachers and principals now depend on the session plans and have become committed to CCC. However, the prediction is that after a certain amount of time, teachers will be independent and will be able to create their own session plans. It is evident that out of the six participating teachers, only one teacher appeared to have a good understanding of CCC and is able to manage the classroom well, a result that likely happened from following the session plan.

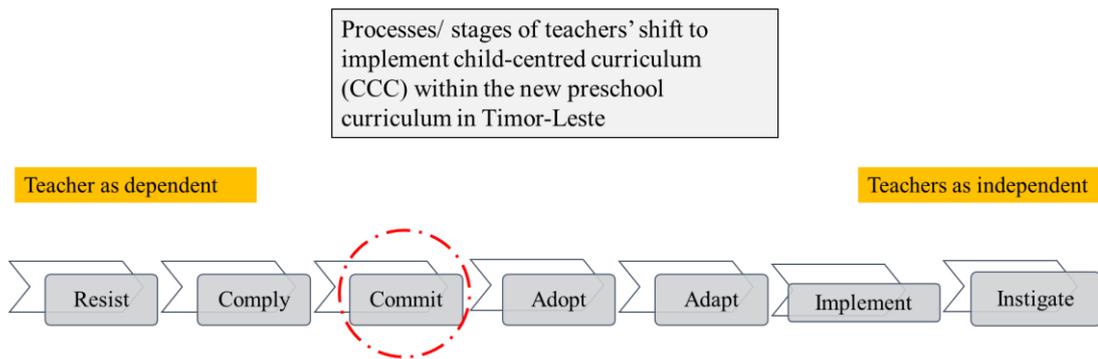


Figure 5.5.1: Teacher's stage/processes of shifting to CCC

5.2.3 How professional development is carried out

The preschool teachers stated that professional development is provided three times a year (in each trimester). Professional development is commonly known as teacher training in Timor-Leste. Figure 5.5.2 illustrates the process of professional development in Timor-Leste; it consists of three parts, filtering down from an upper national policy level, to a municipality training level, to an expected impact on child outcomes. In the first instance, the MoE outlines the programmes of professional development driven by the vision to provide quality education. Then the MoE works with the National Institute for Training of Teachers (INFORDEPE) to create a plan for training. Very often this involves national and international expertise with some support from international or external contractor and donors to design training manuals. This is then delivered to the teachers in a programme called Training of Trainers (TOT).

The professional development carried out by INFORDEPE is delivered to teacher trainers (Formadora), then the Formadora go to the municipalities to deliver PD to the teachers in that municipality. Many of these Formadora are teachers. From conversations that the researcher has had with some Formadora, they explained that sometimes they delivered the training by gathering all the preschool teachers from most parts of the country in one place. In other cases, the Formadora is sent to a municipality to give training (this depends on the funding available to pay for the teachers' or Formadora's expenses). This form of PD could suffer from information being missed or misunderstood when filtered down, as in the game *Chinese Whispers* and a gap can happen at any point.

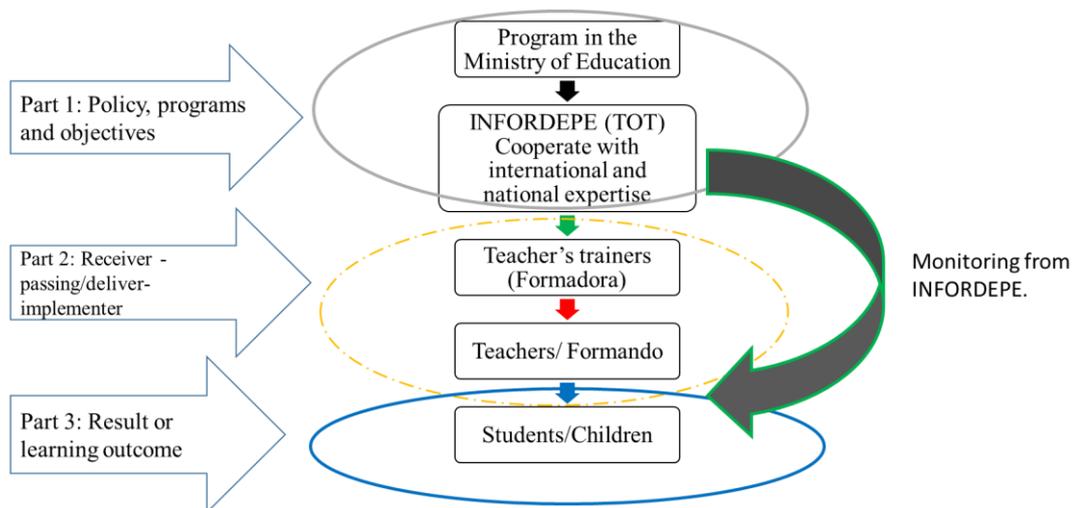


Figure 5.5.2: Process of professional development (Teachers' training)

These three parts are clearly interconnected; this can create a situation whereby there is the opportunity for a mismatch or gap between the policies, receiver-implementer- receiver (INFORDEPE to teacher's trainers/Formadora), implement-receiver (Formadora to teacher/Formando), and receiver- receiver (Formando/teacher to children). Lowenstein (2007) and Murray (2010) argue that what teachers do or implement in the classroom is tied to what teachers receive in their professional development. Kuijpers et al. (2010) assert that PD plays an important role in assuring quality in children's learning as well as improving teachers' teaching capacity.

The national policy aims to overcome these issues in the education sector with the vision of the national policy that by 2025 Timorese people "will have the [same] opportunity to access to quality education" (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2011, p. 7). Yet, in order to achieve this vision the programme of professional development has to address the mechanisms to support teachers in many ways, particularly by providing a programme that produces teachers with quality. The quality of preschool education is after all tied in with the quality of preschool teachers. In addition, this policy should aim to cover or address the needs of preschools located in remote to urban areas. Nevertheless, the study shows that there is a big distinction between access to PD for teachers in urban areas and in remote areas, with teachers in remote area having lesser access. With reference to Bronfenbrenner's theory of macrosystem layers, particular policies do contribute to influence teachers' teaching practices (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Smidt, 2011), as

the necessary support and resources for policy decisions in Timor-Leste do not filter down to all preschools.

For this reason, the vagaries, and mix of answers given by the teachers concerning their understanding of CCC may be related to how and what information they have received from the experts and how it is passed down to the teachers. This finding is in agreement with Ogden (2017) who found that there are inconsistencies between school and the curriculum reform staff when translating policy into practice in Timor-Leste. Inconsistencies include unequal access to information about the new curriculum. This may be because of the number of different contributors and donors, all of whom have their own agendas and objectives related to the project. Other cultural factors might include issues such as teachers not admitting to their lack of understanding, or not wanting to seek clarity of concepts, a scenario that commonly happens in a Timorese context.

5.2.2.3 Support from the inspectorates and the Ministry of Education

Another possible explanation for the teachers' lack of understanding about CCC may be due to a lack of leadership and management from the inspectorates and/or the Ministry of Education. After the preschool teachers receive professional development, monitoring and regular follow up should be embedded into the process and should be continuous. As any type of learning is an ongoing process, this support is required in order to check how successful implementation is, and what should be improved. However, in one of the schools where data was collected, (which was located in a rural area), support and visits by the inspectorate or MoE staff who take charge for this preschool sector rarely happened. This resulted in teachers feeling unsupported, and thus provided a chance for teachers to teach based on what they want rather than complying with the new curriculum.

Thus, within the continuous monitoring and follow up, the method in which teachers implement the current curriculum, can provide ideas of what should be included in the plan for future professional development, and insight into effective ways on how to implement it. Therefore, instead of repeating what the teachers already know, a new learning experience and any gaps that have been observed could be included in subsequent training, making the experiences more valid and

meaningful for the teachers. Across all schools in the research, principals and teachers required more professional development that addressed their needs.

For example, Principals Ela and Ameta who holds roles as both a teacher and a principal had proposed that the MoE create an opportunity for the sharing of best practices with other teachers during professional development. In addition, phonics and demand for PD that supports and develops teachers' teaching and learning pedagogical strategies were also emphasised. In informal conversations, some teachers highlighted problems of not having their salary paid on time, which also caused a lack of motivation and absenteeism.

5.3 Research Question 2:

In what ways do teachers implement CC teaching practice?

The cornerstone to address this question is drawn from the themes that emerged from findings: the play corner and the children's voices on play; teachers' views about their successful practice, the teachers' favourite part in their teaching; and assessment. Each of these themes is discussed in turn with the support of social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner and Te Whāriki) and other literature.

5.3.1 Play corners (Halimar kantu)

The overall findings indicated that the implementation of CCC in the majority of cases is still teacher oriented. There are three main learning outcomes to the curriculum; literacy, mathematics, and general development (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). The teachers' implementation of CCC is primarily and mostly focussed around general development, which is done through play or through activities in the classroom, particularly in the play corner where children can choose and do the activities that they are interested in. During classroom observations, the researcher identified that what teachers are doing in the classroom did not align with the schedule for the weekly session plan. Developmental play should occur two times in each day (40 minutes each) throughout the week. However, the time for play only occurred in one session of approximately forty minutes a day, mostly in the morning before the teachers introduced the activity for the day. The teachers and principals explained that they implement CCC through their preparation following the session plans. The weakness of this research is that follow up

questions were not included when conducting the interviews to identify other ways in which they implement CCC.

The objective of the guiding principles of the preschool curriculum enactment is that the learning and development of the child is through play activities, and play is valued as the main method of teaching activities (Government of Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015; Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2012). In addition, the current curriculum acknowledges that “ways of learning always come through play development” (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014, p. 5). Yet, the findings of this study identified that teachers’ practice does not equate with the principles of the preschool document. This may be due to several reasons: The teachers may not yet fully understand the importance of play, and/or teachers may lack the classroom management skills to implement developmental play twice in a day. Moreover, it could also be that teachers want to ‘*tick the box*’ for what should be covered in a one-day session rather than create a chance for the child to truly learn and develop through play. Finally, another possible explanation may be that there is inadequate or lack of professional development where the information is filtered down to teachers.

Brumbaugh (2008) takes the view that in providing lifelong learning, the learning should not be a chore. Moreover, the child should be given a space to develop their capabilities within a supportive social context (Smidt, 2011, 2013). Furthermore Tomaševski (2001) affirms that in the 4As scheme, education and the teacher should be *adaptable* to the changing needs of the children. Therefore, Timorese preschool teachers need to value and fully understand the importance of play and how play can contribute to children’s development.

5.4.2 The children’s voices

This study found that learning appeals to children’s interests when play is included. Across all the four preschools there was a mixture of answers to the questions (about what the child likes about their preschool; what they learn in their school; what activities they would like to do more often) in the group conversations. Notwithstanding, play was one of the main attractions to the children to be in school. This accords with the social constructivism paradigm, which affirms that children understand the world by perceiving and making meaning from what they encounter

and their experiences (Kiraly, 2000, 2014). In addition, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory cites that school is one of the main influences on child development, so where there is direct interaction in the environment and children have a high interest in school, this could be a positive sign for leaning and interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). With reference to Vygotsky's theory, learning occurs in a social situation where the child takes part in communicating and expressing ideas, and the child is capable of independently functioning with the support of the social context (Dowling, 2014; Smidt, 2013).

There are various types of play that the children mentioned in conversation with the researcher such as blocks, lids from bottles, dried beans, dolls, balls and swings. Other responses also related to literacy and math. According to Reynolds and Jones (2007), play is fundamental to the child's learning and is naturally tied with the child's interests. Moreover, in early stages of learning the essence of experience and the internalisation of the joy to discover, explore and to be curious in school are developed (Brumbaugh, 2008; Ryan, 2007). Other literature claims that how play is set up and prepared and what resources and tools are available will contribute to the child's learning and development (Bruman, 1994). In addition, within play, the autonomy and collaboration of the child is expressed if teachers create a space for the child to act, choose and be responsible, and as such the child's independency and competency can be fostered (Ryan, 2007; Smidt, 2013).

During the classroom observation, it was evident that during the play corner time the children were able to create various things with the tools and facilities that were available, either in groups or alone. However, during play corner there were also issues around too much teacher intervention, and/or frequent occurrences of the teacher prohibiting the child from playing with some toys. This may be due to the legacy from the colonial past of teacher-centred education with rote learning, and it could be related to the limited resources that the schools have. Teachers limited the children's access to the resources such as toys and books. This may have been because they were worried that if those toys and books were broken or damaged they could not be easily replaced. Not all schools have the same support or access to resources, and support related to resources may not be available each year. If the school is supported by donors, they may be lucky enough to have sufficient resources.

This study also identified a lack of teacher support for the children during the play corner. This could be due to previous learning systems where what teachers are required to do is different because play is not the teacher's focus. As such, making adjustments to their approach may take time. Asking questions to support and expand the child learning is part of the elements suggested by the current curriculum (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). This finding concurs with a study in Estonia where teachers did not encourage the children to higher levels of creativity and intervened while the child played (Kimer et al., 2016).

Another issue is the lack of classroom management which frequently resulted in a great deal of chaos and disorder, with children beating each other, running around in the classroom, and making a lot of noise. Very often the teachers had a hard time to manage or resolve the situation or maintain a calm and orderly classroom. Such issues occurred in five out of the six classes in this study. Thus, how the teachers prepare and implement CCC has a direct influence on the child's development. Teachers' knowledge and understanding around the pertinence of play needs to be enhanced. In addition to teachers' classroom management skills, adequate resources need to be provided for the schools in order for the children to play and engage. This is an important issue that needs to be addressed.

This section has analysed the voices of the children and has identified issues around teachers' implementation of CCC tied in with the children's learning. The next section will examine teachers' views of their successful practice and their favourite aspects of teaching.

5.4.2 Teacher's views of successful practice and teachers' favourite aspects of teaching

Teachers' views of successful practice

The findings reveal that there are varied views from teachers and principals in regard to achievement and successful practices. Phonics, progression/achievement of a child's learning and development, ability to follow the session plans, and knowledge gained from PD were viewed as successes and achievements in teachers' teaching practices. There could be several reasons for these particular aspects of success being identified. With reference to phonics, this approach is newly introduced into the revised curriculum. Teachers were amazed and proud seeing

that their children could ‘read’ by putting three to four letters together. These significant changes are also being seen by parents, who mentioned that their children like reading. The children’s progression was also seen through the creativity and capability of what they did during the play corner, such as children drawing or writing, or creating a cake out of bottle lids and blocks. In addition, playing and manipulating dried beans creatively was seen as an achievement by teachers. (Examples are illustrated in Figure 5.5.3)

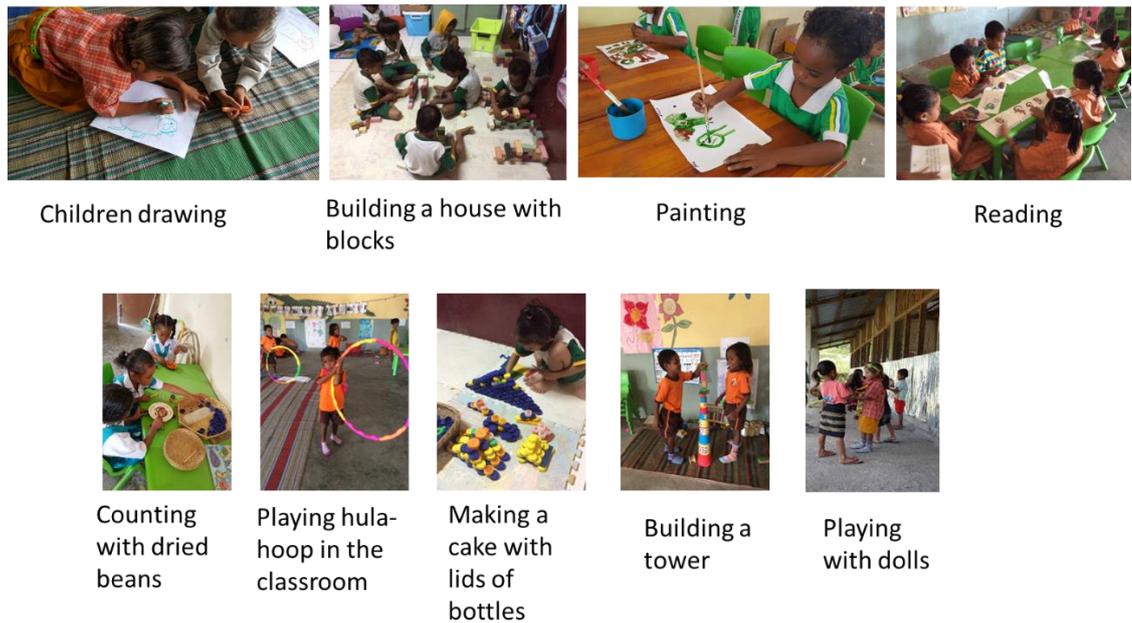


Figure 5.5.3: Children’s creativity

These successes and achievements draw attention to the process of change and to adopting the new model of teaching within a CCC (refer to Figure 5.5.1). Seeing positive changes in the new model could encourage and motivate teachers to move forward from the ‘commit’ stage to the ‘adopt stage’. Moreover, change in itself requires time and processes to be adopted (Fisher, 2005; Fisher, 2012; Morrison & Ferrier-Kerr, 2015). Following the session plans and understanding and implementing what PD has to offer is categorised as an achievement. This may be due to teachers seeing positive outcomes and having greater acceptance of the new model of teaching using a CCC. The vision of the MoE is to provide a quality education for Timorese children. Whilst there are considerable shortcomings in the delivery of this vision, the revised pre-school curriculum has resulted in some positive signs (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2011). With some more support

from the MoE, an increasing number of positive achievements may continue to improve children's educational experiences in preschool.

Teachers' favourite aspects of their teaching

A teacher's passion, or at least enjoyment of what they are doing is essential. As research shows, teachers having a love or passion for what they do has a direct influence on children's learning and the relationships between teacher and children (Peters, 2014; Smidt, 2011). There were some similarities between teachers' views about their achievements and what they enjoy most about teaching. Using the session plans and phonics also emerged as favourite aspects of teaching. Other prevalent responses included: reading to the children, seeing children drawing and playing, counting and singing with the children.

The current situation in Timor-Leste is that one teacher takes charge of all the areas in teaching, whereas in more developed countries there may be greater division of labour for certain subjects such as art or physical education, having a collaborative teaching team, or even having a teaching assistant to help. At the moment, with the amount of work that needs to be done, low pay and a lack of resources, these issues can sometimes contribute to teachers' lack of motivation. Habitual reasons for teacher absenteeism include attending cultural ceremonies, bad weather (particularly heavy rain/flooding), and having to look after their own children/families results in many children being victims of missed opportunities to learn. Bringing both teachers' achievements and what they enjoy most into their teaching counts is an important part of what the MoE needs to take account of in order to reinforce and continually support those achievements and enhance teachers' abilities.

5.3.3 Assessments

How assessment is done, who is involved in the assessment, and how the information from the assessment is used are tied in with the way CCC is implemented. The findings from this research indicate that in each preschool where data was collected, different ways of assessing the children were adopted. Quantitative methods, checklists, narratives, and a combination of narratives and checklists were the types of assessment used (refer to Chapter 4). The assessment often happens during developmental play-in the play corner, where most teachers

focused on assessing literacy and numeracy. Only one teacher mentioned assessing children in their socio-emotional competences.

The revised curriculum holds two principle objectives for assessment: to help learning processes in the future, and to assess the teaching processes that are conducted and implemented (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). The curriculum also encourages teachers to utilise both formal and informal (formative and summative) forms of assessment (refer to Chapter 2). Moreover, the curriculum highlights the notion that the “teacher needs to have better knowledge of their [children] so they are able to explain what the [children] have done in the classroom and point out the level of progress that she/he obtained” (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014, p. 23). The findings identify that across the four preschools there was no unification of how teachers conducted assessment, even though they used the same curriculum. This may be related to a lack of teachers’ knowledge about the principles of assessing children and because the curriculum is relatively new, the teachers may need more time in order to adjust.

The purpose of assessing the child is to see to what extent there is progress in their learning, and what support is required for the teacher to help the child achieve further progress (Arndt & Tesar, 2015; Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). Assessment in this sense should be promoting learning for the children (Clarke, 2003). Rating children using a score or ticking a checklist when assessing a child’s ability is not promoting learning. Measuring the child’s ability using a summative approach is not enough to show the process of the child’s learning. However, using more descriptive methods to determine a child’s progress is more useful for the teacher, children and parents. The curriculum requires teachers to use three steps to support, expand and conduct formative assessment on a daily basis.

Asking questions, giving credit/ value for a child’s work, and guiding the child to move forward are part of the expectations for teacher practice (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2014). Adopting this practice, teachers can use all the information as feedback to modify their teaching and learning (William (2011). According to Clarke (2003), any form of feedback has an influence on the children, hence, the feedback should be effective in motivating children’s learning, not detrimental. Davies (2009) cites that it is important to provide what is working for

learning. However, summative assessments were found by the researcher to be the dominant form of assessment. Only one school out of the four had done any formative assessment. As a result, Timorese teachers need more information and knowledge around assessment methodology to effectively adopt CCC.

In addition, the assessment records and the child's work are given to parents each trimester with a report of the child's progress. The assessment book describes what the child has learned and what support is required from both parents and teachers. Nevertheless, this collaboration between parent and teacher was not mentioned by teachers nor principals in any of the schools. This could be because of the lack of regular communication between school and parents to support the children. Thus, issues around the lack of clarity of purposes for assessment and formative assessment approaches was evident from this study.

5.4 Research Question 3:

What are parents' understanding of CCC learning within the new preschool education curriculum in TL?

The analysis of the findings on parents' understandings of CCC reveals that the majority of parents did not understand or had not been informed of the intentions of the revised curriculum. A smaller proportion, who mainly comprised of parents who held positions as preschool teachers, were able to answer questions related to their understanding of CCC. In this section, the third research question is examined with reference to the influences of political, cultural and institutional factors in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, with a particular focus on the macrosystem and exosystem layers.

5.4.1. Political factors

One of the guiding principles of Article 6 of the Preschool decree law¹, 2015, Timor-Leste, concerns proximity to family and community. Article 11 emphasises: "Close relationship with the family and community"; it includes the point that "The curriculum is developed based on a close collaboration with the family and the community in which the pre-school falls." (Government of Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015, pp. 7727-7730).

¹ Translated from Portuguese language

These Articles lead the researcher to question as to what extent a genuine collaboration has been built between parents, communities and curriculum developers. This raises questions like: does the collaboration with family genuinely encompass the parents? Which area of the collaboration with family was built prior to the revised curriculum? And is the collaboration equally effective in the urban areas and rural areas? The answers to these questions emerged when one group of parents was silent when questioned, and two other groups of parents acknowledged that they did not know what CCC means and had not felt involved in developing this curriculum.

The group of parents that offered the most comprehensive answers was mainly dominated by preschool teachers. The other three groups responded as best they could with regard to the progress of their child's development. Therefore, it became clear that although the policy exists, it does not align with the data from this research. Further work will be required to establish how to genuinely inform, consult and collaborate with parents in policy and curriculum development in the future.

5.4.2. Cultural factors (macrosystem)

Timor-Leste has long utilised education as a forum for cultural invasion by colonial powers (see chapter one). Parents' lack of understanding of CCC could be due to the influence of the previous education system in which they were educated, where it was assumed that "teachers know everything" and were "not to be questioned". In the past, parents or family were only informed when a child was in trouble. This strong division of roles and relationships, where teachers had authority at school and parents at home was not built to support the child's learning progress.

The findings of this study identify that some parents drop their child at school, and often these parents or family members will sit outside or stand near the window while waiting for the child to finish school. Other parents drop their child at the start of school and pick them up at the main door or the gate when school is finished. This depends on the school as not all schools have the same facilities. In this cultural context, the involvement of the parents or family only occurs on special occasions, despite many parents being available and present during the school day.

5.4.3. Institutional factors (exosystem)

Institutional factors can contribute to determining whether parents are fully informed about changes made in education. However, in Timor-Leste most parents' participation in schooling is minimal as parents only receive their children's reports or notices related to financial issues around uniform or tuition fees. Brumbaugh (2008) affirms that in CCC relationships are a fundamental aspect of supporting any child in preschool. Yet Buckler (2015) argues that having different values may create complexity in these relationships. To improve parents' involvement in CCC in Timor-Leste, a commitment to finding shared values and goals will need to be made.

Brumbaugh (2008) and Maeda (2015) suggest that parental and community involvement in school is essential, as both parts can offer support to one another when supporting the child's learning. It is necessary here to clarify what is meant by "both parts". Parents or family know more about their child with regard to what they like and do not like. Moreover, family or parents in Timor-Leste spend the most time with the child. Teachers at school only have contact with the child during school hours. Hence, to benefit from the exchange of information about the child's developmental and educational needs and interests, a relationship between parents and teachers needs to be established and maintained. Figure 5.5.4 draws on ideas from the literature to show how the child could be placed at the centre of such a relationship. Each arrow shows the cycle of two-way information or connectedness that is built between the school and family, with the focus being on creating positive experiences and support for the child.

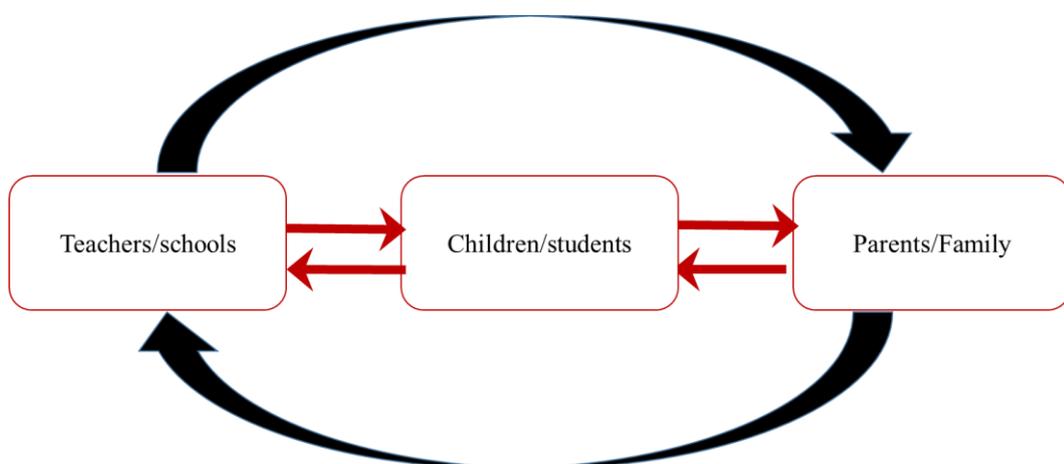


Figure 5.5.4: Relationships required to support children

Despite the parents' lack of understanding about CCC, they did comment on the notable progression they had observed in their children. For example, they spoke of improvements in their children's levels of confidence since starting preschool and expressed pride with regards to their children being able to read, count, sing, draw and write their names. Most parents focused on progress in terms of literacy and numeracy, and only a few mentioned the importance of play or social relationships. In this context, this could be a reflection of past colonial influence where the parents were educated through a system in which learning was measured in terms of the ability to write, read, count and calculate. Today, even though parents seemed to understand that play was important, only some explicitly acknowledged that play was beneficial for learning.

5.4.3.1 Positive transition

This study also found that parents have a high expectation for a positive transition for their children into primary school. In order for a child to have a successful transition to a new setting, preparation and support should start at an early stage. This support can and should be provided by both the family and the school (Perry et al., 2014). According to Peters (2010), a successful transition does not merely happen instantaneously. Successful transitions require processes, interactions and experiences (Perry et al., 2014) so that feelings of security, belongingness, being recognised, and respected are developed through mutually supportive relationships (Peters, 2003, 2010). Therefore, this attests that when transitioning to a school, teachers, parents and the family need to cooperate in order for the expectations of the parents and the success of the child to become a reality.

To summarise this section, there appears to be inconsistency between the policy as stated in Articles 6 and 11 and the application of this policy in Timor-Leste. Little evidence of genuine collaboration between schools and families was found in this study. The researcher's findings indicate that the parents' understanding of CCC is still very low. However, the parents did recognise that there have been positive changes with the introduction and implementation of new curriculum. Nevertheless, building relationships that enhance cooperation between schools and families remain critically important to support the child in pre-school and to provide a smooth transition to primary school to meet the expectations of both parents and

teachers. This should be a focus in future research, as this study has revealed that these relationships are currently underutilised and ineffective.

5.5 Research Question 4:

In what ways might child-centred teaching be enhanced?

To address how and in what ways CC teaching can be enhanced in Timor-Leste, the most common and essential themes have been identified and will be discussed in this chapter. These common themes comprise teachers' requests for continuity of professional development, lack of resources, issues with the physical environment, language, environmental factors, and children's meals. The findings encompass various factors that are not the primary focus of this study, but they are interrelated and contribute to enhancing CC teaching in a Timorese context.

5.5.1 Continuity of professional development

Teachers and principals voiced their need for more and more relevant professional development (PD) and for continuity of PD, rather than its provision only at the implementation of the new curriculum. These findings reveal that teachers and principals do acknowledge that they need greater support and guidance to implement CCC in their school. Their requests for PD included a myriad of aspects: phonics, sharing best practice, reinforcing teachers teaching practice, and for teachers to identify and understand their roles as teachers. However, during the classroom observation, more issues which had not been mentioned by teachers were also found such as poor classroom and time management, teachers over intervening during the learning process, teachers helping in the child's final work rather than encouraging the child to do the work, and creativity appearing to be overlooked. These issues could be related to the teachers' educational backgrounds (refer to Chapter 3). In addition, another probable explanation is that these issues which were encountered by teachers are the result of shifting to different models/ways of teaching where they are uncertain or do not know how to move on (van Gennepe, 1977). Ongoing PD could enable teachers to address these issues over time.

Continuity of PD is proposed, but this should not cover the pedagogy of the curriculum in general; rather it needs to focus specifically on the areas that are yet to be addressed. For instance, PD on teaching of phonics should address how to sound all the letters, as some teachers still lack an understanding of making the

correct sound for some letters. Opportunities for sharing best practice are one of the requirements that both principals and teachers are seeking. Sharing experiences with other teachers provides opportunities to clarify and address some difficulties, as well as to help to develop professional relationships with other teachers. For example, sharing best practice issues around time and classroom management may enable concerns to be discussed and tackled.

Moreover, if the MoE provides PD it could also affirm the value of the child's work and play as evidence of learning, and address strategies to intervene less often when the child is engaged in activities (see Chapter 1). Finally, PD may be conducted in both formal and informal situations, creating opportunities for information and knowledge to be shared and understood by both teachers and principals. This may take place in a number of different environments where staff can feel comfortable to express their needs, concerns and questions. Hence, PD could both facilitate the professional learning of more experienced teachers and extend the skills and knowledge of teachers who are not well qualified so they may all perform well in their teaching practice.

5.5.2 Lack of physical resources

Resources such as story books that align with the theme of the week and the session plans should have been provided or included along with the session plan package but were often not available. According to two schools, the teachers and principals stated that very often they received the same book with the same title instead of the book that they requested.

This indicates that when there is a lack of available resources, teachers have difficulties in their teaching practice. This can be related to Bronfenbrenner (1986)'s ecological system, particularly the microsystem level where the setting is the fundamental core of the interaction. If the resources or other elements in the environment fail to provide a positive setting, then there are barriers to the learning process. Furthermore, based on Tomaševski (2001), the conceptual framework of the 4As scheme notes that within education, resources should be *Available*. Otherwise instead of education being *Accessible*, it becomes a barrier. As such, issues around what story books and materials should be included as part of session plan packages should be actioned immediately by the MoE to support the learning process to minimise these kind of dilemmas in teaching.

5.5.3 Issues with the physical environment

Lack of space, no playground, lack of security, no toilet facilities or access to water are still major concerns for the schools where the data was collected. Notwithstanding these challenges among the four preschools, each school encountered additional barriers. For instance, Preschool number 1 had problems with no toilet facilities or access to water, so the teachers had to fetch water in buckets when they came to school. In addition, the playground was in poor condition and had no fence, and the classroom lighting was very poor. Moreover, the parents from this preschool (Parents group 1) asked if the school and the MoE could provide toilets for the children as some lived very far from the school and this was a concern for them.

Preschool number 2 had classrooms in very poor condition which were overcrowded and had a very large number of children. They also had no playground, electricity, toilet or clean water available on the site. There was no fence for security, so animals, such as goats and cows would also wander about the school. This meant that the children had no opportunity to play outside in a safe and secure environment.

Preschool number 3 had basic facilities, but a very small space in their school. Issues around limited space resulted in teachers having difficulties in arranging activities in which the child could play and interact. Limited space also caused insecurity as children that had insufficient space were not able to move around safely in the classroom. This means CCC may not be well implemented where limited space is a barrier.

Finally, preschool number 4 needed a playground for the children to play in and a fence around the school, so the community around the neighbourhood could not use the toilet and water from the school during the school hours. The parents also asked if the MoE could build a fence around the school for the security of their children. Moreover, during classroom observations, the researcher found that electricity and light was poor, and the condition of the classroom was also substandard.

These issues around the physical environmental causes difficulties for teachers, children and parents collectively. The location of the preschools, whether rural or urban is also influential. As rural preschool has less facilities, no playground, electricity, access to clean water and toilet and having a secure fence in the school

are barriers for three of the preschools. Therefore, children's right to access education with an adequate and safe environment needs to be addressed by people in power.

5.5.4 Language and Environmental factors

The Preschool Decree Law 2015, Article 13, states that the “use of the first language of the children as a tool for effective access to curriculum content [is required]” (Government of Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015, p. 7731) Nevertheless, in the findings of this study, particularly in classroom observations across the four preschools, teachers tended to interchange between the languages of Tetum and Portuguese. This phenomenon most often occurred in math, singing songs, and some literacy activities, and was even evident in conversations or in instruction from teachers to the children. None of the four preschools used the mother tongue.

The lack of clarity about language sometimes caused a dilemma for parents. For example, parents from Parents group 3 claimed that “often my son did not recognise the number that I showed him, I teach him in Tetum and he told me in Portuguese”. Teacher Deoneia raised a similar issue, as she said her children reverted automatically to Portuguese after one-digit numbers. Although only one teacher and one group of parents mentioned language, it is still considered a significant challenge, particularly given Timor-Leste's colonial past and the link between language, identity and learning.

Environmental factors like weather and storms may cause gaps and difficulties during the learning process, particularly in rural areas. At Preschool number 2, when the researcher visited the school most of the children were absent because there was no bridge to cross from their house to their school. Some of the children live a long way from the school, which meant it was too far for young children to come in bad weather. For example, out of a total of 39 children, only two came on the first day when the researcher collected data.

5.5.5 Children's meal (Merenda Pre-Eskolár)

From an economic perspective, issues around poverty and malnutrition (49.9 percent of children have stunted growth) are categorised as having a high impact in Timor-Leste (SitAn Committee & UNICEF, 2015). Thus, free food would make a huge difference to learning. The MoE have a programme called *Merenda Pre-*

Eskolár where children get a free meal during their break time. The findings of this study revealed that not all preschools had the same access to *Merenda Pre-Eskolár*. There was a clear division between public preschools, private preschools and Catholic preschools about how meals were provided. For instance, two of the preschools in the research had no access to *Merenda Pre-Eskolár*, (state school in rural area and Catholic school in sub-urban area), so a decline in the numbers of children who attended these preschools was apparent. Teachers from both schools said that “The children do not want to come to school because there is no *Merenda Pre-Eskolár*”, and they continued that ‘most kids have high motivation to come to school because of the free food they get from school’”

5.6 Limitations

There are some limitations to be found in this discussion chapter. In particular, data from the interviews with teachers and principals may seem limited in enabling the researcher to delve into the subject area more thoroughly. For instance, questions about professional development were not included in the interviews because the research focus was on the nature of the curriculum implementation, rather than the wider aspects of teaching. Similarly, follow-up questions on other ways of implementing CCC were not asked due to early research experiences indicating that teachers and principals tended to repeat their answers, so the first answer was likely to be accurate. In addition, resource factors, especially available time, limited my participants to a relatively small number of schools when a larger sample size would have been preferable.

5.7 Chapter Summary

There are four main sections in this chapter that discuss the four main research questions generated from the findings in Chapter Four.

The section on question one addressed perspectives on the current curriculum and the teachers’ and principals’ understanding of CCC. Section two discussed the importance of the play corner and the children’s voices on play. Moreover, the discussion included teachers’ views on what they considered to be successful practices, their favourite part of the curriculum, and how they conducted assessment.

Section three revealed that the majority of parents did not understand or had not been informed of the intentions of the revised curriculum. Furthermore, unlike

stated aim of policy, there was a little collaboration between parents and the school. Finally, the last section discussed various factors that are not the primary focus of this study but are interrelated and contribute to enhancing CC teaching such as a lack of resources and issues with the physical environment. Conclusions and recommendations derived from these findings will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Introduction / summary of the research

This final chapter consists of six sections. The first section concludes the major findings corresponding to the four research questions. Theoretical and policy implications are presented in sections two and three. Then, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are addressed in sections four and five. Finally, the conclusion of the study is summarised and presented.

This study set out to explore teachers' perspectives, understanding and methods of implementing the new child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste. This curriculum reform was introduced in 2014 and sought to introduce the new child-centred curriculum (CCC) approach. The reasons and motivation for conducting this research arose from the researcher's personal educational upbringing and associated career within the education sector.

Studies that focus on the preschool context in Timor-Leste are very scant. Reports from national and international agencies such as UNICEF and the World Bank have addressed the provision, type and quality of education that Timorese children receive, and have highlighted serious issues that need to be addressed for the future of the nation. The academic success of children is heavily reliant on teachers. No matter how good the country's education programme may be, if teachers lack knowledge and understanding of what they are teaching, the learning outcomes for the children will suffer. Hence, teachers play a very important role and are at the core of delivering pedagogical practices that are central to the learning outcomes of children.

The research sought to answer four questions:

1. What are teachers' understanding of child-centred curriculum within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
2. In what ways do teachers implement child-centred teaching practices?
3. What are parents' understanding of child-centred curriculum within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?
4. In what ways might child-centred teaching be enhanced?

To address these research questions, the researcher used an interpretivist paradigm as a philosophical framework within a qualitative approach. Multiple methods including individual interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and questionnaires were used as a means of gathering data. The major findings are presented in the following sections.

6.2 Key findings

This section synthesises the empirical evidence that has been utilised to address the study's four research questions. The first three questions focus on different aspects of a CCC, with the last question discussed under the perspective of policy implications and how to improve the CCC in Timor-Leste.

1. What are teachers' understanding of child-centred curriculum within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?

This question has been addressed in two parts. The first finding of this study was that the revised curriculum has had a positive impact on teachers, principals, parents and children, and that the packages comprising teachers' session plans have guided, helped and instructed the teachers in their teaching practices (see chapter five). For example, teachers were motivated when seeing that children and parents were pleased with the transition to a CCC. The second finding of this study indicated that teachers do not yet fully understand the concept of a CCC. The teachers' perspectives around CCC are still tied to and influenced by the legacy of their previous approaches, which framed how the learning was put into practice. This was related to the nation's history of colonisation, the use of rote learning and the emphasis on teacher-directed learning.

2. In what ways do teachers implement child-centred teaching practices?

With regard to question two, the study found that the implementation of a CCC was mainly evident in the *halimar kantu* (play corner). The connection between teachers' existing views, understandings of CCC, and the implementation of CCC suggests that the child and the child's learning have not yet been fully placed at the centre of the education system. These findings were reflected in teachers' interventions during the children's play and their lack of scaffolding and support when encouraging and extending the children. On the other hand, some educational

progress has been achieved using the CCC and the revised curriculum. For example, children are better able to read and sound out some letters and they can count. Therefore, teachers following the session plans with the new model of the CCC seems to have led to improvements in learning and educational success.

The study also shows that the methods with which teachers conduct assessment among the four schools varied and indicated a lack of consistency from one preschool to another. The majority of teachers used assessment information to report to parents each trimester, but only a minority of the teachers said they used assessment information to support the child. Teachers and principals highlighted the need for more professional development (PD) and alternative types of PD, such as sharing best practice and the reinforcement of some specific knowledge and skills (e.g. phonics) on a more regular basis to support and develop their teaching practices.

3. What are parents' understanding of child-centred curriculum within the new preschool education curriculum in Timor-Leste?

This study indicated that parents generally have very little understanding of the CCC. The parents acknowledged that they had seen their children's learning progress, although they tended to view learning as being about the ability to read, count and write. There was clear pride when some parents saw that their children were now able to write their names and were able to read four to five letter words phonetically. However, the majority of parents did not mention anything concerning their child's socio-emotional development. These views are likely to be related to cultural factors, as parents' involvement in their child's schooling is limited to financial issues or issues of misbehaviour. Apart from these interactions, there is very little contact between parents and schools. Furthermore, the parents believed that the basic knowledge the children learn in preschool around literacy and numeracy will provide a basic foundation for the next level of learning. These parents also had high expectations of their children's successful transition to the primary level.

6.3 Theoretical implications

The central premise of a CCC is to provide space for the child to develop, grow, and become better at problem solving (Attard et al., 2010; Song, 2015).

Similarly, CCC approaches to learning places children as active agents (Ryan, 2007). However, the findings from this study indicate that the possibilities for enacting these ideals in practice is currently low in Timor-Leste. Very often teachers have limited knowledge about how to support the children's creativity. Moreover, limited resources, small classroom spaces and large numbers of students have resulted in more barriers for teachers when conducting their teaching practices, as well as limited space for the children to learn. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of O'Neill and McMahon (2005b), and Song (2015), who found that factors that hamper or hinder the implementation of CCC include large numbers of children in a classroom and lack of resources.

Good assessment should promote learning and create dynamic circumstances where children can grow and respond to their social environments (Clarke, 2003; Ussher & Earl, 2010). This thesis's findings indicated that summative assessment was mainly utilised by teachers when assessing the children. The majority of the teachers used checklists for grading and measuring the ability of the child in each school. Only a very limited number of teachers used narrative or descriptive assessment for each child's development of learning. Therefore, preschool teachers' knowledge and practices of assessment require further development in terms of applying formative assessment approaches, such as learning stories.

In addition, relationships and the involvement of the family in the child's learning environments are considered critical in a CCC setting (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017; Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2012; Peters & Paki, 2015). However, the findings of this study illustrate that the involvement of parents in their children's education remained very low in Timor-Leste.

6.3.1 Practical implication

Therefore, engaging the family in the education system, enhancing positive relationships with parents and dialogue about what the child is learning at home and school, and communicating what support parents can contribute to their child's development are areas requiring attention.

Creating ongoing PD will support teachers to become better able to make changes in their teaching practices (Armour & Makopoulou, 2012; Murray, 2010). The way PD is implemented in Timor-Leste is that information and training is filtered down from one level to another level (see chapter 4), rather like “Chinese whispers”. This study illustrates that preschool teachers require more PD, delivered in ways that are meaningful to them. There are some areas of teaching and learning that teachers were not familiar with or knowledgeable enough about. Thus, the MoE could consider the way PD is conducted. For example, by having a greater focus on addressing the specific needs of individual teachers through observation and monitoring from the inspectorate, and coaching and mentoring programmes to enhance and reinforce teachers’ knowledge and practices.

6.4 Policy implications

With respect to the policy context in Timor-Leste, the decree law, the policy framework for preschool education, and the revised curriculum do value the importance of a CCC. The vision of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2011- 2030 states that by “2025 the population of Timor-Leste will be educated, knowledgeable and qualified to live a long and productive life” (Ministry of Education Timor-Leste, 2011, pp. 7-8). The policy and the strategic plan also highlight the importance of the rights of the child to the country. In addition, using the metaphor of *Weaving a Tais for Children in Timor-Leste* illustrates and recognises that many strands of life (policy, society, school, family, culture) contribute to the child’s learning (Ministry of Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2012). Yet, the practices and implementation of the CCC at the current stage are not in line with these policies, hampering the educational vision at which the policy aims.

Providing and affirming the right to learn is part of what every child should experience, as every child has the right to be educated (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007). There are interconnected relationships between types of governmental human rights and responsibilities for ensuring the rights of the child are realised. Educational rights can be translated into fundamental educational needs, such as the right to education, rights within education, and rights through education (Thomas, 2009; Tomaševski, 2001, 2006). Tomaševski (2001) uses human rights as the lens for

creating a conceptual framework that removes barriers to education. This framework, the 4As scheme, describes making education *Available, Accessible, Acceptable* and *Adaptable*. However, my study indicates that children's rights in Timor-Leste are not being effectively addressed in practice. There are major issues for children to experience an education that is *Available, Accessible, Acceptable* and *Adaptable* (Tomaševski, 2001). In many communities, only a small percentage of children have access to preschool. In addition, many teachers lack the necessary teaching pedagogy and skills to manage the classroom; and there is also a lack of resources and security in most schools.

There is, therefore, a definite need for the policy to consider that the 2025 vision (see chapter one) may not become a reality if these profound issues in the education system are not addressed. Moreover, providing equal resources to all pre-schools and giving the right support to all teachers in the country requires immediate action. Hence, the fourth research question provides some suggestions for the alignment of policy and practice.

4. In what ways might child-centred teaching be enhanced?

In order to achieve the educational vision that the country is aiming for, providing school resources and various forms of support to teachers and principals are vital. Government logistics and management need to ensure the right learning materials are provided at the correct times in line with the session plans (storybooks, toys, paper), as well as ensuring basic facilities such as toilets and clean water are available at every school.

A robust plan for PD needs to be established using different approaches for teacher training, such as collaborative learning, sharing of best practices among the teachers, and greater use of coaching and mentoring programmes. Such an implementation of a range of formal and informal approaches will assist individual teachers to address the gaps in their skills and pedagogical knowledge. Reinforcement of particular areas of PD, particularly phonics, the importance of play, and the purpose of assessment are urgently required. A system of regular and consistent follow up on the impact of PD is also needed in every preschool, whether it is in an urban or rural area, as currently rural schools are under-served. Making assumptions that PD has been “delivered” does not guarantee that teachers have sufficient knowledge to

apply this knowledge to create programmes that are successful. Furthermore, the creation of a relationship between schools and the families play a vital part in supporting children within the CCC, and strategies to engage with families should be the focus of the professional learning.

In addition, the government needs to provide a strong directive concerning what language of instruction should be used in preschools, as some confusion arose among parents about how to help their children, as teachers were not consistent in their choice of language in the classroom. Although the policy states that the mother tongue and Tetum are the preferred language of instruction, this is not always enforced. The continued influence of Portuguese and the need to elevate the status of Tetum and the mother tongue are thus critical areas in CC in Timor-Leste.

Another area that needs to be addressed is the wellbeing and nutrition of the children. When children are hungry, they cannot learn and focus. The government should therefore continue providing free food for the children under the *Merenda Pre-eskolár* programme, as high levels of malnutrition and stunted growth still exist in the country. This study indicates that providing free meals not only support healthy development, but also encourages the children to come to school even if they have to walk 4-5 km.

6. 5 Limitations of the study

When considering the finding of this study, a number of important limitations need to be taken into account, some of which are due to restricted time constraints, resources and financial constraints.

Firstly, there are over two hundred preschools in Timor-Leste but only four were selected for this study. Although each type of preschool was represented (public, private and Catholic preschools) and different environmental settings (urban, suburban and rural) were selected, this small sample is not sufficiently representative of the total population. Findings may have been different with a larger sample. Data from the interviews with teachers and principals was limited, although it did enable the researcher to delve into some subject areas more thoroughly. For instance, questions about professional development were not included in the interviews because the research focus was on the nature of curriculum implementation rather than the wider aspects of teaching.

Secondly, although a cultural “insider” conducted the study, having only one week in each preschool was not enough for the researcher to build strong relationships with the teachers, parents and the children. Consequently, issues around insecurity, shyness and lack of confidence emerged during the interviews with the teachers, principals, some groups of parents, and some groups of children. Two of the parent focus groups hardly engaged during the interviews, and as a result their responses were limited. One group of parents only had a few participants because of a misunderstanding that occurred between the school’s principal and parents. In hindsight, the management and confirmation of communications should have been checked by the researcher. In addition, during the classroom observations and video recordings, the researcher noted that some of the teachers seemed to feel insecure and uncomfortable. These observations may therefore not reflect daily practice.

It was noted that during some interviews, the follow up questions were mostly being ignored and sometimes the same answers were repeated. This could be due to the limited time the researcher had with the participants and maybe the researcher did not ask the right questions or in the right way. On the other hand, when reviewing transcripts after the data was collected, it was found that half of the participants agreed upon what was said in the paper without rereading the transcript, and the other half of the participants did make some changes and returned them to the researcher. To counter some of the limitations, multi-methods were used to triangulate the data gathered.

6.6 Recommendations for future research

Many questions that need further investigation emerged during this research.

More research is needed to better understand how to optimise professional development and how to improve the follow up and support from MoE. Firstly, with regards to the approach that is currently used by teacher trainers for PD, pertinent questions are: How effectively does PD assist teachers to implement the CCC? If there are gaps in teachers’ knowledge or difficulties are encountered by teachers in their teaching practice, what type of support should or could they receive to improve their skills? To what extent should MoE staff, in particular the inspectorate, monitor preschools? And finally, what form should this monitoring take so as to be effective and appropriate, particularly considering the geographical

remoteness of some schools? Further research might explore how coaching and mentoring within and among schools can be used to support teachers and principal's development in their work.

Furthermore, it is recommended that additional research be undertaken to address families' current lack of involvement in their children's schools. This might consider how the relationship between the school and family contributes to the child's learning and development. Similarly, it would be interesting to assess the effects and type of assessments, and to examine which types of assessments encourage and motivate the children and contribute to their learning and development. In addition, phonics emerged as an integral element of the findings, thus further investigation concerning the role of phonics within the framework of CCC would be of benefit to Timor-Leste.

6.7 Chapter Summary

Teachers in Timor-Leste are in a process of transition from a colonial, rote learning curriculum to a child-centred curriculum. The voices from the participants in this study around curriculum reform made clear that the changes had been perceived as being positive and helpful guidance. Unfortunately, understanding and implementation of CCC was still dominated by previous teacher-oriented styles of thinking. This likely contributed to the finding that collaboration between family and school were still low.

However, while there is a commitment to engage with and implement the revised curriculum, the lack of professional learning opportunities, limited resources, and inadequate provision of basic needs, toilet facilities and running water, remain significant barriers. It has been suggested that the MoE can act and ease these barriers, and that further study around PD, coaching and mentoring, family involvement, assessment and phonic should be future priorities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of Request for Permission to the Department of Education-Translated

Te Kura Toi Tangata
Faculty of Education Phone +64 7 838 4500
The University of Waikato waikato.ac.nz/education
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



May 15, 2017

Mr. Cidalio Leite
Director General-In-Charge, Preschool and Primary Education
Ministry of Education
Dili, Timor-Leste

Dear Mr. Leite:

Greetings!

I am Lucia Guterres De Araujo, a postgraduate student pursuing a Master of Education degree at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. For my thesis, I am conducting a study entitled *“Teachers’ perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste”* which aims to investigate teachers’ comprehension of child-centred teaching and learning in relation to the new preschool curriculum. This research study has been approved by the University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee.

This information letter seeks your permission to invite preschool principals and teachers to participate in this study. The target preschools will be selected to include a representative range; according to ownership of preschool (government preschool and catholic preschool), geographical factors (rural and urban), and size (large preschools and small preschools). Research will be conducted in a total of four preschools, with over two days in each preschool.

Should you give permission to conduct this study, the principals and teachers will be invited to participate in this research through an information letter. Should these principals and teachers give their consent to participate in the study, then the interview process will be conducted by me in their preschool, at a date and time suitable to them between 29th May-17th July. The interviews will take approximately 40 minutes, with the Timorese language (Tetum) being used as the medium of communication. With the participants' consent, the interviews will be audio-recorded. The data will be transcribed and will be returned to the participants within the week of the interview for review. In addition, I will undertake classroom observations, using video recordings of episodes of literacy, numeracy, and general development.

I will also ask the preschool teacher to inform parents and students about the study and will place a notice in front of the classroom inviting parents to participate in a Focus Group discussion. Parents whose children agree to take part in an interview will be asked to give their permission.

All responses from the participants will be treated confidentially. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants and preschools. Similarly, the participants and their preschools will not be named in any publications, presentations, or reports that are produced from the study. Participants will be given a summary of key findings at the completion of the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their data before 1st of August 2017. If you would like any more information about the study, please contact me at +670 7792 7805 or by email lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz or my research supervisors by email- Dr Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Thank you very much for your time and I hope for your positive response on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo

Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone : +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)

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Te Kura Toi Tangata
Faculty of Education Phone +64 7 838 4500
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Hamilton, New Zealand



15 Maio, 2017

Sr. Cidalio Leite

Diretór Jerál-Enarregado, Edukasaun Pre-eskolár no Primária
Departamentu Edukasaun
Dili, Timor-Leste

Ex.mo Senhor Leite:

Komprimentus!

Ha'u Lucia Guterres De Araujo, nu'udar estudante pozgraduadu ne'ebé hala'o hela kursu Masteradu ba Edukasaun iha Universidade Waikato, Hamilton, Nova Zelandia. Ba Ha'u-nia teze, Ha'u hala'o hela estudu ida ho titulu "*Profesór nia perspetiva no implementasaun kona-ba kurrikulu ne'ebé sentradu ba labarik/alunu ba edukasaun pre-eskolár iha Timor-Leste.*" Ho objetivu atu investiga profesór sira-nia komprensaun kona-ba 'metodu sentradu iha alunu' hanorin no aprende ne'ebé relasiona ho kurikulu pre-eskolár nian. Peskiza ida-ne'e hetan ona aprovasaun husi Universidade Waikato nia Komisaun Étiku ba Peskiza.

Karta notifikasuan ida-ne'e atu husu ita-boot nia lisensa atu konvida diretór no professor pre-eskolár nian atu partisipa iha estudu ida-ne'e. Eskola ne'ebé sai alvu sei sesiona atu inklui ho reprezentativu; tuir eskola nia propriedade (pre-eskolár públiku no pre-eskolár katólíka) no fatór jeográfiku, hanesan rurál no urbana; no eskola boot no eskola ki'ik. Perkiza sei hala'o iha total pre-eskolár haat, ho tempu liu lora rua iha kada eskola.

Karik ita-boot fó lisensa atu hala'o estudu ida-ne'e, diretór no profesór sira sei hetan konvite atu partisipa iha peskiza ne'e liuhusi karta informasaun. Diretór no profesór sira mós sei fó sira-nia aprovasaun (hatán) atu partisipa iha estudu ne'e; tuirmai Ha'u sei hala'o prosesu entrevista iha sira-nia eskola, lora no tempu ne'ebé

adequadu ba sira entre 29 Maiu – 17 Jullu 2017. Entrevista sei lori tempu maizumenus minute 40 ho lingua Timór nian (Tetun) ne'ebé uza hanesan médiu komunikasaun. Ho partisipante sira-nia aprovasaun, entrevista sei halo gravasaun áudio. Dadus sei transkreve no sei fó fila ba partisipante sira iha semana ida nia laran husi entrevista atu hetan revizaun. Tuirmai, sei hala'o obzervasaun iha sala de aula uza gravasaun vídeo iha epizódiu balu iha literasia, matemátika no dezvoltamentu jerál.

Ha'u mós sei husu professor pre-eskolár atu informa inan-aman no estudante kona-ba estudu ida-ne'e no Ha'u sei taka anúnsiu iha eskola nia oin atu konvida inan-aman hodi hola parte iha grupu discussion. Inan-aman ne'ebé hatán sira-nia oan atu hola parte iha entrevista sei fó sira-nia aprovasaun lihosi asina iha papel.

Resposta hotu-hotu husi partisipante sira sei trata ho konfidensialidade. Sei uza pseudónimu atu proteze partisipante no eskola nia identida. Nune'e mós, partisipante no sira-nia eskola sei sai konfidensial iha kualkér publikasaun, apresentasaun, ka relatóriu ne'ebé sei prodúz iha disertasaun. Partisipante sira sei hetan rezumu kona-ba konkluzo bainhira peskiza ne'e kompleta.

Partisipasaun iha estudu ne'e voluntáriu no partisipante sira livre atu dada sira-nia dadus antes 1 Agostu 2017.

Karik partisipante sira hakarak atu dada sira-nia partisipasaun no sira-nia dadus, sira bele kontaktu direta Ha'u ba +670 7792 7805 ka liuhusi karta eletróniku lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz. Karik ita-boot iha pergunta no klarifikasaun, ita-boot bele kontaktu Ha'u ka kontaktu Ha'u-nia supervizór peskiza liuhusi karta eletróniku ba Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips no Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Obrigadu barak ba ita-boot nia tempu no Ha'u espera ita-boot nia resposta pozitivu kona-ba asuntu ne'e.

Ho sinseridade tomak,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo
Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz
Phone: +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)
+670 7792 7805 (TL)

Appendix 2: Information Letter for Principals - Translated

Te Kura Toi Tangata
Faculty of Education Phone +64 7 838 4500
The University of Waikato waikato.ac.nz/education
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



_____, 2017

Dear _____:

I am Lucia Guterres De Araujo, a postgraduate student pursuing Master in Education in University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. I am currently conducting a study entitled “*Teachers’ perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.*” which aims to support and investigate teachers’ comprehension of child-centred teaching and learning in relation to the new preschool curriculum. This research study has been approved by The University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee. As discussed, this letter is to formally invite you to take part in my study.

If you agree to take part, I would ask you to participate in a face-to face interview in your preschool between 29th May-17th July at a time that is suitable to you. The purpose of this interview is to identify teacher’s perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum in preschool education. The interview will take up to 40 minutes and with the Timorese language (Tetum) being used as the medium of communication. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded. The interview will be transcribed and the interview script will be returned to you within a week of the interview to allow you the opportunity to review, edit, and amend the interview transcript so that it accurately reflects your perspectives.

While every effort will be taken to ensure confidentiality, this cannot be guaranteed. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and that of the preschool. Similarly, your name and the preschool's name will not be identifiable in any publications, presentations, or the thesis report to ensure data gathered from you is kept anonymous. Information from this research will be used for my Master's thesis which will be lodged on Research Commons website- (<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>); it may also be used in scholarly publication and conferences. I will give you a summary of key findings at the completion of the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their data before 1st of August 2017. If participants wish to withdraw their participation and their data, they can directly contact me at +670 7792 7805 or by email lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz. Should you have other questions and clarifications, you can contact me or my research supervisors by email- Dr Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

If you are willing to participate in this research, please complete and sign the consent form which is attached to this letter. Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo

Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)

+670 7792 7805 (TL)

Te Kura Toi Tangata
Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4500
waikato.ac.nz/education



_____, 2017

Ex.mo Senhor/a _____:

Ha'u Lucia Guterres De Araujo, nu'udar estudante pozgraduadu ne'ebé hala'o hela kursu Masteradu ba Edukasaun iha Universidade Waikato, Hamilton, Nova Zelandia. Ba Ha'u-nia teze, Ha'u hala'o hela estudu ida ho titulu "*Profesór nia perspetiva no implementasaun kona-ba kurrikulu ne'ebé sentradu ba labarik/alunu ba edukasaun pre-eskolár iha Timor-Leste.*" Ho objetivu atu investiga profesór sira-nia komprensaun kona-ba 'metodu sentradu iha alunu' hanorin no aprende ne'ebé relasiona ho kurrikulu pre-eskolár nian. Peskiza ida-ne'e hetan ona aprovasaun husi Universidade Waikato nia Komisaun Étiku ba Peskiza. Hanesan ita koália ona, karta ida-ne'e atu konvida ita-boot mai hola parte iha ha'u-nia estudu.

Sé karik ita konkorda, Ha'u atu husu ita-boot atu hola parte iha entrevista ne'ebé sei hala'o iha ita-nia eskola tuir lora no tempu ne'ebé adekuaudu ba ita-nia tempu entre 29 Maiu – 17 Jullu. Objetivo ba entrevista ida-ne'e atu investiga profesór sira-nia komprensaun kona-ba implementasaun 'metodu sentradu iha alunu' iha kurrikulu pre-eskolár nian. Entrevista sei lori tempu maizumenus minute 40 ho lingua Timór nian (Tetun) ne'ebé uza hanesan médiu komunikasaun. Ho ita-boot sira-nia aprovasaun, entrevista sei hala'o ho gravasaun áudio. Dadus sei transkreve no sei fó fila ba ita-boot iha semana ida nia laran husi entrevista atu ita-boot bele halo revizaun ka hadia transkrisaun ne'e tuir ita-boot nia prespetiva.

Ita-boot nia resposta sira hotu sira sei trata ho konfidensialidade. Sei uza

pseudónimu atu proteze ita-bbot no eskola nia identida. Nune'e mós, ita-bootno eskola nia naran sei sai konfidensiál iha kualkér publikasaun, apresentasaun, ka relatóriu. Ida-ne'e atu hatete katak dados sira sei tau seguru/ anónimu. Informasaun hosi peskiza ne'e sei uza iha Ha'u-nia teze ba Masteradu ne'ebé sei arkiva iha Research Commons website <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; Ita-boot sei hetan rezumu kona-ba konkluzau bainhira peskiza ne'e kompleta.

Partisipasaun iha estudu neé voluntáriu no partisipante sira livre atu dada sira-nia dados antes 1 Agostu 2017. Karik partisipante sira hakarak atu dada sira-nia partisipasaun no sira-nia dados, sira bele kontaktu direta Ha'u ba +670 7792 7805 ka liuhusi karta eletróniku lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz. Karik ita-boot iha pergunta no klarifikasaun, ita-boot bele kontaktu Ha'u ka kontaktu Ha'u-nia supervizór peskiza liuhusi karta eletróniku ba Jeanette Clarkin-Philips no Linda Mitchell (jgcp@waikato.ac.nz & lindamit@waikato.ac.nz).

Karik ita iha vontade ka hakarak atu hola parte ida peskiza ne'e, favor priense no asina formulario konsentienment/aprovasaun ne'ebé aneksa iha karta ida-ne'e. Obrigadu ba ita-nia tempu.

Ho sinseridade tomak,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo
Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz
Phone: +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)
+670 7792 7805 (TL)

Appendix 3: Information Letter for Teachers – Translated

Te Kura Toi Tangata
Faculty of Education Phone +64 7 838 4500
The University of Waikato waikato.ac.nz/education
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



_____, 2017

Dear _____:

I am Lucia Guterres De Araujo, a postgraduate student pursuing Master in Education in University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. I am currently conducting a study entitled “*Teachers’ perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.*” which aims to support and investigate teachers’ comprehension of child-centred teaching and learning in relation to the new preschool curriculum. This research study has been approved by The University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee. As discussed, this letter is to formally invite you to take part in my study. If you agree to take part, I would ask you to:

- participate in a face-to face interview between 29th May-17th July at a time that is suitable to you. The purpose of this interview is to identify your perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum in preschool education. The interview will take up to 40 minutes with the Timorese language (Tetum) being used as the medium of communication. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded. The interview will be transcribed and the interview script will be returned to you within a week of the interview to allow you the opportunity to review, edit, and amend the interview transcript so that it accurately reflects your perspectives.

- give your consent for me to video record an episode of literacy, numeracy, and general development in your preschool;
- put a notice on the wall informing families that I will be video recording and for parents to inform teachers or me if they do not want their child to be recorded (I will supply the notice);
- invite parents to speak to me if they would like to take part in a parent focus group.

Every effort will be taken to ensure confidentiality; this cannot be guaranteed. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and that of the preschool. Similarly, your name and the preschool's name will not be identifiable in any publications, presentations, or the thesis report to ensure data gathered from you is kept anonymous. Information from this research will be used for my Master's thesis which will be lodged on Research Commons website- (<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>); it may also be used in scholarly publication and conferences. I will give you a summary of key findings at the completion of the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their data before 1st of August 2017. If participants wish to withdraw their participation and their data, they can directly contact me at +670 7792 7805 or by email lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz. Should you have other questions and clarifications, you can contact me or my research supervisors by email- Dr Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

If you are willing to participate in this research, please complete and sign the consent form which is attached to this letter. Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo

Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)

+670 7792 7805 (TL)

Te Kura Toi Tangata
Faculty of Education Phone +64 7 838 4500
The University of Waikato waikato.ac.nz/education
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



_____, 2017

Ex.mo Senhor/a _____:

Ha'u Lucia Guterres De Araujo, pozgraduadu ne'ebé hala'o hela kursu Masteradu ba Edukasaun iha Universidade Waikato, Hamilton, Nova Zelandia. Daudaun ne'e ha'u hala'o hela estudu ida ho titulu "*Profesór nia perspetiva no implementasaun kona-ba sentradu ba labarik/alunu kurríkulu ne'ebé ba edukasaun pre-eskolár iha Timor-Leste.*" Ho objective atu suporta no investiga professor sira-nia komprensaun kona-ba hanorin ne'ebé sentradu ba labarik/alunu hanorin no aprende ne'ebé relasiona ho kurríkulu foun. Peskiza ida-ne'e hetan ona aprovasaun husi Universidade Waikato nia Komisaun Étika ba Peskiza. Hanesan ita koália ona, karta ida-ne'e atu konvida ita-boot mai hola parte iha ha'u-nia peskiza. Sé karik ita konkorda atu hola parte, ha'u atu husu ita-boot:

- atu hola parte iha entrevista ne'ebé sei hala'o iha entre 29 Maiu – 17 Jullu tuir loron ne'ebé adekuaudu ba ita-nia tempu. Objetivo ba entrevista ida-ne'e atu investiga profesór sira-nia komprensaun kona-ba implementasaun 'metodu sentradu iha alunu' iha kuríkulu pre-eskolár nian. Entrevista sei lori tempu maizumenus minute 40 ho lingua Timór nian (Tetun) ne'ebé uza hanesan médiu komunikasaun. Ho ita-boot nia aprovasaun, entrevista sei halo gravasaun áudio. Dadus sei transkreve no sei fó fila ba ita-boot iha semana ida nia laran husi entrevista atu ita-boot bele halo revizaun ka hadia transkrisaun ne'e tuir ita-boot nia prespetiva.
- Fó ita-nia aprovasaun atu halo gravasaun vídeo iha epizódium ba literasia,

matemática no desenvolvimento jerál iha ita-nia pre-eskolár;

- Taka anúnsiu iha paredi hodi informa família katak Ha'u sei halo gravasaun vídeo no ba inan-aman sira atu informa profesór ka Ha'u karik sira la fó autorizasaun ba sira-nia oan atu hola parte iha gravasaun. (Karta anúnsiui Ha'u mak prepara);
- Konvida inan-aman atu koália ho Ha'u karik sira hakrak atu hola parte iha grupu diskusaun inan-aman nian.

Resposta hotu-hotu husi partisipante sira sei trata ho konfidensialidade. Sei uza pseudónimu atu proteze ita-boot no eskola nia identida. Nune'e mós, ita-boot no eskola nia naran sei sai konfidensial iha kualkér publikasaun, apresentasaun, ka relatóriu ne'ebé sei prodúz iha disertasaun. Ida-ne'e atu hatete katak dados sira sei tau seguru/ anónimu. Informasaun hosi peskiza ne'e sei uza iha Ha'u-nia teze ba Masteradu ne'ebé sei arkiva iha Research Commons website <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; Ita-boot sei hetan rezumu kona-ba konkluzoan bainhira peskiza ne'e kompleta.

Partisipasaun iha estudu neé voluntáriu no partisipante sira livre atu dada sira-nia dados antes 1 Agostu 2017. Karik partisipante sira hakarak atu dada sira-nia partisipasaun no sira-nia dados, sira bele kontaktu direta Ha'u ba +670 7792 7805 ka liuhusi karta eletróniku lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz. Karik ita-boot iha pergunta no klarifikasaun, ita-boot bele kontaktu Ha'u ka kontaktu Ha'u-nia supervizór peskiza liuhusi karta eletróniku ba Jeanette Clarkin-Philips no Linda Mitchell (jgcp@waikato.ac.nz & lindamit@waikato.ac.nz).

Karik ita iha vontade ka hakarak atu hola parte ida peskiza ne'e, favor priense no asina formulario konsentienment/aprovasaun ne'ebé aneksa iha karta ida-ne'e. Obrigadu ba ita-nia tempu.

Ho sinseridade tomak,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo
Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz
Phone: +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)
+670 7792 7805 (TL)

Appendix 4: Information Letter for Parents and Caregivers –

Translated

Te Kura Toi Tangata

Faculty of Education

The University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4500

waikato.ac.nz/education



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Month Date, 2017

Dear _____:

I am Lucia Guterres De Araujo, a postgraduate student pursuing Master in Education in University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. I am currently conducting a study entitled “*Teachers’ perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.*” which aims to support and investigate teachers’ comprehension of child-centred teaching and learning in relation to the new preschool curriculum. This research study has been approved by The University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee. As discussed, this letter is to formally invite you to take part in my study.

If you agree, I would like to invite you to participate in a parents’ focus group interview, in your child’s preschool on Date and Time. The purpose of this focus group interview is to find out about parents’ views of the child-centred curriculum in preschool education. The interview will take up to 30 minutes and with the Timorese language (Tetum) being used as the medium of communication. With the consent of all the parents taking part, the interview will be audio-recorded.

I cannot guarantee complete confidentiality since there will be four or five parents

taking part in the interview. I will use pseudonyms to protect your identity and that of the preschool so that your name and the preschool's name will not be identifiable in any publications, presentations, or the thesis report. This will ensure data gathered from you is kept anonymous. Information from this research will be used for my Master's thesis which will be lodged on Research Commons website- (<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>); it may also be used in scholarly publication and conferences. I will give you a summary of key findings at the completion of the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their data before 1st of August 2017. If participants wish to withdraw their participation and their data, they can directly contact me at +670 7792 7805 or by email lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz. Should you have other questions and clarifications, you can contact me or my research supervisors by email- Dr Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

If you are willing to participate in this research, please complete and sign the consent form which is attached to this letter. Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo

Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)

+670 7792 7805 (TL)

Te Kura Toi Tangata
Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4500
waikato.ac.nz/education



_____, 2017

Ex.mo Senhor/a _____:

Ha'u Lucia Guterres De Araujo, pozgraduadu ne'ebé hala'o hela kursu Masteradu ba Edukasaun iha Universidade Waikato, Hamilton, Nova Zelandia. Daudaun ne'e ha'u hala'o hela estudu ida ho titulu "*Profesór nia perspetiva no implementasaun kona-ba sentradu ba labarik/alunu kurríkulu ne'ebé ba edukasaun pre-eskolár iha Timor-Leste.*" Ho objective atu suporta no investiga professor sira-nia komprensaun kona-ba hanorin ne'ebé sentradu ba labarik/alunu hanorin no aprende ne'ebé relaciona ho kurríkulu foun. Peskiza ida-ne'e hetan ona aprovasaun husi Universidade Waikato nia Komisaun Étika ba Peskiza. Hanesan ita koália ona, karta ida-ne'e atu konvida ita-boot mai hola parte iha ha'u-nia estudu.

Sé karik ita konkorda, Ha'u atu konvida ita-boot atu hola parte iha foku grupu entrevista, iha ita-nia oan nia iha ____ no _____. Objetivo ba foku grupu entrevista ida-ne'e atu buka hatene kona-ba inan-aman prespetiva ka haree kona-ba 'metodu sentradu iha alunu' iha kuríkulu edukasaun pre-eskolár nian. Entrevista sei lori tempu maizumenus minute 30 ho lingua Timór nian (Tetun) ne'ebé uza hanesan médiu komunikasaun. Ho ita-boot sira hotu ne'ebé hola parte nia aprovasaun, entrevista sei halo gravasaun áudio.

Ha'u labele garante konfidensialidade tomak tanba ne'e sei inklui inan-aman na'in ha'at ka lima ne'ebé hola parte iha entrevista ida-ne'e. Ha'u sei uza pseudónimu atu proteze partisipante no eskola nia identida. Nune'e mós, ita-boot sira no eskola

nia naran sei sai konfidensiál iha kualkér publikasaun, apresentasaun, ka relatóriu. Ida-ne'e atu hatebes katak dados sira sei tau seguru/ anónimu. Informasaun hosi peskiza ne'e sei uza iha Ha'u-nia teze ba Masteradu ne'ebé sei arkiva iha Research Commons website <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; Ha'u sei fó rezumu kona-ba konkluzau ba peskiza ne'e bainhira estudu ne'e remata.

Partisipasaun iha estudu neé voluntáriu no participante sira livre atu dada sira-nia dados antes 1Agostu 2017. Karik participante sira hakarak atu dada sira-nia partisipasaun no sira-nia dados, sira bele kontaktu direta Ha'u ba +670 7792 7805 ka liuhusi karta eletróniku lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz. Karik ita-boot iha pergunta no klarifikasaun, ita-boot bele kontaktu Ha'u ka kontaktu Ha'u-nia supervizór peskiza liuhusi karta eletróniku ba Jeanette Clarkin-Philips no Linda Mitchell (jgcp@waikato.ac.nz & lindamit@waikato.ac.nz).

Karik ita iha vontade ka hakarak atu hola parte ida peskiza ne'e, favor priense no asina formulario konsentienment/aprovasaun ne'ebé aneksa iha karta ida-ne'e. Obrigadu ba ita-nia tempu.

Ho sinseridade tomak,

Lucia Guterres De Araujo
Email: lgd3@students.waikato.ac.nz
Phone: +64 21 158 1490 (NZ)
+670 7792 7805 (TL)

Appendix 5: Informed Consent for Principals – Translated

This is to notify that I, _____, the principal of _____ (public preschool/ private preschool) have read the information letter for this study and have discussed the details of the research with the researcher Lucia Guterres De Araujo. I have been informed about the study *“Teachers’ perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.”* I give my consent to participate and have ticked the following statements to show my understanding and agreements.

- I understand that participation in this research is voluntary.
- I have read the information letter and I have had all my questions answered.
- I agree to take part in a face-to-face interview of up to 40 minutes with the interviewer Lucia Guterres De Araujo.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and my interview transcript will be returned to me for review and amendment.
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw my data until 1st of August 2017.
- I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular questions in the interview.
- I understand that all information will be treated confidentially and the researcher will make every effort to protect the identity of the preschool by using pseudonyms.
- I understand that the data from the interviews will be analysed and the final thesis will be lodged on Research Commons website- <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; it may also be used in scholarly publication and conferences.
- I understand that my identity and the preschool’s identity will not be disclosed in any publications or presentations that report the findings of this study.
- I understand that I will be given a one-page summary of the research findings at the conclusion of this study.
- I understand that any concerns about the research process or ethical matters can be discussed with the researcher or with her supervisor, Dr Jeanette

Clarkin-Phillips and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Name _____

Date

Signature _____

NOTIFIKASAUN KONA-BA INTESAUN ATU SUPORTA HUSI DIRETÓR.

Ida-ne'e atu notifika katak Ha'u, _____, (diretór) husi _____ (pre-eskolár governo / pre-eskolár privadu) lee tiha ona karta informasaun ba estudu ida-ne'e no halo ona diskusaun detallu kona-ba peskiza ne'e ho peskizadór Lucia Guterres De Araujo. Ha'u hetan ona informasaun estudu nian kona-ba "*Profesór nia perspetiva no implementasaun kona-ba kurríkulu ne'ebé sentradu iha alunu iha edukasaun pre-eskolár iha Timor-Leste.*" Ha'u fó Ha'u-nia aprovasaun atu partisipa no hau sei tau vistu ba kada deklarasaun tuirmai atu hatudu katak ha'u komprende no aseita atu partisipa iha estudu ne'e.

- Ha'u komprende katak partisipasaun iha peskiza ne'e ho voluntáriadu.
- Ha'u lee tiha ona karta informasaun no Ha'u hetan ona resposta ba Ha'u-nia pergunta sira hotu.
- Ha'u aseita atu hola parte iha entrevista direta ho entrevistadór Lucia Guterres De Araujo maizumenus iha minute 40 nia laran.
- Ha'u komprende katak entrevista ne'e sei halo gravasaun áudio no entrevista ne'e nia transkrisaun sei fó fila mau ha'u hodi halo revizaun.
- Ha'u komprende katak partisipasaun iha peskiza ne'e voluntáriadu no Ha'u iha direitu atu dada Ha'u-nia dados molok to'o 1 Agosto 2017.
- Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u livre atu rejeita hodi hatán ba kualkér pergunta ruma iha estudu ne'e.
- Ha'u komprende katak infomasaun hotu-hotu sei hetan tratamentu ho konfidensialidade no sei halo esforsu tomak atu proteje eskola nia identidade liuhusi uza pseudónimu.
- Ha'u komprende katak dados hosi entrevista ne'e sei analiza no teze final sei arkiva iha Research Common website <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; bele uza mós iha publikasaun akadémika no konferénsia.
- Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u-nia identidade no eskola nia identidade sei la revela iha kualkér publikasaun ka apresentasaun ne'ebé relata kona-ba konkluziun husi estudu ne'e.
- Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u sei hetan rezumu pájina ida husi peskiza ne'e

nia konkluziun banhira estudu ne'e remata.

- ☐ Ha'u komprende katak preokupasaun kona-ba prosesu peskiza ne'e ka asuntu étiku ruma bele diskute ho peskizadór ka ninia supervizór, Dr. Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips no Profesór Asosiadu (Associate Professor) Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz) & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Naran _____

Data

Asinatura _____

Appendix 6: Informed Consent for Teachers - Translated

This is to notify that I, _____, a teacher of ____ (public preschool/ private preschool) have read the information letter for this study and have discussed the details of the research with the researcher Lucia Guterres De Araujo. I have been informed about the study “*Teachers’ perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.*” I give my consent to participate and have ticked the following statements to show my understanding and agreements.

- I understand that participation in this research is voluntary.
- I have read the information letter and I have had all my questions answered.
- I agree to take part in a face-to-face interview of up to 40 minutes with the interviewer Lucia Guterres De Araujo.
- I understand that I will be asked to discuss a sample of my work and students’ work in the interview.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded for (individual and group interview) and the interview transcripts will be returned to me for review.
- I agree that a literacy, numeracy and general development will be video recorded during my teaching.
- I understand that participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw my data until 1st of August 2017.
- I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular questions in the interview.
- I understand that every effort will be made to treat information confidentially and to protect the identity of me and the preschool by using pseudonyms.
- I understand that the data from the interviews will be analysed and the final thesis will be lodged on Research Commons website- <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; it may also be used in scholarly publication and conferences.
- I understand that my identity and the preschool’s identity will not be disclosed in any publications or presentations that report the findings of this study.

- I understand that I will be given a one-page summary of the research findings at the conclusion of this study.
- I understand that any concerns about the research process or ethical matters can be discussed with the researcher or with her supervisor, Dr Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Name _____

Date

Signature _____

NOTIFIKASAUN KONA-BA INTESAUN ATU SUPORTA HUSI PROFESÓR.

Ida-ne'e atu notifika katak Ha'u, _____, (professór/manorin) husi _____ (pre-eskolár governo / pre-eskolár privadu) lee tiha ona karta informasaun ba estudu ida-ne'e no halo ona diskusaun detallu kona-ba peskiza ne'e ho peskizadór Lucia Guterres De Araujo. Ha'u hetan ona informasaun estudu nian kona-ba *"Profesór nia perspetiva no implementasaun kona-ba kurríkulu ne'ebé sentradu iha alunu iha edukasaun pre-eskolár iha Timor-Leste."* Ha'u fó Ha'u-nia aprovasaun atu partisipa no hau sei tau vistu ba kada deklarasaun tuirmai atu hatudu katak ha'u komprende no aseita atu partisipa iha estudu ne'e.

- Ha'u komprende katak partisipasaun iha peskiza ne'e ho voluntáriadu.
- Ha'u lee tiha ona karta informasaun ne'e no Ha'u hetan ona resposta ba Ha'u-nia pergunta sira hotu.
- Ha'u aseita atu hola parte iha entrevista direta ho entrevistadór Lucia Guterres De Araujo maizumenus iha minute 40 nia laran.
- Ha'u komprende katak amostra Ha'u-nia no student nia servisu sei husu no koália iha entrevista.
- Ha'u komprende katak entrevista ne'e sei halo gravasaun áudio (ba entrevista individual ka grupu) no entrevista ne'e nia transkrisaun sei fó fila mau ha'u hodi halo revizaun.
- Ha'u aseita katak iha epizódriu sei halo gravasaun video iha tempu Ha'u hanorin.
- Ha'u komprende katak partisipasaun iha peskiza ne'e voluntáriadu no Ha'u iha direitu atu dada Ha'u-nia dados molok to'o 1 Agosto 2017.
- Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u livre atu rejeita hodi hatán ba kualkér pergunta ruma iha estudu neé.
- Ha'u komprende katak infomasaun hotu-hotu sei hetan tratamentu ho konfidensialidade no sei halo esforsu tomak atu proteje eskola nia identidade liuhusi uza pseudónimu.
- Ha'u komprende katak dados hosi entrevista ne'e sei analiza no teze final

sei arkiva iha Research Common website <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; bele uza mós iha publikasaun akadémika no konferénsia.

- Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u-nia identidade no eskola nia identidade sei la revela iha kualkér publikasaun ka apresentasaun ne'ebé relata kona-ba konkluzau husi estudu ne'e.
- Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u sei hetan rezumu pájina ida husi peskiza ne'e nia konkluzau banhira estudu ne'e remata.
- Ha'u komprende katak preokupasaun kona-ba prosesu peskiza ne'e ka asuntu étiku ruma bele diskute ho peskizadór ka ninia supervizór, Dr. Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips no Profesór Asosiadu (Associate Professor) Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Naran _____

Data

Asinatura _____

Appendix 7: Informed Consent for Parents and Caregivers - Translated

This is to notify that I, _____, the (parents/ caregiver) of _____ (name of the students) have read the information letter for this study and have discussed the details of the research with the researcher Lucia Guterres De Araujo. I have been informed about the study *“Teachers’ perspectives and implementation of the child-centred curriculum for preschool education in Timor-Leste.”* I give my consent to participate and have ticked the following statements to show my understanding and agreements.

- I understand that participation in this research is voluntary.
- I have read the information letter and I have had all my questions answered.
- I agree to take part in a parents’ group interview of up to 30 minutes with the interviewer Lucia Guterres De Araujo.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- I understand that participation in this research is voluntary but I cannot withdraw my data once the interview is finished because it is part of a group discussion.
- I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular questions in the interview.
- I understand that the researcher will make every effort to protect the identity of the preschool and interviewees by using pseudonyms. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because other parents are taking part in the interview.
- I understand that the data from the interviews will be analysed and the final thesis will be lodged on Research Commons website- <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; it may also be used in scholarly publication and conferences.
- I understand that my identity and the preschool’s identity will not be disclosed in any publications or presentations that report the findings of this study.
- I understand that I will be given a one-page summary of the research findings at the conclusion of this study.

- I understand that any concerns about the research process or ethical matters can be discussed with the researcher or with her supervisor, Dr Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Name _____

Date

Signature _____

NOTIFIKASAUN KONA-BA INTESAUN ATU SUPORTA HUSI INAN-AMAN.

Ida-ne'e atu notifika katak Ha'u, _____, (inan-aman/ ema ne'ebé tau-matan) husi _____ (pre-eskolár governo / pre-eskolár privadu) lee tiha ona karta informasaun ba estudu ida-ne'e no halo ona diskusaun detallu kona-ba peskiza ne'e ho peskizadór Lucia Guterres De Araujo. Ha'u hetan ona informasaun estudu nian kona-ba "*Profesór nia perspetiva no implementasaun kona-ba kurríkulu ne'ebé sentradu iha alunu iha edukasaun pre-eskolár iha Timor-Leste.*" Ha'u fó Ha'u-nia aprovasaun atu partisipa no hau sei tau vistu ba kada deklarasaun tuirmai atu hatudu katak ha'u komprende no aseita atu partisipa iha estudu ne'e.

- Ha'u komprende katak partisipasaun iha peskiza ne'e ho voluntáriadu.
- Ha'u lee tiha ona karta informasaun ne'e no Ha'u hetan ona resposta ba Ha'u-nia pergunta sira hotu.
- Ha'u aseita atu hola parte iha entrevista direta ho entrevistadór Lucia Guterres De Araujo hamutuk ho grupu inan-aman sira, maizumenus iha minute 30 nia laran.
- Ha'u komprende katak entrevista ne'e sei halo gravasaun áudio.
- Ha'u komprende katak partisipasaun iha peskiza ne'e voluntáriadu no Ha'u labeleiha dada Ha'u-nia dados bainhira entrevista remata tamba ne'e iha parte diskusaun grupu.
- Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u livre atu rejenta hodi hatán ba kualkér pergunta ruma iha estudu ne'e.
- Ha'u komprende katak infomasaun hotu-hotu sei hetan tratamentu ho konfidensialidade no sei halo esforsu tomak atu proteje eskola nia identidade liuhusi uza pseudónimu. Maibé la iha garantia a konfidensialidade ba individu tan inan-aman sira mos hola parte iha entrevista.
- Ha'u komprende katak dados hosi entrevista ne'e sei analiza no teze final sei arkiva iha Research Common website <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz>; bele uza mós iha publikasaun akadémika no konferénsia.

- ❑ Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u-nia identidade no eskola nia identidade sei la revela iha kualkér publikasaun ka apresentasaun ne'ebé relata kona-ba konkluzau husi estudu ne'e.
- ❑ Ha'u komprende katak Ha'u sei hetan rezumu pájina ida husi peskiza ne'e nia konkluzau banhira estudu ne'e remata.
- ❑ Ha'u komprende katak preokupasaun kona-ba prosesu peskiza ne'e ka asuntu étiku ruma bele diskute ho peskizadór ka ninia supervizór, Dr. Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips no Profesór Asosiadu (Associate Professor) Linda Mitchell (Jeanette.clarkin-phillips@waikato.ac.nz) & linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Naran _____

Data

Asinatura _____

Appendix 8: Notice Video Recording- Translated

This notice is to let you know that Lucia Guterres De Araujo from The University of Waikato will be video recording here today for her research on teaching and learning at the _____ . Please let her or a teacher know if you would not like your child to be videoed.

Lucia



Gravasaun video iha loron ida-ne'e (in Tetum)

Ho ida-ne'e atu notifika katak Lucia Guterres De Araujo husi Universidade Waikato sei halo gravasaun video iha loron ida-ne ba peskiza kona-ba hanorin no aprende iha _____ Favor fó hatene ba nia ka ita-nia profesor karik sei la autoriza ita-nia oan hola parte iha gravasaun video.

Lucia



Appendix 9: Notice Talking with Children – Translated

Talking with children today

This notice is to let you know that Lucia Guterres De Araujo from The University of Waikato will be talking with students in a group here today for her research on teaching and learning at the _____ . The questions we will be talking about are:

1. What do you like about your preschool?
2. What do you like doing in preschool? What activities do you like most?
3. What do you learn in preschool?
4. What activities would you like to do more of?

Please let Lucia or a teacher know if you would not like your child to be part of the group.

Lucia



Ko'alia/Konversa ho estudante sira ba loron ida-ne'e (in Tetum)

Ho ida-ne'e atu notifika katak Lucia Guterres De Araujo husi Universidade Waikato, sei ko'alia/konversa ho estudante sira iha grupu; iha loron ida-ne'e ba peskiza kona-ba hanorin no aprende iha _____ pergunta sira nebe'e ami sei ko'alia mak hanesan tuir mai ne'e:

1. Saida mak imi gosta kona-ba imi-nia eskola?
2. Saida mak imi gosta halo iha imi-nia eskola? iha atividade espesífiku ne'ebé mak imi gosta liu?
3. Saida mak imi aprende iha imi-nia eskola?
4. Atividade saida mak imi hakarak atu halo barak liután?
Bele fó nia ezemplu ruma?

Favor fó hatene ba Lucia ka ita-nia profesor karik sei la autoriza ita-nia oan hola parte iha grupu.

Lucia



Appendix 10: Notice Inviting Parents- Translated

Invitation for parents

This notice is to let you know that Lucia Guterres De Araujo from The University of Waikato will be talking to parents in a group here today for her research on teaching and learning at the _____ . Please let Lucia or a teacher know if you would like to be part of the group interview.

Lucia



Konvite ba ina-aman (in Tetum)

Ho ida-ne'e atu notifika katak Lucia Guterres De Araujo husi Universidade Waikato sei halo entrevista ho inan-aman sira iha grupo- ba loron ida-ne iha nia peskiza kona-ba hanorin no aprende iha _____ Favor fó hatene ba Lucia ka ita-nia profesor karik ita-boot sira hakarak hola parte iha grupu.

Lucia



Appendix 11: Notice the Presence of the Researcher – Translated NOTICE

This notice is to let you know that Lucia Guterres De Araujo from The University of Waikato will be collecting data in our preschool for her research on teaching and learning. Lucia will spend a week in school. The activities that Lucia will be doing during one week are as follow:

- Interviewing the principal
- Interviewing teachers
- Classroom video recording
- Talking to a group of parents
- Talking to a group of students.

Please let Lucia or a teacher know if you any have questions.

Lucia



AVIZO BA KOMINIDADE PRE-ESKOLÁR (in Tetum)

Aviso

Ho ida-ne'e atu notifika katak Lucia Guterres De Araujo husi Universidade Waikato sei hala'o peskiza ka foti dadus iha itania pre-eskolár iha nia peskiza kona-ba hanorin no aprende. Lucia sei hamutk ho ita durante semana ida nia laran. Aktividade ne'ebé mak Lucia sei halo mak hanesa tuir mai ne'e:

- Entrevista diretór
- Entrevista prosessór/manorin
- Gravasaun iha aula/klase laran
- Ko'alia ho inan-aman
- Ko'alia ho alunu/labarik

Favor fó-hatene ba Lucia ka itania professor karik ita-boot sira iha dúvidas ka pergunta ruma.

Lucia



Appendix 12: Interview Questions for Principals- Translated

1. Tell me about the new preschool curriculum?
2. What is your understanding of child-centred learning in the new curriculum?
3. What have you seen your teachers doing when they implement child-centred learning? Please would you give some examples?
4. What successes do you observe among your teachers in implementing a child-centred curriculum?
5. What challenges do you think teachers face in implementing a child-centred curriculum?
6. How could preschools, teachers and/or the Ministry of Education make improvements to child-centred education?

Pergunta Entrevista Ba Diretór (in Tetum)

1. Oinsá Ita-boot nia hanoin kona-ba kurríkulu foun iha pre-eskolár?
2. Oinsá/Saida mak ita-boot nia komprensaun kona-ba métodu aprendizajen “sentradu ba labarik/alunu” iha kurríkulu foun?
3. Oinsa mak ita-nia esperiénsia, iha haree ita-nia manorin/profesór implementa métodu aprendizajen “sentradu ba labarik/alunu”? Ita bele fó nia ezemplu ruma?
4. Susesu saida mak ita observa/haree iha ita-nia manorin/ profesór sira-nia leet iha implementasaun métodu aprendizajen “sentradu ba labarik/alunu” kurríkulu?
5. Dezafiu saida mak ita observa/haree iha ita-nia manorin/profesór sira-nia leet iha implementasaun métodu aprendizajen “sentradu ba labarik/alunu” kurríkulu?
6. Oinsá/Saida mak bele pre-eskolár, manorin ho Ministériu Edukasaun halo atu hadi’ak métodu “sentradu ba labarik/alunu” iha aprendizajen?

Appendix 13: Interview Questions for Teachers – Translated

1. Tell me about your experience as a teacher. How long have you been working in this professional career?
2. What is your understanding of child-centred learning within the new curriculum?
3. How and when do you implement child-centred learning in your classroom? Would you give some examples?
4. How do you assess your student's/children's learning within a child-centred approach?
5. Would you please show me some examples of the assessment? Who was involved?
6. How and when do you use the information of what you assessed from your students?
7. How do you think a child-centred approach contributes to the student/child's learning and development? How do children respond to child-centred approach?
8. What success do you encounter in your teaching practice? What do you enjoy most?
9. What challenges do you encounter in your teaching practice?
10. What could be done to help you further develop your understanding of implementation of child-centred approach?

Pergunta Entrevista Ba Manorin/ Profesór (in Tetum)

1. Ko'alia uitoan kona-ba ita boot-nia servisu iha karreira profesionál ida-ne'e, ita servisu tinan hira ona?
2. Oinsá/Saida mak ita-boot nia komprensaun kona-ba métodu aprendizajen “sentradu ba labarik/alunu” iha kurríkulu foun?
3. Ho maneira oinsá no bainhira mak ita implementa métodu ne'ebé “sentradu ba labarik/ alunu” iha ita-nia aula/klase laran?
4. Oinsá mak ita avalia ita-nia alunu sira-nia aprendizajen ho implementa métodu aprendizajen “sentradu ba labarik/alunu”?
5. Bele ka lae, ita-boot hatudu ezemplu avaliasaun labarik/alunu sira-nian?

Sé mak envolve?

6. Oinsá no bainhira mak ita uza informasaun kona-ba saida mak ita avalia ona hosi ita-nia estudante sira?
7. Oinsá mak métodu hanorin ne'ebé “sentradu ba labarik/alunu” kontribui ba estudante nia aprendizajen no dezvoltimentu? no oinsá alunus sira-nia responde?
8. Susesu saida mak ita hasoru iha ita-nia prátika hanorin? Saida mak ita gosta liu?
9. Dezafiu saida mak ita hasoru iha ita-nia prátika hanorin?
10. Maneira sadia mak bele halo hodi ajuda dezenvolve liután ita-boot nia kompriensaun ba implementasaun métodu “sentradu ba labarik/alunu”?

Appendix 14: Interview Questions for Parents and Caregivers - Translated

1. In what ways do you see your child is learning at preschool?
2. How do you value education to your child's future?
3. What progress/development do you want to see by the time your child finishes preschool?
4. What do you understand by child-centred learning within the new preschool curriculum?
5. What are the significant improvements in your child that you see since he/she started preschool, for example?

Lista Pergunta entrevista ba Inan-aman (in Tetum)

1. Iha dalan/ maneira saida de'it mak ita-boot sira haree ita-nia oan aprende iha pre-eskolár?
2. Oinsá ita fó valoriza edukasaun ba ita-nia oan nia futuru?
3. Progresu ka dezvoltamentu saida mak ita hakarak atu haree bainhira ita-nia oan remata/akaba hosi pre-eskolár?
4. Saida mak ita hatene kona-ba métodu hanorin ne'ebé "sentradu ba alunu" iha kurríkulu foun pre-eskolár nian?

Progresu ka mudansa signifkante saida mak ita haree iha ita-nia oan desde nia hahu eskola? ita bele fó nia ezemplu?

Appendix 15: Interview Questions for students - Translated

1. What do you like about your preschool?
2. What do you like doing in preschool? What activities do you like most?
3. What do you learn in preschool?
4. What activities would you like to do more of?

Pergunta entrevista ba Estudante/Alunu (in Tetum)

1. Saida mak imi gosta kona-ba imi-nia eskola?
2. Saida mak imi gosta halo iha imi-nia eskola? iha atividade spesífiku ne'ebé mak imi gosta liu?
3. Saida mak imi aprende iha imi-nia eskola?
4. Atividade saida mak imi hakarak atu halo barak liután? Bele fó nia ezemplu ruma?

Appendix 16: Questionnaire for Teachers - Translated

This questionnaire is to provide some background information about your qualifications and teaching experience for the study on the implementation of the preschool curriculum.

Please circle and/or write answers for each question, based on your own knowledge and experiences. Thank you for your time!

1. How long have you been teaching preschool? (write number of years)

2. What is your current position in the preschool? Are you:

- a) Permanent
- b) Contract
- c) Volunteer

3. What is your highest qualification? (circle one only)

- a) Highschool
- b) Bachelor
- c) Masters
- d) Other _____

4. Which region/ district are you from? (write name of district)

5. Which languages are currently used in your classroom? (circle one only)

- a) Mother tongue/ dialect and Tetum
- b) Tetum
- c) Portuguese
- d) Portuguese and Tetum
- e) Other (specify) _____

6. Please rate how familiar you are with the national curriculum? (circle one only)

- a) 25%
- b) 50%
- c) 75%
- d) 100%

QUESTIONNAIRE BA MANORIN/ PROFESÓR (in Tetum)

Kestenáriu badak ida-ne'e atu hetan antesedénsia informasaun báziku kona-ba profesór/manorin sira iha pre-eskolár. Halo favor hatán ho tau sírkulu ka hakerek tuir pergunta ida-idak tuir ita-boot nia konhesementu. Obrigada ba ita-nia tempu!

1. Ita hanorin iha pre-eskolár tinan hira ona?

2. Ita-nia pozisaun agora dadaun hanesan saida?

- a). Permanente
- b). Kontratadu
- c). Voluntariu

3. Saída mak ita-boot nia kualifisaun akadémiku?

- a) Secundária
- b) Lisensiatura/ Baxarelatu
- c) Masteradu
- d) Seluk _____

4. Ita hosi rejiaun/distritu ne'ebé?

5. Liangua ka lia saida mak agora dadaun ita uza iha aula/clase laran?

- a) Lian-inan no Tetum
- b) Tetum
- c) Portugés
- d) Portugés no Tetum

6. To'o iha ne'ebe ita-nia persentajen koñesimentu ho kurríkulu foun?

- a) 25%
- b) 50%
- c) 75%
- d) 100%

Appendix 17: Data collection timetable

Date/ Month	Activities	Remarks
15 th nd May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit the letter of permission to the Department of Education, Dili, Timor-Leste 	
18 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up the status of the permission to the department of Education, Dili. if there is no response within three days 	
23 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive the approved letter of permission and the endorsement letter from the Department of Education, 	
24 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the preschool of the randomly chosen principals and teachers to talk to them and present the endorsement letter, letter inviting participation and consent form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the principals and teachers who agree to participate in the study and schedule interview with them. 	Preschool A Preschool B
29 th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the preschool of the randomly chosen principals and teachers to talk to them and present the endorsement letter, letter inviting participation and consent form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the principals and teachers who agree to participate in the study and schedule interview with them. 	Preschool C
31 st may	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the preschool of the randomly chosen principals and teachers to talk to them and present the endorsement letter, letter inviting participation and consent form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the principals and teachers who agree to participate in the study and schedule interview with them. 	Preschool D
7 th -13 th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handing out questionnaire • Interview principal • Interview teachers • Interview focus group parents • Interview focus group students • classroom observation 	Preschool A
16 th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription review with preschool A 	
19 th -23 rd June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handing out questionnaire • Interview principal 	Preschool B

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interview teachers ● Interview focus group parents ● Interview focus group students ● classroom observation 	
27th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transcription review with preschool B 	
28 th June- 4 th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handing out questionnaire ● Interview principal ● Interview teachers ● Interview focus group parents ● Interview focus group students ● classroom observation 	Preschool C
10 th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transcription review with preschool C 	
11th-17th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handing out questionnaire ● Interview principal ● Interview teachers ● Interview focus group parents ● Interview focus group students ● classroom observation 	Preschool D
21 st July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transcription review with preschool D 	
24th- 28 th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finalise and collect transcription review 	Preschool A- Preschool D